



FACULTY OF
MANAGEMENT & FINANCE
UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO

**Colombo
Business
Journal**

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
THEORY & PRACTICE
Vol. 10, No. 02, December, 2019

Book Review

Renwick, D. W. S. (Ed.), Contemporary Developments in Green Human Resource Management: Towards Sustainability in Action? 2018, Routledge, Pages: 220, Price: USD 134 (LKR 24,300, Approx.) (hbk); USD 53 (LKR 9,600, Approx.) (ebk), ISBN: 978-1-138-78285-3 (hbk); 978-1-315-76895-3 (ebk)


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Suggested citation: Priyankara, H. P. R. (2019). [Review of the book *Contemporary developments in green human resource management: Towards sustainability in action?* by D. W. S. Renwick (Ed.)]. *Colombo Business Journal*. (10)2, 149-154

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.4038/cbj.v10i2.54>

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Introduction

The unprecedented environmental damage caused by human activities in the history of humankind has resulted in the global climate change crisis, which has threatened the existence of humans and other species. In this backdrop, the external pressure from a variety of stakeholders and the internal motive of meeting economic ends through greening, force organisations to adopt Environmental Sustainability (ES). In the context of corporate ES, can Human Resource Management (HRM) support corporate greening and make positive contributions to the planet, society, organisations, and individuals? Fulfilling the need of the hour, ‘Contemporary Developments in Green Human Resource Management: Towards Sustainability in

Action?’ explores different perspectives on how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), the emerging branch of HRM, fosters ES in the work sphere.

This book, edited by Douglas W. S. Renwick, an eminent writer in GHRM, is a collection of ten (10) chapters which includes seven (07) conceptual and three (03) empirical research-based chapters with the contribution of twenty-one (21) reputed contemporary GRHM scholars, which provide new perspectives on the emerging field of GHRM. The chapters are organised using a multilevel framework that contains micro, meso, and macro-level topics in GHRM. Apart from Chapter one, the other chapters have been arranged under two thematic areas: 1) Internal and external organizational GHRM initiatives and 2) Contextualizing GHRM-from GHRM to Sustainability. The edited volume is exciting to read since the chapters have been clearly articulated and logically organised with thought-provoking insights. Sustainable policymakers, HRM practitioners, and HRM researchers will equally benefit from this book since each chapter of the book provides informative and theoretically rich content on the current status and prospects of the selected areas in GHRM.

Contents in Brief

Chapter 1 by Renwick discusses the current theory and practice of GHRM and provides novel research avenues in GHRM. It builds on configuring damages to the external ecological environment and the inevitable nature of ES. The author argues the potential indirect contribution of GHRM in facing the climate change crisis through the promotion of Employee Green Behaviours (EGB). In addition, the writer draws attention to the theoretical lenses, including the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory, the primary theoretical lens used in viewing and explaining GHRM, and an array of other theories connected to the conceptualization of GHRM and EGB. Further, the author details the nature of GHRM, the link between GHRM to EGB, and variables affecting EGB at the workplace. Similarly, the chapter highlights the need for trade union involvement in corporate greening and researching the same. However, it would have been easier for readers to navigate through the book if summaries of subsequent chapters were given at the end of this chapter.

Theme 1 - Internal and External Organisational GHRM Initiatives

Chapter 2 by Unsworth and Tian initially develops the argument that the pro-environmental behaviours are simultaneously crucial for mitigating further climate change, but tangential for most employees. The central question that the chapter answer is, ‘what can HRM do to motivate employees to engage in green behaviours?’

In doing so, at the outset, the authors discuss the distinction between green motivation and traditional work performance motivation. After that, they argue that conventional HR practices are inadequate in arousing green motivation and emphasise the need for specially designed GHRM practices to engender green motivation in employees. The structuring, theoretical soundness, and logical flow of arguments by the authors make this chapter attractive.

In Chapter 3, ‘employee engagement in managing environmental performance,’ Hanyal and Haddock-Millar illustrate a qualitative multiple case study research about the Planet Champion Initiatives of two McDonald’s outlets in the UK and Sweden. The authors explore how GHRM initiatives have been used to bring about employee engagement in improving environmental performance in the two subsidiaries. By way of volunteer participation, teamwork, green training and development, exemplary leadership, and embedding greening into performance measures, McDonald’s succeeded in engaging employees in green initiatives of the company, which resulted in reducing litter and increasing cardboard recycling in the two subsidiaries concerned.

Chapter 4 by Russell and Hill is a case study which illustrates, through the lens of AMO theory, how an Australian health care provider has effectively integrated GHRM practices with ES initiatives of the company. It is impressive to see the use of action research in identifying issues related to fostering green abilities, motivation, and opportunities of employees. Also, the case study illustrates the design and implementation of action research-based initiatives such as sustainability-focused communication strategy, behaviour change interventions and campaigns, and data collection on environmental knowledge across the organization to overcome the identified issues in implementing ES. Notably, the chapter emphasises the need for top management commitment, research collaboration, and co-creation of sustainability knowledge in bringing positive GHRM effect in practice.

In Chapter 5, Blazejewski, Graf, Buhl, and Dittmer, through a qualitative study in mid-sized German firms, present a new view and evidence of harnessing spillover effect of private green activism to workplace green behaviours. The chapter deals explicitly with green activist-cum-employees, a segment of employees who are underrepresented in the existing GHRM literature. The central argument of the chapter showcases a necessity for a different approach in GHRM for this category of employees from the one used for mainstream employees since they expect different enabling and supporting structures to engage in green behaviour within the

workplace. Similarly, the chapter reveals that identity as a green activist plays a significant role in motivating spill over behaviours and high-intensity EGB.

Theme 2 - Contextualising GHRM – From GHRM to Sustainability?

Chapter 6 by Carollo and Guerci, addresses three current contextual issues connected to GHRM: How GHRM balances the dichotomy between control and commitment; embeddedness of GHRM in political and institutional contexts of the firm; and ethical concerns in implementing GHRM. The authors offer thought-provoking implications which include: the need for adding contextual variables in designing GHRM research projects in a multi-level framework that encompasses individual, organisational and societal levels; the need for employing critical view in GHRM studies by contextualising GHRM within the broader social, political and ethical issues; the necessity of integrating green, critical, ethical and sustainable HRM research.

In Chapter 7, Matthews, Obereder, Aust and Miller-Carmen conceptualise different paradigms in HRM and discusses the HRM-Performance paradigm, the status-quo/dominant paradigm in HRM, which takes different approaches such as the universalistic, contingency, configurational, and contextual stances in managing HR. The chapter highlights the drawbacks of the shareholder-oriented status-quo paradigm in the context of the present environmental conditions governed by multi-stakeholder perspectives, and proposes the alternative to HRM-performance paradigm, the sustainable HRM paradigm to strive towards achieving economic, social and ecological ends simultaneously. The authors also identify the practical possibilities and hindrances for a paradigm shift to sustainable HRM and urge HR managers to be agents of a holistic change.

Chapter 8 by Xu, Gollan, and Wilkinson, focuses on a discussion of the new frontier in corporate sustainability, namely, sustainable HRM. The authors inspire readers by explaining the role of HRM in corporate sustainability and offering two frameworks, based on the Integrated Diagnostic Framework and Complex Adaptive System (CAS) thinking, to address the challenge of executing sustainable HRM in two types of organisations: first, organisations in early stages of sustainability initiatives and second, organisations with experience in the journey of sustainability.

In Chapter 9, Glavas discusses an exciting proposition that the focal starting point of GHRM should be individual and not performance – whether it is economic, environmental, or social. In a holistic model, recognising ES as an antecedent and

acknowledging the cyclical nature of ES, organisation, and HRM, the author puts forward unique theoretical and practical implications for job design, organisational justice, and engagement. As the title 'Future directions of Green HRM: Redefining Human Resource Management to humans really matter', suggests, the conceptualisation in this chapter redefines the way of figuring out how GHRM should be viewed and practiced.

The final chapter by Renwick proposes the prospects of GHRM research by highlighting less examined areas in GHRM in terms of theoretical backgrounds, methodological variations, contextual differences, conceptual thematic areas, and nature of analysis required. Also, this chapter brings to light the link between sustainability and GHRM and introduces the concept of Sustainable Workforce in Management (SWiM).

Conclusion

This edited book is worth reading since it focusses on multiple facets of growing GHRM literature from micro, meso, and macro-level analytical framework. All chapters are written based on either prior knowledge on GHRM and related disciplines or empirical evidence through a new exploration of GHRM issues and solutions in practice. This book is an exciting resource for HRM researchers and practitioners to illuminate themselves in what needs to be done for the furtherance of GHRM for indirectly contributing to curbing the adverse climate change effects of organisations by nurturing green behaviours at work. In a similar vein, it is a resource for identifying future research directions to initiate theoretically rigorous research in transcending GHRM and moving to Sustainable HRM.

Although this book has many merits, it is not without some limitations. At first, Chapter 1 lacks comprehensiveness in showing the breadth and depth of GHRM due to the absence of a framework that illustrates the building blocks of GHRM. Next, the non-inclusion of one of the best review articles on EGB literature by Norton, Parker, Zacher, and Ashkanasy (2015) in explaining the nomological network of EGB is an obvious limitation. Also, the book would have been much more productive if the authors had included the issue of dynamics of the technological environment in contextualising GHRM and Sustainable HRM. Furthermore, the book would have provided a more contextually balanced perspective of GHRM if case studies from Asian and emerging economies were included. In spite of these limitations, overall, the book has done justice to the title 'Contemporary Developments in Green Human Resource Management: Towards Sustainability in Action?'

About the Editor

Douglas W. S. Renwick is an Associate Professor of Sustainable Workforce Management in Nottingham Trent University, UK, and Visiting Professor at the Institute of Human Resource Management, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the valued patronage rendered by Dr. Krishanthi Vithana by gifting this book to me.

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