GREEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (GREEN HRM) AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract
The high concern and attention of the world leaders and stakeholders on climate change have necessitated shift to greening the economy in terms of renewable energy, green construction, environmentally friendly services, zero carbon emission transportation system, organic farming system etc. It is expected that this new trend in the global world (greening) will eventually lead to job loss (unemployment) and or the creation of additional jobs, because of the shift in professional skills from the conventional practice to the modern practice. In order for unemployment to be averted as a result of the structural development, this implies that new and decent jobs are needed to prevent structural unemployment. Consequently, proactive interventions are required to assist in the area of employment, education and training to suit the change in the demand for green economy, as demand for new trend will call for the adoption of new skills or modification of the existing skills. Therefore, without investment in new technology and human capital development, achieving green production process will be difficult. Thus, greening the labour market through acquisition of green skills, green selections, green training, green compensation etc. are necessary. Although, research on Green HRM is gaining ground in developed world, however, it is an area that lacks comprehensive awareness among developing countries especially Africa. Nigeria as one of the Africa countries is not an exception in terms of low awareness and inadequate research on Green HRM. However, more awareness need to be done in Africa countries; as these countries are more vulnerable to environmental degradation due to various business activities and under developed nature of these countries. In view of this, more need to be done in the area of conceptualizing Green HRM and also human resource managers need to be well informed about the prospects and challenges that they may be subjected to from practicing Green HRM. Given the low information and dearth of research in this area, this study tries to add to knowledge on the concept of Green HRM, the prospects in Green HRM, and challenges that HR practitioners could face when embarking on Green HRM. The information gathered from this study will help stakeholders and HR practitioners in
appreciating reasons while greening needs to be celebrated, so as to save human in particular and the environment in general.

Keywords: Stakeholders, climate change, renewable energy, green economy, degradation

Introduction
Over the centuries, economists have measured economic progress in term of GDP. However, the 21st Century has called for more inclusive measures in terms of environmental and social measure. The first United Nation agreement on environmental protection in 1972 that was held in Stockholm gave birth to other agreements such as the Kyoto 1997, Bali 2007, Copenhagen 2009, Paris Agreement 2016, and the most recent United Nation Climate Action Submit in 2019 on environment are all in the bid to protect the environment from Greenhouse gases and other pollutants that affect the environment and human.

Significantly, these treaties have instigated environmental sustainability awareness worldwide, thereby making it necessary for business organizations to act in an eco-friendly manner. Consequently, these may lead to job loss and or the creation of new jobs. Therefore, for unemployment to be averted as a result of the structural development, new and decent jobs are needed to prevent structural unemployment. Consequently, proactive interventions are required to assist in the area of employment, education, and training to suit the change in the demand for green economy, as demand for new trend will call for the adoption of new skills or modification of the existing skills. Hence, the need to green the labour market. Greening the labour market would solve some of the challenges of the 21st century through the creation of new socio economic model that will help in solving some of the challenges of the environment.

It should however be noted that without investment in new technology and human capital development, achieving green production process will be difficult. Therefore, greening the labour market through acquisition of green skills, green selections, green training, green compensation etc. are necessary. Aykan, (2017) emphasized that for change and development to happen in an organization human resources must play vital roles.

Green HRM practice entails the use of less paper work in executing HR function like recruitment & selection, training, performance evaluation, zero harmful environment, and competitive advantage in employee appointment (Hossain & Rahman, 2016).

Green HRM management will bring about efficiency in the use of resources so that intensity in the utilization of natural resources and non-natural resources will be minimized in order to save future generation and thus, achieve sustainable development. Sustainable development according to the Brundtland Commission Report is a development that meets the needs of the current generation without jeopardising the ability of future generations in meeting their own needs. (Brundtland Commission Report, 1987).

Although, research on Green HRM is gaining ground in developed world, however, it is an area that lacks comprehensive awareness in developing countries especially Africa. Africa countries are more vulnerable to environmental degradation because of the underdeveloped nature of their business activities this necessitates more awareness in the area of Green HRM. To corroborate this, Yong, Yusliza, and Fawehinmi (2019) emphasized in their systematic review on Green HRM that although, research on Green HRM is essential in developed countries but focus on developing country is also important

Nigeria as one of the Africa countries is not an exception in terms of low awareness, inadequate information, and research on Green HRM. Therefore, more need to be done in the area of conceptualizing Green HRM and also human resource managers/practitioners need to be aware about the prospects and challenges that could arise from practicing Green HRM as this will help to inculcate Green initiatives in their HRM practice. Given the low awareness and dearth of research in this area of study, this paper throws more light on the concept of Green HRM, identifies some green practices/initiatives, prospects in Green HRM, and challenges that HR practitioners could face when embarking on Green HRM. Also, the information gathered from the study will enable HR practitioner not to focus only on profit making but also to realize the reasons to protecting their employee and the environment so that sustainable development can be achieved. The knowledge gathers from this study will help to throw more light on the concept of GHRM, the prospect that
could arise when companies are able to practice green activities and also provide some challenges that company could face when adopting green initiatives in their human resources management.

Sequel to the introductory part of the paper, the next section examines some literature relevant to the study, this Section provides some literature review on sustainable development & Green HRM and contributes to the concepts of Green HRM and Sustainable Development. While Section three highlights and explains some green initiatives that can be used in the business environment by the human resources practitioners. Section four presents some prospects in Green HRM Initiatives. While Section five deals with some of the challenges in Green HRM practices. Finally, Section six concludes the paper and gives some recommendations.

**Literature Review**

*Sustainable Development*

Sustainability is defined as the first step that is required for the attainment of economic development and growth and at the same time prevent environmental degradation, save the life of biodiversity and ensure sustainability of natural resources (Chendo, (2013)).

Sustainable development has gained wider attention since the Brundtland report on our common future in 1987. The concept of sustainable development was explicitly defined in the Bundtland’s commission report of the united nation in 1987 as a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (WCED).

Sustainable development encompasses three dimensions which is also called the 3Ps or Triple Bottom Line (TBL). The 3Ps denotes people, planet and place which is synonymous to social, environment and economic. People stands for the level of social responsibility embark on by the organisations and entails just and good business operation where the business is practiced. Planet is the level of environmental responsibility of the firm and entails effective and skillful use of natural resources and protection of environment from degradation. Profit denotes the economic gain that is obtained by the firm from the society.

The term – 3Ps was first coined by Freer Spreckley in 1981 and developed by John Elkington. in 1997 according to him, the awareness of TBL ensures that organisations focus attention not only on economic gains (profit), but also careful about their environment and social advantages/gains that may affect the society. It is emphasized that the sustainability of a business depends on the application of the three principles of sustainability planet, people and profit in the operation of the business (Moshina, 2015)

Sustainable development encompasses the use of renewable resources and discourages the use of non-renewable resources (Hall, Daneke and Lenox, 2010). Savitz and Weber, (2006) explained sustainable development as a development that entails the ability of the business to earn profit, prevent environmental degradation, and ensure the well-being of its stakeholders. Emphasis has also been placed on the role of green practices in human resources management (HRM) as an avenue to organisation’s sustainable development (Freitas et al. 2012 and Renwick et al. 2016). Sustainable developments entails not only making profit but also having awareness about the environmental impact of organizational activities (Deshwal, 2015). Also, the author opined that in order for firm to achieve sustainability and development they should put more attention not only in the area of profit but should also be mindful of the implications of their business activities on the environment.

Hosain and Raman (2016) stated that the focus of green HRM practice is not confined to implementing environmental initiative but also involves the formulation and the implementation of rules and practices that entails sustainable HR Management. Similarly, green HRM entails the application of HRM rules and practices to encourage sustainability in resources use in the business environment through the creation of awareness and commitment in the area of environmental sustainability (Deshwal, 2015; Sarawat, 2015). Scholars have agreed that inculcating green practices in HRM could lead to sustainability (Renwick et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2011; Jabbor and Santos, 2008)

Sustainable development is a continuous development that is above economic development (Lotfi, Yusuf and Safari 2018) this means that sustainable development encompasses economic development and
other developmental dimensions. Sustainable development helps to prevent the elimination or deterioration of natural resources, degradation of the environment, climate change, ozone layer depletion, and maintenance of a good quality life style for the present and future generation. According to Kushwaha (2010) sustainable development is a situation when resources, investment, technology advancement, and institutional changes are utilized in agreement with the requirement of the current and succeeding generation.

**Green HRM (Human Resources Management)**

Green HRM practice involves the use of less paper work in carrying out HR function such as recruitment and selection, training, human resources appraisal in order to ensure sustainable, zero harmful environment, and competitive advantage in employment (Hossain and Rahman, 2016).

Renwick (2008) emphasized that green HRM entails the blending of organisation’s environment management objectives with the HR functions such as recruitment and selection, training & development, performance management, assessment and reward. It is also believed that eco-friendly HR practices enhances efficiency, reduces cost, and helps to develop and raised environment of engaged employees that enhances innovation and minimizes cost (Mishra, 2017).

Green HR has been divided into two elements: environmental friendly HR practices and preservation of knowledge capital (Jain, 2017). Green HR involves the altering of the HR function such as recruitment, selection, training, and development, performance appraisal, employee compensation, employee involvement so that they can be in line with green practices. Thus, altering of HR function will not only affect organisation but also the individual employee and the society as a whole.

Green HRM focuses on the social and economic well-being of employee and the organisation within a broader perspective (Jain (2017). Through Green HRM, efficient use of resources is enhanced, improvement in work life, lower cost of operation, enhancement of workers’ performance, reduction in employee carbon footprints, flexible work scheduled, online recruitment, recycling, re-use, online training etc. are encouraged.

Ahmad (2015) explained that the rise in awareness about green policy has enhanced human resources to adopt green HR practices by emphasizing on zero paper approach, minimization of carbon footprint and waste product.

Green HRM spurs efficiency, reduces cost, enhances better workers’ engagement, through the encouragement of activities that will minimize workers’ carbon footprint (2013). High benefit can accrue to the company and employee through Green HRM as it can help to boost employee confidence.
Some Green Practices/Initiatives

Green Recruitment and Selection
This involves the recruitment and selection of candidates that possess green initiatives, practices and behaviors. Green recruitment and selection can come in the area of online recruitment and selection that could help to reduce cost for organisation.

Green Recruitment and Selection in the first place, will help to reduce cost of recruitment and selection by performing online selection, online interview, online advertisement etc. Second it will help organisation in the area of ensuring that workforce are recruited based on their green initiatives/awareness, their recycling knowledge, reduction in paper use in the organisation etc. These two ways of green recruitment and selection were identified by Mishra (2017).

Green Training & Development
Training and development is an important function of human resources manager as training helps to improve workers’ existing skills, development of new skills, productivities, align workers to new area in business, update and expand worker’s knowledge, and improve their productivities This area of human resources management is very crucial to every organisation for organisational development

Green Training & Development also helps to enhance workers’ awareness and knowledge about green initiatives in order to save the organisation, and the workforce in particular, and the environment in general. Green Training & Development would inculcate safety and health in the workplace, handling of some equipment to ensure safety, especially those that are more vulnerable to hazards in their workplace, Training in the use of less paper, recycling, and re-use, and efficient usage of energy. Mandip, (2012) advised that green orientation programs should be inculcated into the items/content of training and development for new employees.

Green Performance and Appraisal
Employee needs to be appraised and encouraged about their performance to ensure continuity in their green practice and adjustment. Green Performance and Appraisal can be used to encourage green initiatives among employees. It can also be used to put employee on the right track when they are acting outside the green practices. Gholami et al., (2016) identified performance management as one of the main human resource initiatives for enhancing environmental behavior and sustainable development.
Green Compensation and Reward

This is also one of the GHRM practices that can be used to increase green initiatives and practices among employees. For the organizations, stakeholders can compensate in the areas of tax holidays, loans, grants in favour of organisation that practises green initiatives. For employee they can be compensated through increase in salary, bonus, promotion, etc.

Prospects in Green Human Resources Management

- Conservation of Resources

Through GHRM, resources are conserved not only for the present generation but also for the future generation. This will help in the area of resource management, efficiency, and reduction in the intensity of both natural and non-natural resources.
  - It safeguards health and wellbeing of workers

  The practice of GHRM will help to protect the health and welfare of employee in the organisation. This will help to boost the productivity of the workers as sick leave and absenteeism will be reduced or averted.
  - It boosts organizational business image

  Organisation image is key for the organisation to achieve sustainable growth development. With GHRM the business image of the organisation will be enhanced especially where there are many competitors and this would help organisations to have competitive advantage over its competitors in the market.
  - New jobs can be created

  It is possible for more jobs to be created with the adoption of GHRM, as new ways of doing things are developed and this would entail new workforce in the organisation. For instance, in the area of online recruitment, this would require an expert in computer so that recruitment can be done effectively.
  - Cost Reduction

  The use of GHRM practice would also help to reduce cost in terms of paper usage, reduction of resources, re-use of some items, carpooling, online training etc. All these can go a long way in reducing the organisation cost.
  - Innovation and new ideas

  New ideas and innovation can be enhanced though GHRM practice and this will increase production and save cost. It can also enable the organisation to have comparative advantage in terms of market share, high production, efficiency, and even earn more profit.

Challenges with Green Human Resources Management

- It may be expensive to operate

  GHRM may be expensive to operate especially at the initial stage since it may require some adjustment to be made in the organisation to suit the new practices. Also, some trainings may be needed to change the conventional HR practices to the green HR practices and this would definitely require some cost implications
  - It is time consuming

  It may be time consuming as selection and recruitment of employee with green initiative may be difficult due to the skills and experience that will be required to fill such position so getting the right personnel may be challenging and time consuming.
  - High initial cost /Capital

  At the initial stage, huge investment may be required to convert from conventional HR practices to green HRM. such initial cost may involve cost of machineries, training, equipment, and cost of training
  - Overall changing of the entire HRM practices

  Green HRM practice may involves changing the entire HR system in order to fit into the new system, this may be challenging to organisation especially when there is no assistance in terms of financial or technical support from anywhere and organisation needs to rely on their own efforts
  - Acceptance of Green HR practice for the employer and employee may be challenging

  The acceptance of Green HR practice for the employer and employee may be challenging. This is because the organisation for instance, may require the changing of the operation and management of the organization. and also for the employee they may require orientations, new skills, or additional skills and this would require training and/additional educations.
Conclusion
Adoption of green HRM would help to achieve some of the main objectives of an organisation in terms of cost control, enhancing corporate social responsibility, skills acquisition, and competitive benefit over rival companies via environmental awareness and preservation of natural resources and ethical values. Therefore, Green HRM initiatives if well practice and applied will benefit the individual workers, organisations in particular, and the society in general.

References


Conservation of Resources

- Zero negative impact of human activities on the environment
- It safeguard health and wellbeing of workers
- It boosts organizational business image
- New jobs are created

Cost Reduction

Innovation and new ideas

Mobility and Flexibility

Efficiency

It boosts organizational business image

New jobs are created

It safeguard health and wellbeing of workers

Zero negative impact of human activities on the environment

Cost Reduction

Innovation and new ideas

Mobility and Flexibility

Efficiency