

## Green Human Resource Management in Indian Startups: A Sustainability Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

During the past ten years, Indian Startups have expanded across multiple sectors including FinTech, EdTech, HealthTech, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, and sustainable energy. Cities such as Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Hyderabad have emerged as key innovation hubs. The ecosystem has also seen the birth of multiple "unicorns," or companies worth more than a billion dollars, illustrating the growing global competitiveness of Indian entrepreneurial ventures. Sustainability has been a key objective for organizations in recent years, specifically Startups in economically developing countries like India. In order to support long-term organizational results, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) incorporates environmental management into HR policies and procedures. The adoption of Green HRM practices in Indian Startups is studied in this research, along with their effects on organizational sustainability. The adoption of Green HRM practices in Indian Startups is examined in this study, along with their effects on organizational sustainability. The study examines important GHRM aspects such as sustainable hiring, green skill development, green appraisal, and employee green behaviour using a qualitative and analytical method based on secondary sources and new empirical insights. The conclusions indicate that Green HRM has significance to fostering sustainability oriented, boosting the competitive edge of Indian Startups, and increasing environmental performance. By emphasizing on Startups, an under researched but crucial economic sector in India, the study adds to the expanding volume of Green HRM literature

**Keywords:** Green HRM, Indian Startups, Sustainability, Employee Green Behavior, Sustainable HR Practices

### INTRODUCTION:

Over the last decade, India has emerged as one of the world's most rapidly developing Startup ecosystems. The launch of the Startup India initiative in 2016 by the Government of India played a significant role in fostering entrepreneurship by providing regulatory support, funding opportunities, tax incentives, and incubation facilities. According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the number of recognized Startups has increased dramatically over the previous decade, reflecting the country's strong innovation and technology-driven economic climate. Environmental sustainability has become a global concern due to climate change, resource depletion, and increasing regulatory pressures. Businesses in all sectors are expected to match sustainable development objectives with their business plans. In this regard, employee attitudes, actions, and corporate culture regarding environmental responsibility are greatly influenced by Human Resource Management (HRM). Green HRM refers to the role that HR practices play in protecting and preserving natural resources **Prasad (2013)**. **Opatha & Anton Arulrajah (2014)** outlined how G-HRM is converting company workers into green workers in order to solve numerous environmental problems and become

more sustainable. Employees are encouraged to go green by ongoing maintenance tasks as part of G-HRM. Sustainable development through human resource management is the main goal of Green HRM. It has extended the limits of traditional HRM procedures in the direction of more environmentally friendly and sustainable tactics (**Sarode et al., 2016**). According to **Hossain & Rahman (2016)**, green HRM practices include using less paper while performing HR functions such as hiring and selection, training, performance evaluation, zero harmful environment and competitive advantage in hiring. By implementing sustainable practices into human resource policies, green human resource management (GHRM) plays a critical role in advancing sustainability inside enterprises. This strategy encourages a culture of environmental stewardship among staff members in addition to coordinating organizational objectives with environmental strategies. In order to lessen ecological footprints and improve overall sustainability efforts, GHRM includes a number of strategies, including green hiring, training, performance management and awards. Indian Startups constitute a rapidly emerging sector of the economy that makes substantial contributions to economic growth, innovation and job creation. Startups often face limited resources, adaptable organizational structures and changing HR

processes in contrast to huge organizations. The adoption of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) methods is thus presented with both opportunities and obstacles.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Concept of Green Human Resource Management

Green HRM entails creating HR policies that promote environmental sustainability objectives. It encompasses methods like eco-friendly hiring, paperless HR procedures, eco-friendly training and development, eco-friendly performance reviews and eco-friendly reward schemes. Green HRM, according to **Opatha & Arulrajah (2014)**, is the execution of organizational policies, practices and systems that create green workers for the betterment of the individual, team, society, environment and company. Even though different scholars have varied definitions of "green HRM", but their goals for the sustainability of human resources and their surroundings are similar. Green HRM can be defined as the HRM of environmental management (**Renwick et al., 2013**) or as HR practices and policies related to hiring, selection, training, performance management, incentives and environmental protection (**Tang et al., 2018**). In a similar vein, **Kim et al. (2019)** discussed environmental policy communication, training, empowerment and incentives aimed at boosting environmental responsibility. According to research done among Polish businesses, green human resource management (HRM) fosters pro-ecological attitudes and plays a critical role in environmental sustainability by raising employees' awareness of green competencies and stressing environmental education related to their job positions (**Wielewska et al., 2023**). Green HRM encourages eco-friendly business operations by incorporating environmental sustainability into HR regulations (**Zournatzidou et al., 2024**). It encourages businesses to implement sustainable growth plans that support environmental preservation and a bright future, which is in line with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

### 2.2 Green HRM and Organizational Sustainability

By incorporating digital technologies, employee green behaviors and green careers, green human resource management (GHRM) practices greatly improve Organizational Sustainable Performance (OSP) while cultivating a sustainable culture that is in line with strategic goals across economic, social and environmental dimensions (**Haque & Ali, 2024**). According to prior research, Green HRM has a favorable impact on corporate reputation, employee engagement and environmental performance. Organizations can gain a competitive edge and long-term sustainability by promoting pro-environmental behavior among their workforce.

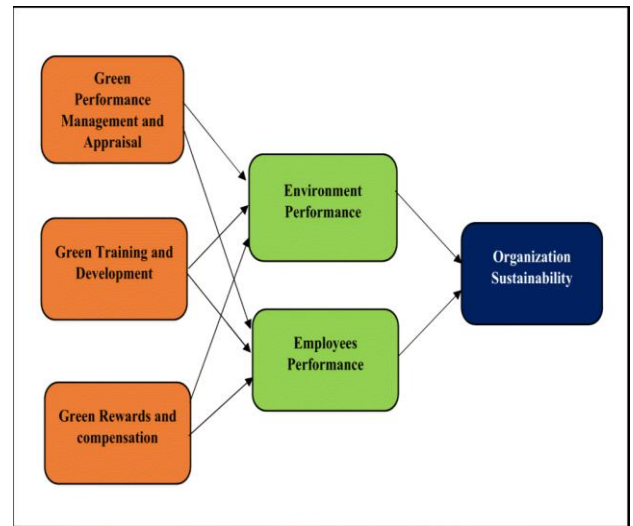


Figure 1.1: Green HRM and Organizational Sustainability

Source: Amjad, F. et al (2021)

### 2.3 Green HRM in Emerging Economies

Green HRM has acquired increased academic and operational attention due to rapid economic growth, ecological degradation and growing pressure from governments, global markets and stakeholders to embrace sustainable corporate practices. **Ahmad (2015)** observed that Indian corporations are becoming more conscious of the need to go green and implement different environmental management strategies. The paper provides the simple definition of Green HRM and focuses on the many Green HRM approaches that firms pursue. In order to get a competitive edge in this fast-paced business environment, organizations all around the world are integrating and striving to implement Green HRM. Green HRM adoption is still in its infancy in developing nations like India. Green HRM adoption is inconsistent since Startups frequently lack organized HR systems, but large firms have started embracing sustainability-driven HR practices. Businesses are switching to resource-efficient building methods that reduce adverse environmental effects. Utilizing solar energy, recycled materials, appropriate sewage, conserving water, etc. Additionally, businesses are moving toward a paperless workplace these days.

### 3. Research Gap

Many researchers have studied how sustainable business practices affect environmental performance. The majority of the material that is now available, however, concentrates on traditional sectors and big multinational corporations. Startups have received little attention, especially in developing nations like India. Furthermore, little research has been done on incorporating Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) techniques into Startup sustainability plans. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate GHRM-aligned practices and sustainability goals across a subset of Indian Startups in various industries.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the concept and dimensions of Green HRM in Indian Startups.
2. To analyze the role of Green HRM practices in promoting organizational sustainability.
3. To identify challenges faced by Indian Startups in implementing Green HRM practices.
4. To suggest strategies for effective adoption of Green HRM practices.

## 5. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data. Academic papers, research articles, books, sustainability reports and reliable internet sites about Green HRM and Startup sustainability were the sources of the data. In order to establish a conceptual understanding of Green HRM practices in Indian Startups, the analysis focuses on synthesizing existing literature.

## 6. Green HRM Practices in Indian Startups

### 6.1 Green Recruitment and Selection

**Dhawan, S. (2019)** In today's digitalized world, green recruiting, also known as e-recruitment, has grown in popularity. In addition to being the least expensive method of recruiting employees, it also saves an immense quantity of paper and energy, which promotes environmental sustainability. It minimizes pollution and energy consumption brought on by the production, transportation, and recycling of paper goods. This idea was established by organizations that prioritize environmental protection while achieving their objectives. Green recruitment uses less paper and has less of an environmental impact. The goal is to hire the best people at the lowest possible cost by utilizing technology and other web-based resources. virtual interviews, telephone interviews, resume scanning, job portals, and the usage of other e-recruiting technologies are some methods for implementing green recruitment. Even Startups use green hiring practices because they recognize how important it is to align company objectives with environmental sustainability. Online interviews, digital recruitment platforms, and paperless documentation are becoming more and more common among Indian businesses. Prioritizing the hiring of eco-aware workers contributes to the early integration of sustainability into company culture.

### 6.2 Green Training and Development

Green training and development teaches employees how to operate in ways that minimize waste, make good use of resources, conserve energy and lessen the causes of environmental deterioration. It also gives employees the chance to participate in solving environmental problems

(**Zoogah 2011**). The study conducted by **Perron et al. (2006)** used a numerous case study approach to identify the function that green training and development trains have in generating company value. Startups offer online courses and awareness campaigns about sustainable work methods, trash minimization, and energy conservation. These programs improve workers' awareness of and responsibility for the environment.

### 6.3 Green Performance Management

According to **Jabbour and Santos (2008)**, green performance management is crucial to the success of green management initiatives over time because it directs employee performance toward the environmental performance requirements of the company. In their study, **Mandip (2012)** found that the connection between performance management and green job descriptions is a viable strategy for implementing green performance management. Some firms encourage eco-friendly efforts and innovation in order to integrate sustainability goals with employee success, even if official rating mechanisms are frequently lacking.

### 6.4 Green Rewards and Recognition

Another potentially effective method for promoting environmental management initiatives that could aid in the pursuit of environmental objectives is green compensation and reward (**Milliman & Clair, 1996**). **Ramus (2002)** investigated how employee behavior and attitude were influenced by rewards. Sustainable behavior is frequently encouraged by non-monetary incentives like acknowledgment for green achievements, flexible work schedules, and remote work opportunities.

## 7. Sustainable Startups with GHRM Elements: Evidences from India

The emergence of sustainable Startups has been a revolutionary trend in the entrepreneurial environment in recent years. Driven by an increasing awareness of environmental issues around the world, these entrepreneurs are developing cutting-edge solutions that put ecological sustainability and commercial success first. The causes driving the growth of sustainable Startups and their contribution to the development of a more ecologically conscious business environment are examined in this section.

Several Startups integrate Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) elements into their core business strategies to promote environmental sustainability and social responsibility. These elements often include eco-friendly practices across HR functions like recruitment, training, and employee well-being. The following Table 1.1 presents the Indian Startups in a sector-wise and the GHRM elements they incorporate:

**Table 1.1: Sector-wise Classification of Indian Startups and Green HRM Indicators**

Sr. No.	Sector	Startup Name	Core Mission	Sustainability	Green HRM-Aligned Practices / Indicators
1.	FinTech/Lending	Rupeek	Enhance financial integration by decreasing dependency on conventional banking procedures through digital gold loans.		Paperless documentation, virtual employee orientation, flexible scheduling options that lower transport carbon footprints, and personnel sustainability awareness training.
2.	EdTech (Education Technology)	Cuemath	Reduce reliance on physical learning resources by offering accessible, technologically advanced math instruction worldwide.		Work-from-home educational paradigm, virtual classrooms avoiding physical infrastructure, green office techniques and employee education on digital resource preservation.
3.	FinTech / Crypto & Digital Assets	CoinSwitch	Encourage effective digital financial systems with no physical infrastructure and streamline cryptocurrency investment.		guidelines that emphasize remote work, paperless HR procedures, energy-efficient workplace processes, and a culture of transparency regarding sustainability.
4.	Health-tech	Pristyn Care	Increase access to healthcare through hospital collaborations and tech-enabled procedures.		Green hospital collaborations, staff education on sustainable healthcare practices, teleconsultation that reduces travel, and digital record keeping for patients.
5.	FinTech / Financial Data Analytics	Perfios	To cut down on traditional paper work and increase financial transparency, enable digital financial data analysis.		Digital employee on-boarding, sustainability awareness initiatives, paperless HR systems and effective use of IT infrastructure.
6.	Fashion / Supply Chain Tech	Fashinza	Promote ethical manufacturing and transparent, sustainable fashion supply networks.		Sustainability audits of suppliers, trustworthy sourcing training for staff, ethical labor compliance evaluations, diversity and responsible procurement policies.
7.	Rental Economy/ Consumer Services	Rentomojo	Encourage a circular economy by making it possible to rent appliances and furniture rather than buy them.		Employee participation in waste reduction techniques, training on sustainable consumption models, green workplace regulations, and circular economy activities.
8.	Mobility & Transportation	Ola (Ola Electric)	Promote electric mobility and reduce carbon emissions through EV adoption		ESG and CSR policies; employee engagement in clean mobility vision; training on EV technology; sustainability-driven employer branding

		<b>Rapido</b>	Reduce traffic congestion and emissions through bike-based mobility solutions	Promotion of fuel-efficient transport; rider awareness on Eco-driving and safety; operational efficiency training
9.	<b>Food &amp; Delivery</b>	<b>Zomato</b>	Reduce food delivery environmental impact and promote sustainable packaging	Plastic-Free Future initiative; CSR policy focused on sustainability; employee and partner awareness programs; waste reduction practices
		<b>Swiggy</b>	Improve delivery efficiency while minimizing environmental footprint	Eco-packaging initiatives; EV pilot programs for delivery; training on safety and responsible operations
10.	<b>E-Commerce Marketplaces &amp;</b>	<b>Meesho</b>	Enable digital commerce and inclusive entrepreneurship with minimal physical infrastructure	Ethical and inclusive HR practices; diversity hiring; indirect sustainability via digital marketplace model
		<b>Flipkart</b>	Build a sustainable e-commerce ecosystem through green logistics	Green packaging initiatives; supply chain emission reduction; ESG-linked HR policies; employee participation in CSR programs
11.	<b>Circular Economy &amp; E-Waste Management</b>	<b>Banyan Nation</b>	Promote circular economy by recycling plastic waste into reusable raw materials	Sustainability-centric job roles; employee training in recycling processes; environmental compliance and safety practices
		<b>Phool</b>	Up-cycle temple floral waste into eco-friendly consumer products	Green job creation; training in waste up-cycling; women empowerment through sustainable employment
12.	<b>Renewable Energy Solutions</b>	<b>ReNew Power</b>	Accelerate India's transition to renewable energy (solar & wind)	ESG-driven HR framework; employee skill development in renewables; sustainability performance alignment
		<b>Hero Future Energies</b>	Develop clean energy solutions for long-term environmental sustainability	Training in clean energy technologies; environmental compliance culture; green workplace standards

(Source: Researchers' Compilation from Literature Review)

### 8. Role of Green HRM in Startup Sustainability

There are various ways that green HRM supports Startup sustainability:

- a) Lowers operating expenses by making effective use of resources.
- b) Improves talent attraction and employer branding.

- c) Increases organizational commitment and employee engagement.
- d) Encourages conformity to environmental laws.
- e) Creates an ongoing competitive edge.

### 9. Challenges in Implementing Green HRM in Indian Startups

Despite the benefits it offers, Indian entrepreneurs encounter a number of difficulties:

- a) Limited resources, including financial as well as human.
- b) Insufficient knowledge and proficiency in sustainable approaches.
- c) The lack of official HR policies.
- d) Priorities for short-term survival of the organization.
- e) Employee resistance to change.

#### 10. Suggestions for Effective Implementation

The following strategies will aid in effective implementation of Indian Startups:

- a) Integrate sustainability goals into HR strategy from inception
- b) Offer initiatives for green awareness and training.
- c) Promote leadership dedication to environmental projects.
- d) Make use of technology to facilitate remote and paperless HR procedures.
- e) Create straightforward green performance metrics that are appropriate for Startups.

#### 11. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in promoting sustainability within Indian Startups. As global environmental concerns and sustainability expectations rise, Startups are under increasing pressure to incorporate environmentally responsible practices into their business models and organizational procedures. According to the analysis, GHRM practices such as green recruitment, green training and development, green performance management, and environmentally oriented reward systems play an important role in encouraging pro-environmental behavior among employees and strengthening organizational sustainability.

Startups may build staffs that actively contribute to environmental responsibility and long-term growth by incorporating environmental ideals into HR policies and procedures. Previous research has shown that GHRM

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motivates employees to adopt environmentally friendly work behaviors and enhances overall environmental performance within firms (Renwick, Redman & Maguire, 2013). Furthermore, implementing GHRM principles can improve an organization's reputation, employee engagement and long-term competitiveness. Sustainable HR practices improve not just environmental performance but also economic and social consequences, hence supporting the triple bottom line idea in organizational sustainability (Jackson et al., 2011). Adopting Green HRM practices can be a strategic way to accomplishing sustainable development goals for Indian Startups working in a competitive and dynamic environment.

However, the study also identifies several challenges faced by Startups in implementing Green HRM, including limited resources, lack of awareness and the absence of formal HR structures. Despite these limits, firms can gradually embrace green practices by using digital technology, raising staff knowledge and integrating sustainability activities into corporate strategy. Overall, the findings suggest that Green HRM can act as an important driver of sustainable organizational performance in the Startup ecosystem of India.

#### 12. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The outcomes of this study indicate that Indian Startups can enhance sustainability by incorporating Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices into their organizational strategies. Startup founders and HR managers should prioritize green recruitment, environmental training, and aligning sustainability objectives with employee performance and rewards. The adoption of digital HR systems and paperless processes can help to promote environmentally friendly workplace practices. Startups can improve their corporate reputation, employee engagement and long-term sustainable growth by encouraging employee participation in environmental activities and incorporating sustainability into HR policy (Ahmad, 2015; Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013)....

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