

## **Rethinking Work and Growth: A Conceptual Exploration of Sustainability and Work- Life Balance**

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### **Abstract**

In streamline the development actions for greater achievement; India released its set of 17 sustainable development goals (SDG's) and 169 targets. Different countries around the globe are in the pressure of reducing GHG emissions and are deploying different initiatives and technologies to do so. According to survey conducted by LinkedIn, internationally total number of green jobs increased at the rate of 8% per year over the last 5 years, but number of people with abilities only increased by 6%. Hence there is a huge skillset gap for sustainability revolution. Unfortunately, effect on work life balance due to implementation of sustainable practices or for employees engaged in sustainable development has not been widely discussed or researched. Current research aims to analyze the previous literature on work life balance of employees engaged in sustainable development. Study suggests that implementation of green human resource management (GHRM) practices in the organization irrespective of an industry can help to improve work life balance (WLB) of sustainable skills

**Keywords:** - green human resource management (GHRM), work life balance (WLB), sustainable skills, green technology

### **Introduction**

India has set ambitious 17 sustainable development goals (SDG's) and 169 targets for streamlining the development actions for greater achievement. The aim of the SDGs is to enhance sustained economic growth, efficient resource allocation, collective prosperity and descent work environment (Nour Chams, 2019). According to Sustainable Development Report 2022, world has significantly achieved its SDG achievement from 2000 to 2019, just before covid. At the beginning of 2000, nations across the world achieved just 59% of all the

SDGs, whereas in 2019 it increased to 66% (Bjorn Lomborg, 2022).

To complete 100% completion of the SDGs by 2030 as promised by all the nations including India, there should be global 2.4 percentage point increase every year, instead there is only 0.36 percentage increase up to 2021, which is 7 times slower. As per the evidence, each rupee spent across 169 targets will deliver Rs7 of social benefit, but if just 40 best targets are focused, then each rupee would deliver Rs 21 of social benefits (Bjorn Lomborg, 2022). Since, India has committed some ambitious SDGs, it has become the need of the hour for administrations and entities to think about strategies to reduce GHG emissions and incorporate in the HRM practices. Due to more awareness of climate change and its potential impact on businesses, economy and society there is an ample amount of pressure from investors, regulators of the company to adopt sustainable practices. Some of the Indian companies like Tata Steel, Infosys and ITC Limited has taken some significant steps to reduce greenhouse gas emission and has set up a benchmark for other industries.

A significant progress has been made by Tata Steel, a leading steel manufacturing company in India, in reducing GHG emission by 13% between 2016 till 2020. They are trying to utilize plastic waste for steel making, which can reduce usage of coal and can cut down CO<sub>2</sub> emission. Infosys, will already be achieving carbon neutrality in 2030, which is 30 years ahead of Paris Agreement target. They invested in renewable energy, which resulted in 44% of its electricity consumption through renewable energy (<https://earth5r.org/>, 2023). ITC limited which is into fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), hotels and paper industry has been a pioneer in sustainable practices in India. For the last consecutive 18 years company is water positive and carbon positive since last 15 years. Mahindra and Mahindra which is an automotive and farm equipment manufacturer has signed a signatory with United Nations Global Compact to be carbon neutral by 2040. They also focused on fresh water consumption reduction by 76% per vehicle between 2016 to 2020. According to a survey conducted by MIT Sloan Management Review and Boston Consulting Group conducted a survey, it was suggested that numbers of managers and companies taking sustainable practices should be the top most priority. According to the survey results, 70% of the company has placed sustainability on the management agenda in past 6 years. 31% of the respondents revealed that their companies are profiting from sustainable practices (David Kiron, 2012).

### **Sustainable Development and Skill Gap**

Since entities around the world are aiming towards SDGs and has committed towards GHG emissions, they also look for expertise for the same. Different companies are deploying eco-friendly technologies to for their production and services. In India, it has been projected that green technology can achieve a market size of \$ 45-55 billion by 2030, with an estimated annual growth rate of 25-30%. India has also launched National Green Hydrogen Mission which aims to export green hydrogen and its by products, decrease dependency on imported fossil fuels (India, 2023). This requires total investment of Rs 8 lakhs crores and expected to generate 6 lakhs job opportunities and can reduce fossil fuel imports with more than 1 lakh crores. To mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture, Government of India is also initiated National Innovation in Climate Resilient Agriculture project. This includes adoption of green manuring, organic farming, hydroponic farming. Indian Railways has committed towards net zero carbon emission by 2030 by complete electrification of railway broad gauge network which can decrease the reliance on fossil fuels and eliminate carbon emission (India, 2023).

Due to the ambitious goal of net zero and various initiatives taken by Indian government, it is important to deploy green sustainable technology. This technology puts an effort to eliminate anything that causes global warming or climate change.

Different countries around the globe are in the pressure of reducing GHG emissions and are deploying different initiatives and technologies to do so. Question arises: -

### **Research Question 1**

Is there enough manpower with the skill sets to deploy green technology or practices in the organization?

It was found out in LinkedIn the Global Skillset Report 2023, only globally one in eight workers in an organization has one or more sustainability skills (LucyBradbury,2023).Entities globally require army of people, in all areas of business to tackle global sustainable issues. According to Linked In survey there has been increase in the number of international green jobs at the rate of 8% per year over the last 5 years, but number of people with abilities only increased by 6%. Hence there is a huge skill set gap for sustainability revolution. According to fig 2, 57% of the sustainability professionals, do not hold sustainability related academic degree.

**Fig 2 Sustainability Gap**



(Source:-**Boston Consulting Group (Sharma,2023)**)

Entities can implement systematic training programmes for decision makers and transformative skill sets required to bring about changes in business. Since various governments across the world are implementing sustainable technologies (Rubicon, 2023), roles in sustainable technologies will be high in demand. According to Microsoft's sustainability talent skill gap report, digital skills provide a strong foundation for sustainability work.



**Fig 3 Skills for Sustainability Work**

**Source :-**(Sharma, 2023)

In Australia 52% of new hires for the role of energy special is prior green experience. It was also revealed in the report that in Australia green hiring increased by 50% since 2016. It is projected that if Australia meets its emission goals, energy efficiency and demand management work force is projected to grow from 200,000 workers to 400,000 workers by 2030. Hence, Australian Universities are launching new degrees and short courses to address the sustainability skill gap in the market. University of Technology Sydney has launched an online master degree program sustainability program and in sustainable energy and leadership (LIU, 2023).

According to Salesforce data, which covers 1300 knowledge workers in 11 countries, 82% of the surveyed employees lack skills required for climate goals. According to 90% of the respondent's businesses aren't doing enough to invest in training on sustainability skills and 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of them is eager to incorporate these priorities in their job roles. Salesforce has incorporated some training programmes for employees and even external audience about SDGs, science-based targets etc (Clancy, 2022). Evidence has also shown that companies that fail to comply with climate changes may find themselves in trouble. They incur social and economic cost of climate change due to scrutiny from customers, investors and various other agencies. According to KPMG survey 20% of British professionals turned down jobs in businesses that couldn't demonstrate their commitment to Environment, Social and Governance (ESG). It was also observed that number of chief sustainability officers have increased more than triple from 9% in 2016 to 28% in 2021 (Microsoft, 2023). Embedding ESG system in organization has become the need of the hour. Environmental and social issues are the top five most global risks, according to World Economic Forum (WEF) Global risk report. It was surprising that only 27% of boards fully understood ESG risk, according to a survey by PwC and a joint survey by Boston Consulting Group and the INSEAD Corporate Governance Centre found that only 47% of directors believe that their board has sufficient ESG skills. Due to lack of knowledge on key sustainability issues there is a huge nature loss, climate change and human rights across all the levels of business (Sanjini Jain, 2023).

Many researchers have suggested to incorporate green human and resource management (HRM) practices in organization to achieve economical rewards between community, biosphere and global warming issues. Green HRM talks about sustainable development, execution of policies and that stimulate the green behaviour of company's employee in order

to create environmental sensitive, resource efficient and socially responsible organization. It was suggested that incorporation of green HRM is not difficult, but needs improved methods on current HR practices with mutually the administration and staffs concurrently (Sujata Das, 2022).

Hence, various reports and studies has suggested that there is a skill gap of sustainability which need to be addressed. Corporates under a radar to reduce GHG emission for ESG compliance and SDG's commitment. As per are centarticle in economic times, four in five Indian business leaders will hire talent with green expertise in 2024. According to report by IB Mand Morning consult, 82% of the business leaders in India are looking for talent with green and sustainability tech skills (Verma, 2023). Since, there is a limitation of sustainable skill globally, employees engaged in sustainable development are facing major work life balance issues. Hence, the next research question arises

## **Research Question 2**

How is the Work life Balance (WLB) for employees engaged in sustainable development?

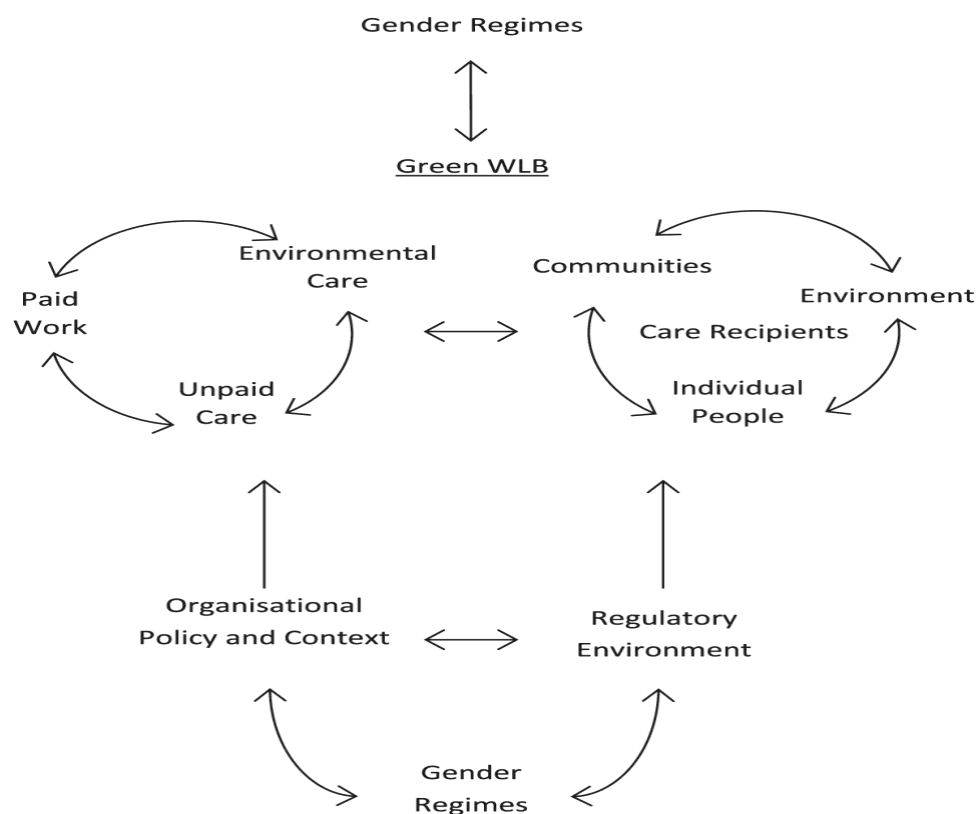
Work life balance is an issue which has been widely discussed for many industries like IT, education, hospitals, tourism etc (Ranitha Weerarathna, 2022), (Dodi Wirawan Irawanto, 2021), (Sharda Singh,2017).Unfortunately, effect on work life balance due to implementation of sustainable practices or for employees engaged in sustainable development has not been widely discussed or researched. Research has suggested that work life balance is a concept independent of environmental concern and many organizations may be into the practice of greenwashing, which weakens the commitment of protection of natural values amongst workers and stakeholders. In China, study has suggested Green (GHRM) is significantly impacting employee's green behaviour and intermediary role of the relational psychological contract is regulated by environmental knowledge and green values (Shaoying Zhu, 2021)

Current research aims to analyse the previous literature on work life balance of employees engaged in sustainable development. It also aims to suggest research which can be under taken to fulfil the gap and contribute in the literature

## **Literature Analysis**

It was realized that since green work life balance is at nascent stage, hence it has failed to theories the way it should be for personal, community, environmental and organizational

needs. Research has proposed a model for how to research and design sustainable care system in an organization.



**Fig. 4 Model for Sustainable Care System**

Source :-(Ravenswood, 2021)

According to the model gender regime are fundamental to organisational policy, since gender regime influences our concepts of green WLB and care itself. This model signifies the dynamics and reciprocal nature of care and care recipients, which further focuses on green WLB. Organisational outcome is a part of green WLB are considered in relation to outcomes of care and carers (Ravenswood, 2021). Research examined the logical reason that governs the green work life balance or just green washing. Based on the data of banking sector employees WLB and employee job performance is a significant part of employee engagement. It also suggests that WLB is concept which is independent of environmental concern (Anuradha Iddagoda,2021). It was found out that Green HRM practices aim to create sound occupational and organisational health which helps to sustain intellectual capital in the organisation and it can be beneficial for both employer and employees. Green HRM practices incorporate environmentally friendly HRM practices and initiatives that can result in more efficiency and employee engagement at the workplace (Dr. Sireesha Rani Vasa, 2017). A conceptual model of green human resource management (GHRM) was suggested for tourism and hospitality industry, which suggests that employee engagement or job satisfaction act as a mediator for the effects of human resource practices on employee's performance. It was found out that work engagement and job satisfaction act as an underlying mechanism through which GHRM influences employee's pro environmental behavior (PEB).Model also suggest that HR practices like recruitment, selection, training, empowerment can be adopted to GHRM practices. Hence, the model suggested incorporate green selective staffing, green training, green empowerment, green rewards, green career opportunities, green team work, green work life balance and green participation in decision making (Engin Ari, 2020). For Indonesian company which has incorporated GHRM has created an environmentally friendly organisational culture and work climate, which has increased the efficiency of various resources. It also helped them to form a positive corporate image which has enhanced economic and eco-friendly performance (Lieli SUHARTI, 2020). According to the cross-sectional analysis of data collected from academic personals of Malaysian public universities, sustainable work life balance is significantly related to employees' turnover intentions and mediates the relationship between person-environmental fit dimensions and employee's turnover intension. It was also found out that job opportunities significantly moderate the association between sustainable work life balance and turnover intension (Roselina Ahmad Saufi, 2023).



A conceptual model has been suggested to explain how organisation addresses green growth. Based on the dimensions of the exploration and exploitation, strategic green growth archetyped type is environmental laggard. It was suggested that cooperative and entrepreneurial archetype are best GHRM practices towards strategic environmental goal (Labella-Fernández,2021).GHRM practices positively and significantly impacts green lifestyle and organisation citizenship behaviour for Chinese hotel employees. It was found out that green shared value significantly moderates the relationship between green lifestyle and green organisation citizenship behaviour (Jianfeng Meng 1, 2023). An interview was conducted with six small and medium sized workplace employees. The objective of the interview was to analyse key aspects of physical environment which relevant for experienced benefit and challenges faced by workers. Following themes emerged in relation to physical environment, i.e. 'simplicity', 'safety', 'comfort', 'contact with nature'. 'Sociality', 'well-being' and 'functioning' stood out as main benefit and 'digital dependency' and 'illegitimacy' as a challenge to overcome (Victoria Linn Lygum,2023). GHRM has a positive effect on employee's green behavior and the relational psychological contracts play an intermediary role between GHRM and employees' green behaviour. Relational psychological contracts are regulated by environmental knowledge and green values (Shaoying Zhu Y. W., 2021). Employee life cycle, education and training, employee empowerment and management involvement significantly affect the in-role and extra-role green behaviour for employees of People's Republic of China. Needs for the information plays a mediating role on employee's life cycle, education and training and manager involvement on the green behaviour of employees (YujingZhang,2019).According to the primary data collected from Serbian universities, green competencies will influence people's willingness to participate in green activities. It was found out that pro-environmental approach will have direct and indirect impacts on organizational growth, financial performance and the environment (Vuk Mirčeti', 2022).

## **Conclusion**

SDG and emission reduction have become an utmost important agenda for corporates to address. Government, stakeholders, employees are under the radars of various agencies to reduce GHG emissions and move towards sustainable goals. Globally corporates are implementing various technologies and following GHRM practices to reduce GHG emission

and attain SDGs. Hence, there is an urgent need of sustainable development skills in the organizations and sustaining them in the organisation through efficient WLB policies. It has become quite challenging for organisation to maintain the WLB of sustainable skills and reaching ambitious goal of SDGs. Hence, WLB of employees possessing sustainability skills is an important agenda which needs to be addressed through significant research and reports. Current research aims to identify significant research in the same domain and suggest implementation of GHRM practices in the organisation irrespective of an industry can help to improve WLB of sustainable skills (Dr. Sireesha Rani Vasa, 2017). Still, ample amount of research needs to be conducted to suggest strategies to improve WLB of sustainable intellectuals in the organisation.

This paper has analyzed some relevant research paper on WLB for sustainable employees. This research can further be carried with primary data for Indian organisation or a comparative analysis can be conducted between different industries or country wise.

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