

Role Of Hr In Achieving Un Sustainable Development Goals (Sdgs) In Multinational Companies

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal blueprint for achieving social, economic, and environmental wellbeing. Multinational companies (MNCs), owing to their global reach and corporate influence, play a crucial role in accelerating SDG adoption. Human Resource (HR) departments are key drivers in integrating sustainability principles into workplace policies, employee practices, and organizational culture. This study examines the role of HR in achieving SDGs within selected multinational companies in Chennai City, focusing specifically on HR contributions to SDG-related initiatives such as gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), and climate action (SDG 13).

A sample of 200 HR professionals and employees from MNCs in Chennai was surveyed using a structured questionnaire. Statistical techniques including reliability tests, correlation, and regression were employed to analyze how HR interventions such as sustainable talent management, diversity and inclusion policies, green HRM practices, and ethical governance contribute to SDG alignment. The findings reveal that HR plays a significant strategic role in advancing sustainability goals, with Green HRM practices and Diversity & Inclusion initiatives emerging as the strongest contributors. The study concludes that HR functions must evolve into sustainability leaders to effectively support global SDG commitments...

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Sustainable Development Goals, Multinational Companies, Green HRM, Corporate Sustainability, Chennai.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were approved by the United Nations in 2015, are a set of seventeen interrelated objectives that are intended to ensure the sustainability of the global environment by the year 2030. Due to the huge resources, global networks, and governance systems that they possess, multinational corporations play a crucial role in supporting the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Human Resources (HR) department serves as a change agent within organizations. It is responsible for integrating sustainability into the culture of the company, the policies that govern the workforce, and the behaviors of the employees.

Human resources departments are increasingly incorporating sustainability into their day-to-day operations. This includes recruitment based on ethical ideals, staff training on sustainability, adoption of green workplace practices, diversity enhancement, community involvement, and programs to improve employee well-being. HR plays a vital role in converting Sustainable Development Goal principles into organizational activities in Chennai, which is home to a large number of international corporations operating in the information

technology, finance, engineering, and manufacturing sectors.

This study investigates the ways in which human resources (HR) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in multinational corporations (MNCs), with a particular emphasis on HR practices that are linked with workplace equality, environmental responsibility, economic development, and ethical governance.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Despite MNCs' open commitment to sustainable, there remains a disconnect between policy and practice. While many businesses emphasize sustainability in their yearly reports, employees frequently aren't aware of how HR practices directly support the SDGs. Organizations also have to deal with issues including uneven employee participation, fragmented SDG activities, insufficient assessment tools, and little HR training in sustainability. The true role of HR in achieving SDGs is still poorly understood in light of these obstacles, especially in Chennai-based multinational corporations. Examining how employees feel, how well HR-led sustainability programs work, and how HR practices affect SDG accomplishment are all crucial. By examining the scope and efficacy of HR contributions

to SDGs in global corporations, this study seeks to close the gap.

3. REVIEW OF LITRATURE:

Mehta and Sharma (2021) examined green HRM practices and found that they have a major impact on waste reduction, energy saving, and organizational climate action initiatives. Examples of these initiatives include recycling programs, paperless systems, energy-efficient workspaces, and sustainability-focused staff training. They came to the conclusion that HR divisions are crucial in promoting ecologically conscious conduct at all corporate levels.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programs improve workplace fairness by tackling socioeconomic, cultural, and gender-based disparities, according to Nair and Gopinath (2022). Their work demonstrates how SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are clearly aligned with HR policies that support inclusive hiring, equitable compensation, safe working environments, and nondiscriminatory practices. They underlined that D&I initiatives boost staff retention, innovation, and morale in addition to enhancing organizational fairness.

According to Raman and Solomon (2023), HR plays a major role in implementing the SDGs by promoting employee skill development, leadership training, and well-being initiatives. They noted that HR efforts including leadership coaching, wellness programs, emotional intelligence development, and reskilling equip workers for the rapidly evolving demands of global sustainability. Their research highlights how investments in people boost organizational productivity and sustainability impact by linking HR's developmental function with SDGs.

According to Kumar and Rajesh (2024), HR divisions in multinational Indian corporations significantly contribute to sustainability, particularly through workforce development that is connected to the SDGs. Their research showed how HR strategies including competency mapping, sustainability-focused onboarding, green hiring, and ongoing professional development aid in integrating global SDG goals into routine business operations. They contend that HR is crucial to guaranteeing that organizational strategy, culture, and long-term decision-making incorporate sustainability.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2024) highlighted the importance of HR-driven wellness initiatives in multinational corporations and stated that employee physical and mental health is essential to achieving the SDGs. According to WHO, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) is directly impacted by employee well-being programs such ergonomics, stress management techniques, mental health assistance, flexible work schedules, and health monitoring. According to the survey, workers who are in better health are more engaged, productive, and able to assist firms in making more extensive sustainability transitions.

When taken as a whole, these studies show that HR is crucial to business sustainability initiatives and SDG integration.

4. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

To analyze HR practices related to sustainability adoption in multinational companies.

To examine the contribution of Green HRM practices to SDG achievement.

To evaluate the role of Diversity & Inclusion initiatives in supporting SDGs.

To assess how HR-driven employee development and ethical governance influence SDG implementation.

To identify which HR practice most strongly predicts SDG success in MNCs.

Hypotheses:

H01: Green HRM practices do not significantly influence SDG achievement.

H02: Diversity & Inclusion initiatives have no significant effect on SDG implementation.

H03: HR-driven employee development does not significantly affect SDG achievement.

H04: HR's ethical governance practices have no significant impact on SDG outcomes.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study employed a descriptive and analytical research approach to facilitate a thorough investigation of HR practices associated with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in multinational enterprises (MNCs) located in Chennai. The descriptive component facilitated the identification and documentation of existing HR sustainability initiatives, whereas the analytical component allowed for assessing the strength and direction of relationships between HR practices and SDG achievement. This dual-design methodology facilitated the successful capture and interpretation of both observable patterns and underlying forces.

SAMPLE PROFILE:

The research concentrated on employees and HR specialists employed by international corporations in Chennai City. Two hundred people participated in the research. The sample size was deemed sufficient for performing reliability tests, correlation analysis, and multiple regression modeling with appropriate statistical power.

A purposive sampling method was employed to guarantee that participants had sufficient understanding of sustainability initiatives and HR regulations in their firms. This strategy was suitable since employees directly involved in sustainability programs comprehend SDG-related HR activities more clearly than the general workforce.

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed on a **5-point Likert scale**, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The questionnaire comprised two main sections:

Demographic and Organizational Profile, and

Construct-based statements measuring Green HRM practices, Diversity & Inclusion, Employee Development, Ethical Governance, and SDG Achievement.

The Likert scale format enabled the quantification of attitudes and perceptions in a consistent and measurable manner.

Statistical Tools Used

Reliability analysis

Pearson correlation

Multiple regression analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS.

Analysis and Results

Table: 1 Descriptive Statistics for HR Sustainability Practices (N = 200)

| Construct (HR Sustainability Practices) | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|---|----------|-------------------------|
| Green HRM Practices | 3.94 | 0.62 |
| Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives | 4.02 | 0.58 |
| Employee Development Programs | 3.87 | 0.65 |
| Ethical Governance Practices | 3.98 | 0.60 |
| Overall HR Sustainability Orientation | 3.95 | 0.59 |

Respondents show a *high positive perception* of Green HRM initiatives such as energy-saving policies, waste reduction, and green training. Perceptions of D&I practices are *very favorable*, indicating strong support for equality, gender inclusion, and non-discrimination in MNCs. Employees moderately agree that training, upskilling, and career opportunities are aligned with SDG targets. Ethical HR policies-transparency, fairness, anti-corruption are rated highly by respondents. Overall, HR in MNCs demonstrates a *strong orientation* toward sustainability-linked initiatives.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Green HRM | 0.86 |
| Diversity & Inclusion | 0.84 |
| Employee Development | 0.82 |

| Construct | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Ethical Governance | 0.85 |
| SDG Achievement | 0.88 |

Reliability analysis was conducted using **Cronbach's Alpha** to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used for each construct in the study. In social science research, a Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.70 and above** is generally considered acceptable, while values **exceeding 0.80 indicate high reliability**. The reliability values obtained in this study demonstrate that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold, confirming that the questionnaire items are internally consistent and measure their respective dimensions effectively.

The construct **Green HRM** recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of **0.86**, indicating strong internal consistency among the items measuring eco-friendly HR practices such as green training, green performance appraisal, and sustainable recruitment. This suggests that respondents perceived these items consistently as part of a unified construct.

The **Diversity & Inclusion** construct yielded an Alpha value of **0.84**, reflecting that the items related to inclusive hiring, equal opportunity, and workplace fairness reliably represent the D&I dimension. This high reliability score indicates that the respondents had uniform perceptions regarding D&I policies implemented in multinational companies.

Employee Development obtained a reliability value of **0.82**, demonstrating that items measuring training opportunities, leadership development, and skill-building are cohesive and consistently interpreted by participants. This confirms the stability of the development-related measurement scale.

Similarly, **Ethical Governance** exhibited a Cronbach's Alpha of **0.85**, which signifies that statements concerning ethical HR practices, transparency, anti-corruption measures, and fairness form a reliable and consistent construct.

The construct **SDG Achievement** recorded the highest reliability score of **0.88**, indicating excellent internal consistency. This suggests that the items assessing the organization's overall progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals were well understood and consistently rated by respondents.

In accordance with the reliability description in the IoT-enabled workplace study (the model paper), these results confirm that **all constructs demonstrate a high level of internal reliability (>0.80)**. This consistency assures that the instrument is statistically sound, and therefore suitable for further advanced analyses such as correlation and regression.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

| Variables | GHRM | DI | ED | EG | SDG |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Green HRM | 1 | 0.63** | 0.61** | 0.65** | 0.76** |
| Diversity & Inclusion | 0.63** | 1 | 0.64** | 0.66** | 0.74** |
| Employee Development | 0.61** | 0.64** | 1 | 0.67** | 0.72** |
| Ethical Governance | 0.65** | 0.66** | 0.67** | 1 | 0.75** |
| SDG Achievement | 0.76** | 0.74** | 0.72** | 0.75** | 1 |

With coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.76, the correlation analysis demonstrates that all HR sustainability practices Green HRM, Diversity & Inclusion, Employee Development, and Ethical Governance have robust, favorable, and statistically significant associations with SDG Achievement. This suggests that increased organizational achievement toward SDGs is closely linked to improvements in any HR factor. The two factors that have the strongest relationships with SDG achievement are ethical governance and green human resource management, underscoring their pivotal roles in promoting sustainable results. All things considered, the findings demonstrate that HR procedures collectively and significantly aid in the achievement of SDGs in global corporations.

Table 4. Regression Analysis

| Predictor Variable | Beta (β) | t-value | p-value |
|--|----------|---------|---------|
| Green HRM | 0.30 | 5.10 | 0.001 |
| Diversity & Inclusion | 0.27 | 4.58 | 0.002 |
| Employee Development | 0.22 | 3.89 | 0.020 |
| Ethical Governance | 0.29 | 4.92 | 0.001 |
| R² = 0.78, F = 121.56, p < 0.05 | | | |

Regression analysis shows that the model explains 78% of SDG accomplishment variance, suggesting excellent predictive potential. Green HRM ($\beta = 0.30$) and Ethical Governance ($\beta = 0.29$) were found to be the most significant predictors of SDG results, highlighting the importance of ethical and ecologically responsible HR practices. Diversity & Inclusion and Employee Development also positively impact SDG implementation in multinational organizations, demonstrating that inclusive workplace policies and continual employee

capability-building can help. The results show that HR drives corporate sustainability performance strategically.

Table 5: Objectives, Hypotheses, and Analysis Used

| S. No. | Objectives of the Study | Hypotheses (H0) | Statistical Analysis Used |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 1 | To analyze HR practices related to sustainability adoption in multinational companies. | — | Descriptive Statistics (Mean, SD) |
| 2 | To examine the contribution of Green HRM practices to SDG achievement. | H01: Green HRM practices do not significantly influence SDG achievement. | Pearson Correlation & Multiple Regression |
| 3 | To evaluate the role of Diversity & Inclusion initiatives in supporting SDGs. | H02: Diversity & Inclusion initiatives have no significant effect on SDG implementation. | Pearson Correlation & Multiple Regression |
| 4 | To assess how HR-driven employee development influences SDG implementation. | H03: Employee development does not significantly affect SDG achievement. | Pearson Correlation & Multiple Regression |
| 5 | To identify the role of HR's ethical governance practices in supporting SDGs. | H04: Ethical governance practices have no significant impact on SDG outcomes. | Pearson Correlation & Multiple Regression |

6. CONCLUSION:

The study concludes that HR plays a pivotal role in enabling multinational companies in Chennai to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. HR-driven sustainability practices particularly **Green HRM initiatives and ethical governance systems** are essential for organizational SDG outcomes. Diversity & Inclusion programs and employee development strategies further reinforce SDG adoption by cultivating equitable, empowered, and socially responsible workplaces.

To strengthen SDG achievement, HR departments must move beyond administrative functions to become **strategic sustainability leaders**, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, fairness, and ethical conduct. This transformation will ensure that MNCs contribute meaningfully to global sustainable development targets.

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