

Green Human Resource Management for Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study

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Abstract: *Environmental sustainability is such a momentous issue that it has already drawn attention of academicians and management disciples. As a part of the environment, organizations should ensure environmental sustainability through its Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. Green HRM is mandatory in this regard as it helps to integrate the environmental management into HRM of an organization to ensure environmental sustainability. This paper aims at discussing the green HRM practices along with its sustainable goals based on accessible literature on green HRM and environmental sustainability and also providing a conceptual framework of the relationship between them. The paper also explores the green initiatives and role of HR of Plummy Fashions Limited which is the first eco-friendly knitwear factory of Bangladesh approved by US Green Building Council(USGBC)in the form of a case study. For this, two HR personnel were interviewed to collect relevant data. The case study shows that Plummy Fashion Limited is very much concerned about the environmental issues. Though the HR of this organization is adopting many environment friendly policies, it can introduce some more proactive green HR practices for making its sustainable programs perdurable.*

Keywords: *Environmental management, Sustainability, Green HRM.*

1. Introduction

Sustainability is defined as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. So, sustainable development is termed as a balance maker among profit, planet and people. In the context of business, sustainability means a lingering resolution by business organizations to create new job opportunities along with generating economic wealth into the near future (Deshwal, 2015). A sustainable organization is very much concerned about the economic, social, and environmental benefits. With the passage of time more and more organizations are trying to incline toward the environmental sustainability as natural resources are depleting day by day. Scientists and

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environmentalists are highly stressing on maintaining ecological balance as the excess emission of carbons, global warming and pollution will threaten the existence of human beings on earth. Natural calamities like earthquakes, frequent floods and vanishing of certain species and animals are the consequences of ecological imbalance. Going green in every aspect of life is now the want of time. Organizations have already started to realize the need for a green sense of responsibility to save the environment. So, the term Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) is gaining popularity among business organizations as the HR functions will become the driver of environmental sustainability.

According to Renwick et al., (2008), green HRM is the integration of corporate environmental management into human resource management. It involves undertaking such HR activities that are environment friendly and will further lead to greater effectiveness, cost reduction and better employee engagement and retention. Some green HR initiatives like electronic filing, car-sharing, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, tele-commuting, online training, energy efficient office space etc. help the organization to reduce carbon footprints (Mandip, 2012). Green HR also helps the organization to reduce unnecessary wastage of papers and proper application of green human resource policies such as green planning, green recruiting & selecting, green employee management and green employee relations. It provides the shade of green in the workplace which is necessary for sustainable development.

Though the term 'Green HRM' is gaining popularity among managers, employees, customers and other stakeholders, very few research studies link the green HRM process with environmental sustainability. So, there is a growing need to show the real life sustainable initiatives and the role of HR of that organization for maintaining it. The present study is aimed at providing a clear understanding of the green HRM practices and its impact on environmental sustainability along with a real life example in the form of a case study.

2. Rationale of the Study

Environmental sustainability issues have become an integral part of an organization as business entities are also a part of our society. So, HR practitioners and academicians are always trying to achieve sustainability through implementing green HR practices. This study will help HR professionals through providing a clear conception of green HR practices. It will also provide a guideline to the employers and HR managers regarding the usage of green HR practices for ensuring environmental sustainability along with the well-being of its employees. Finally, this study will help future researchers by revealing additional information regarding the sustainable

initiatives and role of HR of an organization for maintaining environmental sustainability.

3. Literature Review

Green HRM refers to all those activities that ensure sustainability through increased employee awareness and commitment. Green HRM tries to convert general employees into green employees to achieve long term environmental goal along with greater contribution to the environment. It involves all environment- friendly HR initiatives that lead to increased efficiency and employee engagement, retention, lowering costs, conserving energy and reducing carbon emissions to the environment. For this, each and every HR function is needed to be green and integrated with the overall organization goal for ensuring environmental sustainability.

3.1 Green Job Design and Analysis

Nowadays environmental management issue has become so significant that many organizations are creating environment friendly jobs to ensure environmental sustainability (Arulrajah et al., 2015). Environmental, social, personal, and technical requirements of the organizations can be included in the job descriptions and job specifications. For example, environmental reporting roles, health and safety tasks and environmental protection duties can be included in the job descriptions (Wehrmeyer, 1996; North, 1997; Revill, 2000). Many organizations use teamwork and cross-functional teams as job design techniques to successfully manage the environmental issues (May and Flannery, 1995; Florida, 1996; Clement, 1997; Beard and Rees, 2000). Again, Green competency can be a special component of job description (Opatha, 2013).

3.2 Green Human Resource Planning

In order to introduce environmental issues in the corporate culture, specific set of skills and expertness are needed (Arulrajah et al., 2015). Green human resource planning is required in this regard. New environment friendly strategies can also be taken to meet the forecasted demand by an organization. For example: ISO 14001, cleaner production, responsible care, environmental audits etc. are some of the good practices which are already being adopted by some leading organizations to meet their environmental goals.

3.3 Green Recruitment

Green HRM can be ensured through integrating the recruitment policy and corporate environmental policy of the organization. A survey by the British Carbon Trust ensured that more than 75% employees stressed on implementing an active

environmental policy to reduce carbon emissions (Clarke, 2006). Firms are trying to attract new talents through gaining a reputation of being a green employer (Phillips, 2007; Stringer, 2009). Now-a-days, many organizations are adding environmental criteria and expressing their preference to recruit environment conscious employees in their recruitment messages (Opatha, 2013). High achieving potential employees also take the environmental activities and reputation of the organization into consideration while taking decisions regarding applying for job vacancies (Wehrmeyer, 1996; Oates, 1996).

3.4 Green Selection

For maintaining environmental sustainability, 'environmental concern and interest' can be one of the selection criteria while taking selection decision for vacant posts. Environment related questions can be asked in the interview board while interviewing candidates (Crosbie and Knight, 1995; Wehrmeyer, 1996; North, 1997; Revill, 2000). Some organizations are trying to select candidates who are sufficiently aware of the term 'Green HRM' and who are involved in greening as consumers in their private lives (Opatha, 2013).

3.5 Green Induction

Induction process is used by the organizations to ensure the well understanding and conformity of new employees in the new corporate culture (Wehrmeyer, 1996). Green induction can be achieved in two ways: general green induction and job specific green induction. In general green induction process, the organizations provide necessary basic information about the corporate environmental management policy, system and practices to the selected candidates (Renwick et al, 2013). Some organizations prefer job specific green induction where new employees are provided with environment orientation programs specific to their jobs (North, 1997). Both processes are very necessary for making new employees understand their environmental responsibilities, health and safety arrangements, the corporate environmental culture and the company's environmental policy and practices (Crosbie and Knight, 1995).

3.6 Green Performance Evaluation

Green performance evaluation is very necessary for ensuring realistic environmental performance in the long run. It can be done separately or can be aligned with the existing performance evaluation system of the organization. Many organizations have already established Environmental Management Information Systems (EMIS) and environmental audits in their organizations for ensuring green HRM practices. For example: Tata Group of Companies have installed corporation-wide environmental performance standards covering on-site use, waste management, environmental audits

and the reduction of waste to measure environmental performance standards and to develop green information systems. It also performs environmental audits in order to gain useful data on managerial environmental performance (Mandip, 2012).

3.7 Green Training and Development

Appropriate environmental training is necessary to develop required skills and knowledge of employees for the proper functioning of corporate environmental management programs of the company (Cook and Seith, 1992). Environmental education, seminars and workshops are very helpful for increasing awareness among the employees to achieve environmental goals (North, 1997). Some good green training and development practices are: training staff to produce green analysis of workspace, job rotation to train future green managers, specific training on environmental management aspects of safety, energy efficiency, waste management and recycling, development of green personal skills, and re-training of staffs losing jobs in relevant polluter industries (Renwick et al. 2008 and 2013).

3.8 Green Reward Management

Green reward management significantly increases the level of motivation of managerial and non-managerial employees. Green rewards can be both monetary and non-monetary. Monetary rewards are: incentives, bonuses, cash etc. and Non-monetary rewards are awards, special recognitions, honors, prizes etc. Both of the rewards are given for the good environmental performance of employees. Some organizations have already added environmental criteria into salary reviews and successfully rewarded extraordinary environmental performance (Crosbie and Knight, 1995). Some other company specific green reward practices are: pollution prevention pays (3M), waste reduction always pays (Dow), priority one (Monsanto) and save money and reduce toxics (Chevron) (Berry and Randinelli, 1998).

3.9 Green Health and Safety Management

Green health and safety management is so important for an organization that now-a-days many organizations are creating a new post named 'Health, Safety and Environment Manager'. The main purpose of green health and safety management is to provide an environment sensitive, resource efficient and socially responsible workplace for all workers. Organizations can create green factor or green zone to ensure health and safety of employees. Organizations that adopted proactive stance (3M, DuPont, Allied, Signal, Amoco, and Monsanto) in environmental management have found that management of environment is necessary for improving the health of employees and local communities which in turn enhances the image of the organization as a desirable employer and corporate citizen (Ditz et al., 1995).

3.10 Green Employee Discipline Management

Green discipline management ensures green employee behaviour which is compulsory for achieving environmental as well as organizational management objectives and strategies. 'Discipline management' assures self-regulation of the workforce for protecting the environment against the activities of their organization. Recently, some organizations have designed specific set of rules and regulations that will help employees to be aware of the environmental protection. Hence, if these rules and regulations are despised by any employees, s/he will be subject to disciplinary actions like warning, fining, suspension etc. (Renwick et al., 2008). If the rules despised are not significant then progressive disciplinary actions can be undertaken as the punishment of that employee (Opatha, 2013).

3.11 Green Employee Relations

While practicing green HRM, employee relations and union pressure may resist the implementation of environmental management activities. Encouraging employee involvement and participation in green schemes, problem solving, generating and maintaining ideas green and maintenance can remove the problem of resistance (Renwick et al., 2008 & 2013). Employee participation is also seen as a strong tool to impede pollution from the workplace (Phillips, 2007). Again, increasing supervisory support, union-management negotiation, training of union representatives, introducing green whistle-blowing and help-lines can be helpful for maintaining good relationship with the employees' union. Some organizations are trying to build green habits like flexible work weeks, car pool-program, free or discounted transportation passes and car sharing within their employees (Mandip, 2012).

3.2 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a responsive interaction with the environment with a view to conserving natural resources through developing alternative sources of power and reducing pollution or any negative impact for the long term environmental quality. Nature has a remarkable rejuvenation ability to care for itself when it is left alone. But when human being take an entry and use natural resources, things start to change. Human actions deplete natural resources and increase pollution which in turn creates ecological imbalances. Environmental sustainability is necessary for the sustainability of human being. It focuses on two aspects of environmental damage: mitigation which means reducing the harm to natural resources and adaptation that acknowledges the projected harms and implement strategies for better outcomes. As a part and benefactor of the environment, organizations should be more alert while using new technology to minimize environmental destruction and try to make products that creates less pollution or harm to nature. (Liu, 2010; Ozen and Kusku, 2008). For

ensuring environmental sustainability, an organization needs not only technical and scientific factors but also human element. Human resources play the key role in the success or failure of an organization's efforts towards environmental sustainability. Organizations' basic functioning require daily use of a lot of paper, plastic, envelope and ink toner and so on. It is very difficult for an organization to minimize the use of these consumables as they are a part of basic operation regardless of how eco-friendly it is. But for ensuring environmental sustainability it can take some environment friendly measures like minimum use of paper and printed materials, e-recruiting, reduced carbon footprints, increased recycling, use of tele and video conferencing, cleanliness and waste management, green job agenda and green reward to employees (Prasad, 2013). Green commuting habits, green whistle-blowing, green targets and green behavior indicators are also necessary to maintain environmental sustainability (Mandip, 2012). Therefore, environment friendly HR processes can ensure better efficiency, minimize costs and encourage employees' participation to help the organization run in an environment friendly and sustainable manner.

4. Objectives of the Study

This paper has two objectives:

- i. to depict a conceptual framework of green HRM that leads to environmental sustainability; and
- ii. to examine the sustainable initiatives and the role of HR of Plummy Fashions Limited, Bangladesh as a case study.

5. Research Methodology

This is basically a qualitative study that uses both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected through interviewing key HR personnel of Plummy Fashions Limited, Bangladesh. Secondary data have been collected from comprehensive literature and other published materials, i.e. books, journals, research papers, websites and newspaper articles (internet based) to develop a solid theoretical foundation based on empirical evidence.

According to the US Green Building Council (USGBC), a total of 67 Bangladeshi RMG factories have received 'Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)' certification which is one of the top green building rating systems in the world (Source: Dhaka Tribune, 30/05/2017). Among them, Plummy Fashions Ltd, Bangladesh has scored 92 out of 110 in USGBC's knitting category and is currently the greenest knitting firm in the world (Source: Dhaka Tribune, 30/05/2017). So, the sustainable initiatives and role of HR of this organization has taken as a case for the purpose of this paper. The HR Manager and Assistant HR Manager of Plummy

Fashions Limited were interviewed using an unstructured questionnaire. Respondents were holding key positions in the HR departments that make the case study more representative and informative. The sampling was purposive with an aim to get insightful response.

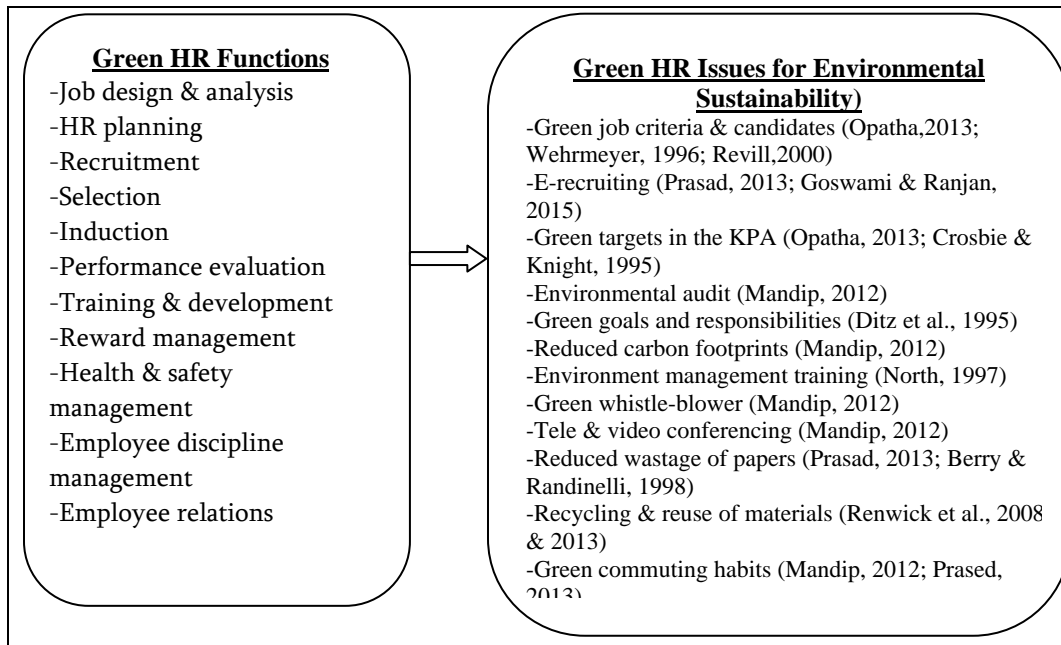
The case study method was used as it helps to investigate an entire organization with all details that are necessary to carefully study the research problem and relate it to the activities of that organization (Zikmund, 2010). Here, the case study method helped the researchers to gather in depth knowledge regarding the sustainable initiatives undertaken by PFL and the role of HR department for making it green

6. Analysis and Findings

6.1 Green HRM for Environmental Sustainability

Green HRM is the set of activities (HR planning, recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal, employee relations, pay and reward etc.) that direct an organization's human resources toward achieving organizational goals through environmental sustainability. The role of HR in maintaining environmental sustainability is two- folded: management of employees for achieving corporate goals and ensuring sustainability through all their activities. On the basis of our discussion we can propose a conceptual framework of green HRM for environmental sustainability.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Developed by the Authors

6.2 Case Study: Sustainable Initiatives and the Role of HR of Plummy Fashions Limited, Bangladesh

Plummy Fashions Limited (PFL) is one of the greenest factories in the textile world which was established in 2009 and situated in Narayanganj, Bangladesh. It is 20 kilometers south from the Dhaka city covering about five and a half acres of land. Currently, 1500 employees are working in the PFL among which majority of the employees are women. It produces about 1 million pieces of t-shirts and polo shirts for boys and girls monthly. It exports garment items that worth almost 3 million US dollars. As the world's first eco-friendly knitwear factory, PFL has got US Green Building Council's (USGBC) 'Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum' certification in 2015 for scoring 92 out of 110 points. It has also got 'National Award on Environment, 2016' which is the highest award in environment in Bangladesh. Top buyers of PFL are: Next, Lidl, Zara, Aldi, Falabella, Family Dollar and Mango.

6.2.1 Sustainable initiatives at PFL

The most attractive green feature of PFL is the award winning designed buildings with very big serene gardens. Trees are neatly planted all around the premises. A natural lake is located inside the factory premise that not only maintains a balanced eco-system but also provides a feeling of diversion and peace. It has a leading natural water management system for re-cycling and re-using both rainwater and surface water. PFL has installed Chloro Fluro Carbons (CFCs) free cooling systems, carbon-di-oxide (CO₂) monitoring system and low energy plant minimizing the company's carbon footprint. It has also installed efficient water fixtures, LED lighting and the largest solar energy plant in Bangladesh. The most modern machineries are there to control sound pollution as well as CO₂ emissions. PFL has its own Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) that purifies industrial waste water which in turn is provided to the employees as drinking water. PFL's LEED scorecard describes how environment friendly and green it is.

Table 1: LEED Facts and Scores of PFL by USGBC

| LEED Facts | Scores (92/110) |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sustainable Sites | 25/26 |
| Water Efficiency | 10/10 |
| Energy & Atmosphere | 31/35 |
| Material & Resources | 7/14 |
| Indoor Environmental Quality | 10/15 |
| Innovation | 5/6 |
| Regional Priority Credits | 4/4 |

6.2.2 Sustainable site

PFL is uniquely designed where more than 50% of its land areas have been retained as free space that exceeds the requirement of USGBC. It also strictly follows the core standards and guidelines for structural design and management provided by USGBC. There are separate buildings for cutting, sewing, knitting, dyeing and administration. The steel structured building has a lawn surrounding the floors with a total of 11 exits and five stairs with handrails that greatly satisfies The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2015 (Amended). All the essential facilities and amenities are located within 500 meters including market, school, mosque and bus stops. It has also housing for workers, child care and health care, training facilities, prayer room, dining for 500 workers, indoor games centre with satellite TV and electricity-efficient auto-cleaning knit machines. The site provides secure bicycle parking facilities and encourages the use of non-fossil fuel transport.

6.2.3 Reducing the carbon footprint

PFL has strong policies for using its resources more efficiently by reducing CO₂ emissions and creating an ecologically friendly office environment. It has installed CO₂ sensor to monitor the level of CO₂ in the occupied areas. Depending on this CO₂ level, the feedback from the sensors triggers fans to regulate fresh air in the workplace. It has also installed CFCs free refrigerants for chillers, air conditioning and insulation that will help to reduce the depletion of ozone layer. According to the report of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), PFL is 35% efficient in terms of carbon emission.

6.2.4 Water conservation

PFL has auto sensor urinals, dual flush water closets and faucets with a low flow rate of 1.5 litre/minute to comply with US Energy Policy Act (US-EPA) and ISO14001. It has reduced irrigation water demand by 80%. The landscaping includes drought resistant and locally adapted plant species which do not require regular irrigation. If limited irrigation is required the need is met using recycled non-potable rainwater. Its six reservoirs store around six lakh litres of rainwater. The installed water fixtures economize water consumption by up to 60%. The system allows only 1.5 litres of water for use per minute, instead of 6 to 8 litres under the traditional system. It has installed such facilities that reduce the use of potable landscape water by 100%, baseline indoor water by 40% and minimize waste water generation by 50%.

6.2.5 Conservation of energy

In order to meet and exceed natural energy requirement, PFL has constructed one of the largest solar energy plant in Bangladesh. The 65kw solar panels which have been

set up on the rooftop of the factory provide 13% of the plant's total power requirement of 500kw. It has installed machines with very low energy servo motors to reduce power consumption by 50% over conventional factories. State of the art LED lights further reduce the energy demand by 80%. The factory has designed the windows and louvers in a way to use maximum daylight. Moreover, 44 signature series prismatic dome skylights by Sun optics, USA have been installed for ambient lighting during the day time. No light is directed to the night sky to reduce light pollution. The exterior lighting is automatically controlled to turn off during non-business hours. It has designed the windows and louvers in such a way so that it can use the maximum daylight, a move that helps to save 70kw power on a sunny day.

6.2.6 Environmental quality management

Employees of PFL work in a neat and clean environment within 28 degree celsius temperature under complete air conditioning. The reduction in waste heat further reduces the load on cooling system which helps to maintain quality environment in the workplace. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood and low volatile organic compound (VOC) paints are used by PFL to minimize the impact on the environment. More than 20% of local materials are used for construction to support the local economy and to reduce the environmental impact resulting from transportation.

6.2.7 Recycling and Reuse

PFL has reduced the use of paper by 44% while increasing the use of recyclable stationeries. It has natural water management system for re-cycling and reusing both surface and rainwater. Every drop of water that enters into the factory site is carefully controlled. The rainwater management plant prevents rainwater from leaving the site. Rain water is collected in a harvesting tank and re-cycled for toilet flushing and irrigation purposes.

6.2.8 The Role of HR of PFL

PFL has a strong HR team who work in collaboration with a highly qualified, experienced and professional management team for ensuring the environmental sustainability. The management team ensures the collaboration of green HR initiatives with the overall strategy of the organization. The HR of PFL tries to recruit officials having clear conception of green HR and environmental sustainability. The environmental criteria have been included in PFL's staff appraising process. It has also a compliance manager having profound knowledge on local and international environmental issues who provides environmental training to the new employees. The HR is also responsible for providing training on health, sanitation, fire safety, labor laws, electricity and ergonomics for ensuring safety of workers along with high

quality production. The HR has made the hazard awareness training and the correct use of safety equipment training mandatory for all staff. It has trained a dedicated fire fighting unit for first response in the event of any incident. Employees are encouraged to use bicycle to reduce emission of carbons in the nature. As a part of green health and safety program, the HR has also introduced a lifestyle centre for employees which is a zero carbon emission building designed under USGBC rules. HR of PFL is responsible for the proper maintenance of this lifestyle centre. A committee has been formed by the HR to monitor overall activities of the factory. The committee is timely trained by the HR to help employees to maintain and preserve sustainable initiatives undertaken by PFL.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

For assuring significant contribution in several areas like conservation of energy, reduction in water use, protecting environment from carbon footprint and maintaining ecological balance; PFL has already been awarded with many national and international awards. The most prestigious 'LEED Certificate' from USGBC, 'Green Office Certificate' from WWF and 'National Award on Environment' from the government of Bangladesh are some testimonies to these green efforts and achievements. It has also been recognized as the world's first eco-friendly knitwear factory.

The concept of green firms is new to Bangladesh. But within a short time, many green firms have been established throughout the country. PFL's green initiatives are very appreciating. But still it can take some more measures to maintain and preserve its sustainable initiatives. It can introduce environmental audits in their organizations for ensuring green HRM practices. It can also encourage involvement and participation of employees in green schemes, problem solving and generating green ideas to reduce carbon emissions and save energy. Green reward management programs can be introduced. Monetary or non-monetary rewards can be given for the good environmental performance of employees. PFL should be more strict while providing and implementing rules and regulations. Disciplinary actions like warning, fining, suspension, etc. can be imposed if necessary. It can also introduce green whistle-blowing and help-lines for maintaining good relationship with the employees.

Green HRM is a very desirous issue to all the stakeholders of HRM. The practitioners and employers can have a profound impact on linking green HRM with the environmentally sustainable programs like waste management, reducing CFC, recycling and reuse. They can encourage the participation of employees and unions to implement those combined organizational and environmental strategy to safeguard employees' health and well-being. Further research can be conducted by the

academicians in this area covering additional data on the knowledge base and practical implications of green HRM practices for environmental sustainability.

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