

Sustainable Workplace Environments As Pathways To Employee Psychological Well-Being: A Conceptual Model Integrating Pro-Environmental Behaviour And Leadership Support

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper develops an intellectual construct that challenges how environmental factors in a sustainable workplace affect the psychological welfare of employees.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Building upon established tenets of environmental psychology and organisational behaviour theory, the study postulates pro-environmental behaviour as a mediating construct and leadership support as a moderating variable. The model combines the sustainability practises applied in the workplace, including the introduction of green areas, energy efficiency programmes, and effective waste-management systems, and employee-level outcomes.

Findings: It is theoretically predicted that a dual-path effect will occur in which sustainable workplace environments will have a direct positive impact on psychological well-being and an indirect one that is mediated by pro-environmental behaviour. In addition, these associative connections are enhanced by the presence of leadership support, thus highlighting the role of managerial impact as essential in instilling sustainability as organisational culture.

Practical Implications: The framework can be applied in practical implications to organisations, meaning that the implementation of eco-friendly workplace practises, supported with a strong will of the organisational leadership, not only can increase the well-being of the employees, but also the culture of environment stewardship.

Originality/Value: This addition to the body of knowledge contributes to the sustainability, ecological design, and human resource development discussion by bridging the three analytical elements to deliver new information to organisations that seek to balance the need to address environmental issues with human resource management.

Keywords: Sustainable workplace, psychological well-being, Pro-environmental behavior, Leadership support, Environmental psychology

1.INTRODUCTION

Modern day working environment is undergoing paradigm shift to sustainability propelled by the mounting environmental awareness and the increasing awareness that organisational practises have a substantial impact not only on ecological systems but equally on human well-being (Ones and Dilchert, 2012). The interplay between sustainable work environment and psychological well-being has become a centre of research and theoretical application as companies around the world have to grapple with the demands of climate change and the issue of employee wellbeing (Robertson and Cooper, 2011; Norton et al., 2015).

According to recent developments in environmental psychology, the physical workplace has an immense influence on cognition, affective and behavioural results of employees (Mehta et al., 2012; Klauer and Meijers, 2003). At the same time, organisational sustainability efforts have ceased to be a source of regulatory compliance and have developed into strategic necessities with the ability to make organisations more appealing, staff more involved, and progressively more effective (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Jones et al., 2017).

Although the interest in both sustainability and employee well-being is on the rise, theoretical frameworks that purely focus on how the two concepts interact with one another in the organisational settings are few. The current paper aims to fill this gap by elaborating a holistic conceptual framework merging sustainable working conditions, pro-environment behaviour, leadership support and employee psychological well-being.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of sustainable workplace environments on employee psychological well-being?
2. What is the mediating variable of pro-environmental behaviour in this association?
3. How does leadership support moderate the relationships among sustainable environments, pro-environmental behaviour, and well-being?

Contribution Statement

The research has three major contributions to the literature. First, it enhances theoretical knowledge by integrating environmental psychology and organisational behaviours theories. Second, it provides a solid structure on which workplace sustainability is interconnected with human resource outcomes. Third, it provides practical lessons to organisations in their quest to achieve environmental stewardship goals and ensure the well-being of their employees at the same time.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainable Workplace Environments: Conceptual Foundations

Sustainable workplace environments include physical, technological, and cultural aspects that aim to minimize environmental impact and, at the same time, increase human comfort and productivity (Al Horr et al., 2016). This is the type of environment that usually incorporates green building, energy-efficient, natural lighting, interior plants, waste minimization (programmes), and sustainable transportation options (Singh et al., 2010; Newsham et al., 2009).

Empirical research in environmental psychology has shown that the physical environment has significant effects on human cognition, emotion and behavior that involve the restoration of attention, reduction of stress, and biophilic reactions (Kaplan, 1995; Wilson, 1984; Ulrich et al., 1991). The biophilia theory suggests that humans have innate preference to natural environments and such elements of green workplaces are particularly beneficial to psychological operations (Kellert and Wilson, 1993).

Modern sustainability discussion on the workplace goes beyond physical attributes to include organisational practises, policies and cultural norms that facilitate the promotion of environmental responsibility (Zibarras and Ballinger, 2011). This holistic approach recognises sustainable environments as a result of harmonising the formation of built characteristics of the environment and organisational system and employee behaviour (Lulfs and Hahn, 2013).

2.2 Psychological Well-Being of Employees In Organisational Environment.

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional phenomenon, which encompasses positive affect, life satisfaction, personal growth, environmental mastery, autonomy and positive relations (Ryff, 1989; Warr, 1987). In the corporate world, job characteristics, working environment, social relations and the organisational culture impact staff welfare (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000; Page and Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is a theoretical approach to the research of workplace well-being conditions that propose that job resources depress the effect of job demands and encourage motivation and good results (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Workplace features that are sustainable, including environmental resources, can serve as contextual job resources and contribute to employee well-being (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Attention Restoration Theory (ART) also explains the effects of the environmental characteristic on the psychological functioning by speculating that natural elements serve to replenish directed attention capacity and eliminate mental fatigue (Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Accordingly, sustainable workplace environments can directly improve well-being through cognitive restoration processes.

2.3 Environmental Pro-Friendly Behaviour as a Mediating Process.

Pro-environmental behaviour refers to the activities that people engage in in order to reduce the adverse environmental impact or maximise the positive environmental performance (Stern, 2000; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Such behaviours, within organisational contexts, are energy conservation, waste elimination, sustainable-based transportation decisions, and support of environmental programmes (Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Norton et al., 2015).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is applied to explaining the pro-environmental behaviour development and it focuses on the attitude, the subjective norms and the control over behavioural process (Ajzen, 1991; Bamberg and Moser, 2007). Sustainable workplaces can support pro-environmental behaviors by providing supportive settings that promote attitudes, positive norms, and perceived control of environmental outcomes.

Experience has indicated that pro-environmental behaviour may improve psychological well-being in various ways, such as meaning-making, strengthening self-efficacy, and social connexion (Venhoeven et al., 2013; Kasser, 2017). The warm glow effect is used to denote the positive affect of pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours, which states that these behaviours might directly lead to well-being (Andreoni, 1990; Ferguson et al., 2018).

2.4 Leadership Support as a Moderating Factor

The concept of leadership support defines the degree to which leaders show their interest in sustainability actions, invest in environmental programmes, and promote employee involvement in pro-environmental actions (Lulfs and Hahn, 2013; Robertson and Barling, 2017). The styles of transformational and ethical leadership are especially relevant to the context of sustainability due to their focus on the motivation based on values and general collective good (Bass, 1999; Brown and Trevino, 2006).

The Social Learning Theory implies that leaders act as role models, and their attitudes and behaviours are followed and copied by employees (Bandura, 1977; Brown et al., 2005). Accordingly, leadership support for sustainability may amplify the effects of sustainable workplace environments by establishing social norms and expectations that reinforce pro-environmental behaviour.

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory further sheds light on the role of leadership support in employee performance, as it postulates that when leader-member relations are of high-quality, employee outcomes in terms of motivation, performance, and well-being improve (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Dulebohn et al., 2012). A sustainability-linked leadership support can thus reinforce such relationships and at the same time, facilitate environmental and wellbeing outcomes.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

This theoretical model combines three main theoretical perspectives, including Environmental Psychology, Social Cognitive Theory, and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory.

Environmental Psychology forms the basis of explaining the impact of physical environments on psychological states and behaviors. The main concepts are the restorative properties of the natural environments, effects of environmental stressors on well-being, and person-environment fit as a determinant of the outcomes (Mehta et al., 2012; Evans and McCoy, 1998).

Social Cognitive Theory describes the interplay in its environment, based on individual factors and behaviours as the way that the environment reacts and vice versa to shape its results (Bandura, 1986). The latter view is especially applicable to the explanations of how sustainable workplace settings shape pro-environmental behavior via modeling, self-efficacy boosting, and outcome expectations.

According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, people seek to acquire, maintain and defend resources and that when people are exposed to threats or loss of resources, stress ensues (Hobfoll, 1989). Sustainable workplace environments may function as environmental resources that protect against stress while promoting well-being and positive behaviours.

3.2 Proposition Development

P1: Sustainable workplace environments are positively related to employee psychological well-being.

The first proposition, [Proposition 1], argues that a positive relation is established between the benefits of environmental affordances and the psychological wellbeing of employees when the workplaces are made sustainable with the help of the natural features, energy saving systems, and green technologies. Based on Environmental Psychology and Attention Restoration Theory (ART), these environments help in psychological restorations, stress reduction, and Biophilic satisfaction (Kaplan, 1995; Kellert and Wilson, 1993). Empirical studies record that exposure of natural environments and green building characteristics brings about mood elevation and stress reducing and better cognitive performance (Ulrich et al., 1991; Singh et al., 2010).

P2: Pro-environmental behaviour mediates the relationship between sustainable workplace environments and psychological well-being.

Proposition 2 suggests that when sustainable workplace environments exist, they foster pro-environmental behavior by providing opportunities, resources and environmental cues that enable action (Stern, 2000). Such behavioural engagement in turn upgrades well-being through the creation of meaning-making, self-efficacy, and good affect tied to the giving to the common good (Venhoeven et al., 2013; Kasser, 2017). This indirect route goes hand in hand with the direct impacts on the environment stated in the Proposition 1.

P3a: Leadership support moderates the relationship between sustainable workplace environments and psychological well-being.

Proposition 3a is that leadership support changes the relationship between sustainability at work and employee psychological health; the stronger the leadership support, the stronger the direct positive effects of sustainability. By providing explicit support, allocating resources, and establishing norms (Lulfs & Hahn, 2013), high leadership support indicates organizational commitment and, consequently, increases employee engagement with environmental characteristics, which leads to increased well-being.

P3b: Leadership support moderates the relationship between sustainable workplace environments and pro-environmental behaviour

Proposition 3b contends that leadership support moderates the link between sustainable workplace environments and pro-environmental behaviour, such that the relationship is stronger when leadership support is high. By leaders modelling, reinforcing, and legitimising sustainability in-sight, employees develop greater interest in engaging with sustainable aspects and undergoing pro-environmental behaviour (Bandura, 1977; Robertson and Barling, 2017).

P3c: Leadership support moderates the mediated relationship between sustainable workplace environments and psychological well-being through pro-environmental behaviour,

Proposition 3c is a synthesis of the influences of Propositions 3a and 3b, which states that leadership support also mediates the indirect relationship between sustainable environments and psychological well-being through pro-environmental behaviour, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when leadership support is high. Positive leadership support, thus, strengthens the environment-behaviour relationship as well as the overall pathway that brings well-being gains of sustainable workplace environments.

4.CONCEPTUAL MODEL:

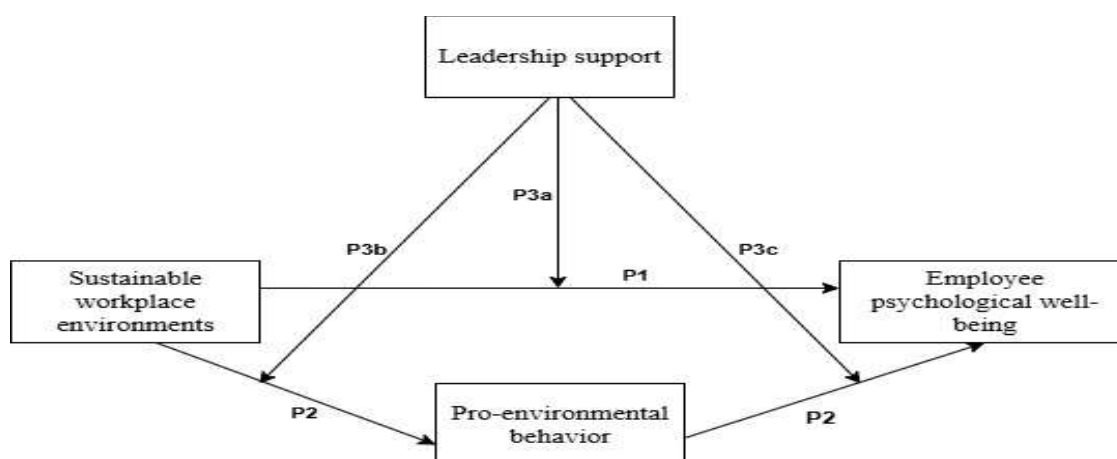


Figure 1 conceptual model

4.1 Model Components

There are four constructs that are interrelated in the proposed model. Conceptualization of Sustainable Workplace Environments is in the form of a multidimensional environment that includes green architecture (both indoor vegetation, sustainable materials, and access to the outdoors); energy-efficient systems (LED lighting, intelligent HVAC systems, and renewable energy systems); well-planned waste-management programs (recycling, composting, and waste reduction); and a general factor of environmental quality (natural light, indoor air quality, and acoustic comfort). Employee Psychological Well-Being is established on the basis of such indicators as positive affect and emotional states, increased life satisfaction and fulfilment, decreased stress and increased emotional regulation, and high cognitive

functioning and mental clarity. The Pro-Environmental Behaviour can be described as the level at which the employees practise sustainability at work place such as saving energy, reducing wastes, supporting environmental activities, and adopting eco-friendly modes of transport. Finally, Leadership Support is characterised by transformational leadership behaviours, explicit commitment to sustainability objectives, provision of resources for green programmes, and consistent recognition and reinforcement of employees' environmentally responsible conduct. All these elements jointly form the basis of the conceptual model which positions workplace sustainability as a central element on both organisational and employee performance.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

Empirical studies of this conceptual model in the future are to be conducted using a mixed-methodology that incorporates both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and observations. The multilevel design is justified by a hierarchical nature of the employees in the organisations and the effects of the variables at the organisational level on the individual outcomes.

5.2 Sampling Strategy

The target population would include the employees of the organisations that are characterised by different levels of the implementation of sustainability across the spectrum of the industries. A sample size of 400 individuals embedded in 40-50 organisations would be sufficient to give a statistically significant power of multilevel analyses and permit the interaction of cross-level effects.

5.3 Measurement Instruments

Sustainable Workplace Environments: A scale which takes into account both objective environmental measurements (e.g., LEED ratings, energy consumption data) and employee perceptions of the environmental characteristics must be established, based on the available instruments (Singh et al., 2010) and relying on new items to capture new sustainability practices.

Psychological Well-Being: The measures that have been established previously should be used, such as the PANAS affect (Watson and Clark, 1988), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the Workplace Well-Being Index (Zheng et al., 2015).

Pro-Environmental Behaviour: It is recommended to use the Employee Green Behaviour Scale (Ones and Dilchert, 2012), and to include some context-specific questions reflecting the environmental behaviour at the workplace.

Leadership Support: Transformational leadership measures (Bass & Avolio, 1997) should be adapted with sustainability-specific items, and novel measures of environmental leadership support should be developed.

5.4 Analytical Approach

The most suitable method that could be used to test the relationship proposed and consider the nested nature of the data is multilevel structural equation modelling (ML-SEM). Bootstrapping will be used to facilitate strong evaluation of mediation effects and multi-group analysis will be performed to test the modulating role of leadership support.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The current conceptual framework is a qualitative improvement of our theoretical knowledge about the ways environmental sustainability could be incorporated into the wider contexts of organisational behaviour and psychological health. First, the model provides an integrated perspective through which one can consider the processes by which sustainability initiatives influence employee outcome because of synthesising environmental psychology and established theories of workplace dynamics. Second, the mediation of the pro-environmental behaviour, as an intermediate variable, predetermines the behavioural dimension, as a relevant channel between the physical environment and psychological well-being. Third, the model raises into focus the necessity of having leadership to actualise and maintain the positive directions that are identified.

Its contribution is reflected in the emerging field of positive environmental psychology, which shows that properly designed environmental interventions can have ecologically sound, as well as human-friendly, benefits (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Clayton, 2011). This type of dual-benefit approach begs

the deeply rooted burden of the trade-off paradigm, implying that synergies could be developed in the interplay between organisational sustainability and employee wellness.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings can be summarised into a few recommendations that can be implemented by the practitioners:

Environmental Design: This is due to the adoption of holistic, sustainable workplace features green infrastructure, natural lighting, energy-efficient technologies and rigorous control of indoor air quality; as an investment in human capital that promotes well-being in tandem with ecological stewardship.

Behavioural Facilitation: Institutions must also create conditions that support and reinforce pro-environmental behaviour, such as organizing recycling programs, energy-conservation competitions, incentives to encourage sustainable commuting and systematic suggestion systems.

Leadership Development: The training programmes are meant to prepare leaders to model and instil the environmental behaviours in the corporate vision and corporate culture of value systems to ensure optimum investment returns.

Integrated Approach: Due to the synergistic relationship of environmental design, behaviour of employees, and organisational involvement with leaders, organisations ought to aim to undertake complex, concurrent interventions instead of single-strategy approaches.

6.3 Future Research Directions

There are several promising directions that can be taken up as the conceptual framework:

Longitudinal Studies: Extending the temporal studies to trace the development and process of pro-environmental behaviours, maintenance processes, and spill-over into non-work milieus.

Cross-Cultural Research: A systematic study of the moderating effect of cultural variability on the proposed relationships, in particular concerning environmental values, leadership perceptions and conceptualisation of well-being across national settings.

Mechanism Exploration: Undertaking subtle research on the psychological signalling effects, such as attention restoration, stress mitigation, meaning-making, social connectedness, through which sustainable environments have their powerful impact on wellbeing.

Boundary Conditions: The establishment of the limitations and magnifying factors of the model applicability including personal disparities including environmental values and personality, job level factors, and organisational variables including the dimension of size, industry, and culture.

Technology Integration: how the different emerging digital platforms, such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and mobile applications, can be used to improve environmental design, track behaviours, and create real-time feedback loops.

7. LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

There are limitations and considerations that apply in this case.

7.1 Theoretical Limitations

The model has a focus on the positive nexus of sustainability and wellbeing which could blur some situations in which environmental initiatives can cause stress or may fail to appeal to employees. The alternative research directions in the future would be systematic investigation on the adverse effects, defining the conditions of the boundaries within which sustainability measures would be counterproductive.

In addition, the model assumes that the positive effect of pro-environmental behaviour is universal, but it might be moderating through individual interpretations and motivational drivers. Other employees can see the environmental requirements as forced and not rewarding.

7.2 Measurement Challenges

Sustainable workplace environments are a multidimensional problem that requires a strong tool that balances the objective measurements of the environment and the subjective employee perceptions. Validity and reliability of such dual-mode measures is a critical issue.

In the same way, measurement of pro-environmental behaviour needs to address the problem of social desirability bias, and distinguish voluntary action by behaviour participants and mandatory action by compulsory behaviour. The risk of over-estimating real behaviour is when it is based on self-reporting.

7.3 Contextual Considerations

The propositions stated here will most probably differ in different types of organisations, industrial environments, and cultures. The definition of what sustainability means will vary based on geographical

area, size of organisation and availability of resources. Economic cycles could also alter the perceived worth and viability of sustainability programmes balancing employee reactions at times of decline and prosperity.

8.CONCLUSION

The paper has outlined a holistic model that explains how sustainable workplaces have an impact on psychological wellbeing in terms of pro-environmental behaviour with the leadership support being one of the critical moderators. The model provides a theoretical framework with which to explore the human value of environmental programs by incorporating the perspectives of environmental psychology, organisational behaviour, and literature on sustainability. The five key propositions presented below offer an empirical research direction and theoretical improvement in the future. Companies that choose the framework are able to create sustainability policies that would not only tackle the ecological responsibility, but also the human resource's goal, they also do not have to view sustainability as the expense, but as the investment in the wellbeing of staff and their organisational performance. Further empirical support of this model will deepen our understanding of sustainability-wellbeing relationships and provide viable advice to companies, who need to create positive and sustainable workplaces that would promote people and the planet. With increased environmental problems and employee welfare assuming a more crucial role in organisational achievement, frameworks incorporating these issues will advance continuously greater speculative and practical applicability. The way ahead requires a long-term cooperation of scholars in the field of environmental and organisational behaviour and sustainability management to produce subtle insights into the ways environmental and human systems could be streamlined in parallel. This theoretical framework marks a huge, yet the first, step in that continuing speculative process.

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