

Employee Engagement and Well- Being as a Corner Stone Of Sustainability

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Abstract

This research explores the pivotal role of employee engagement and well-being in achieving organizational sustainability. Through secondary data analysis, the study identifies the positive correlation between employee engagement, well-being initiatives, and long-term sustainability. Engaged employees who benefit from well-being programs tend to exhibit higher levels of productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction, which directly contribute to the sustainability goals of organizations. Case studies of leading companies like Patagonia, Google, and Salesforce demonstrate that fostering a culture of well-being and engagement enhances both financial and environmental sustainability. The research underscores the importance of integrating these factors into a company's strategic framework to ensure a resilient and sustainable workforce. The findings suggest that organizations that prioritize employee engagement and well-being are more likely to thrive in a competitive and environmentally-conscious business landscape.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Employee Well-being, Organizational Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Employee Productivity, Sustainable Business Practices

Introduction

In the contemporary business landscape, sustainability has evolved into a multi-dimensional concept, incorporating not only environmental and financial considerations but also the social and human elements that contribute to long-term success. Among these, employee engagement and well-being have emerged as essential pillars of sustainable organizational growth. Organizations today are realizing that their true competitive advantage lies not just in technological innovation or market positioning, but in the strength and well-being of their workforce.

At the heart of this transformation is the understanding that engaged employees are not mere resources, but key drivers of organizational success. Employee engagement, defined as the emotional commitment and passion employees have for their work, plays a vital role in enhancing productivity, innovation, and overall organizational performance. In parallel, employee well-being—encompassing physical health, mental stability, job satisfaction, and work-life balance—has become a critical determinant of both individual and organizational performance. When employees thrive, organizations thrive, creating a symbiotic relationship where growth and well-being are mutually reinforcing.

The Importance of focusing on employee engagement and well-being is not just a modern trend; it is rooted in age-old wisdom. As the great Indian philosopher and statesman, Chanakya, once said,

(One should uplift oneself by one's own efforts; the self is the friend of oneself.)

This ancient teaching emphasizes that the individual's well-being and personal growth are intrinsically linked to the larger success of any community or organization. When employees are engaged and supported in their well-being, they become the architects of the organization's growth and sustainability.

Sustainability, in this context, cannot merely be defined by profit margins or environmental stewardship; it is a holistic approach that includes fostering a positive work culture, ensuring employee satisfaction, and contributing to the broader societal good. Organizations that invest in their employees' engagement and well-being create an environment where individuals feel valued and supported, leading to enhanced job satisfaction, higher retention rates, and a more innovative and productive workforce. This, in turn, strengthens the organization's competitive

edge, long-term viability, and social responsibility—essential elements for enduring sustainability.

A relevant Hindi proverb beautifully encapsulates this idea:

(Where there is peace in the workplace, success will naturally follow.)

This highlights the interdependence between a harmonious work environment—fueled by engaged and healthy employees—and organizational success. When employees are mentally and physically well, they are more likely to be motivated, innovative, and loyal, all of which are critical to an organization’s sustainability in today’s fast-paced world.

In today’s globalized and interconnected economy, the pressure on organizations to deliver continuous results is immense. However, this often comes at the cost of employee burnout, stress, and disengagement. This research explores the symbiotic relationship between employee engagement, well-being, and organizational sustainability, aiming to highlight how a workforce that is both engaged and well-supported can contribute to an organization’s long-term success. By understanding the dynamics between these elements, this study proposes that businesses focusing on their human capital—through effective engagement strategies and holistic well-being programs—are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth.

The paper will explore how the combination of engaged, healthy employees and responsible business practices can create a positive cycle of growth, innovation, and organizational success. Through an in-depth analysis of organizational case studies and empirical evidence, this research seeks to answer how companies can design sustainable work environments that enhance both the well-being of their employees and the longevity of their business. The role of leadership, organizational culture, and supportive policies will also be examined, as they are pivotal in cultivating an engaged and healthy workforce, which is the cornerstone of any sustainable organization.

Literature Review

The relationship between employee engagement, well-being, and organizational sustainability has garnered increasing attention in recent years, as businesses recognize the importance of a motivated, healthy, and committed workforce in achieving long-term success. A review of the

existing literature reveals significant insights into the interconnectedness of these elements and their impact on organizational performance and sustainability.

Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

Employee engagement is widely regarded as a critical factor that influences organizational performance. According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is defined as the psychological presence of individuals in their work roles, where they fully invest their energies—cognitive, emotional, and physical—into their tasks. Engaged employees exhibit higher levels of productivity, creativity, and commitment to organizational goals, thus driving the overall success of the business. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) in their meta-analysis of employee engagement studies, found that businesses with higher levels of employee engagement experience lower turnover rates, better customer satisfaction, and higher financial performance.

Further studies have confirmed that employee engagement is linked to numerous positive outcomes for organizations, including increased profitability and organizational innovation. Macey and Schneider (2008) highlight that engaged employees are more likely to contribute to innovation and are more resilient in the face of organizational challenges, making them a key asset for sustainable business practices.

Employee Well-being and Organizational Success

Employee well-being encompasses multiple dimensions—physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as job satisfaction and work-life balance. The positive impact of well-being on individual performance and organizational success is well-documented. Danna and Griffin (1999) argued that employee well-being is a determinant of overall job performance and that healthier employees are more productive, engaged, and less likely to experience burnout or disengagement. Warr (2002) further suggested that employees who feel satisfied and supported in their roles are more likely to have a positive attitude towards their work, which translates into better outcomes for the organization.

In line with this, Ryff and Singer (1998) introduced the concept of psychological well-being, emphasizing that employees who experience high levels of psychological well-being—such as autonomy, personal growth, and positive relationships—are more likely to remain committed to

their work and contribute to the organization's long-term success. A comprehensive approach to employee well-being, therefore, has profound implications for reducing absenteeism, enhancing job satisfaction, and fostering a culture of high performance.

The Role of Well-being and Engagement in Organizational Sustainability

Organizational sustainability is increasingly seen as a multidimensional concept that goes beyond financial success and environmental responsibility. Scherer (2011) defines sustainability as the ability of organizations to continue their operations in the long term without depleting the resources—whether human, financial, or environmental—that they depend on. A key component of this sustainability is the social sustainability of the workforce, which is closely tied to employee engagement and well-being.

Research has shown that organizations that prioritize the well-being and engagement of their employees are more likely to experience sustainable growth. Harter et al. (2009) found that engaged employees are more likely to show loyalty and remain with the organization, reducing turnover costs and enhancing the continuity of the workforce. In turn, a stable and engaged workforce is crucial for fostering long-term relationships with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders, which are essential for sustainable business practices.

Kanter (1999) further emphasized the role of employee engagement in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. She argued that when employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to share their ideas, collaborate across departments, and contribute to the organization's ability to adapt and innovate in a constantly changing market. Such innovation and adaptability are key to the long-term sustainability of an organization, as they allow it to remain competitive while maintaining ethical and socially responsible practices.

Integrating Employee Engagement and Well-being into Sustainability Frameworks

Many scholars have explored how organizations can integrate employee engagement and well-being into their broader sustainability frameworks. Greenwood (2007) suggested that companies can adopt policies that support both engagement and well-being, such as flexible working hours, professional development opportunities, and wellness programs. He argued that these policies

not only improve individual performance but also create a positive organizational culture that is more likely to attract and retain talent.

Moreover, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) proposed the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which suggests that organizations should balance job demands with resources to prevent employee burnout and increase engagement. By providing adequate support—such as training, recognition, and work-life balance initiatives—employees are more likely to remain engaged, motivated, and productive.

The Role of Leadership and Organizational Culture

Leadership is a crucial factor in fostering both employee engagement and well-being. Bakker et al. (2004) argue that transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees to go beyond their self-interest for the greater good of the organization, is associated with higher levels of engagement. Leaders who demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of their employees, offer support, and recognize achievements create an environment where engagement and well-being flourish.

Similarly, Edwards and Collier (2007) found that organizational culture plays a significant role in determining employee engagement and well-being. A culture that prioritizes open communication, trust, and collaboration is more likely to create an environment where employees feel empowered to contribute their best work and maintain a positive work-life balance.

The literature on employee engagement, well-being, and organizational sustainability suggests a strong, interconnected relationship. As businesses increasingly focus on their long-term sustainability, it becomes evident that prioritizing employee engagement and well-being is not only a strategy for enhancing individual performance but also a key factor in fostering organizational resilience and adaptability. Organizations that cultivate an environment where employees are engaged, supported in their well-being, and empowered through positive leadership and culture are better positioned to navigate the complexities of a dynamic business world while achieving sustainable growth.

Objectives

- To analyze the impact of employee engagement on organizational sustainability.
- To assess the relationship between employee well-being and organizational performance.
- To examine the role of employee engagement in fostering a sustainable organizational culture.
- To review strategies implemented by organizations to enhance employee well-being and engagement within sustainability frameworks.
- To identify key challenges and barriers in integrating employee engagement and well-being into sustainability initiatives.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a secondary data research methodology to examine the relationship between employee engagement, well-being, and organizational sustainability. Secondary data refers to previously collected and analyzed information that is available in the public domain, such as academic articles, reports, case studies, and other relevant publications. Utilizing secondary data enables a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and findings without the need for primary data collection, which is both time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Data Collection

The data for this study will be sourced from a variety of established and credible secondary sources. These sources include academic journals, industry reports, government publications, and corporate sustainability reports that discuss employee engagement, well-being, and organizational sustainability. The objective is to gather data from reliable and authoritative publications that provide valuable insights into how employee engagement and well-being contribute to organizational sustainability.

Sources of Secondary Data

The following types of secondary data will be utilized for the research:

Academic Journals: Peer-reviewed journal articles that provide theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and critical reviews on the topic of employee engagement, well-being, and sustainability.

Industry Reports: Reports from global consulting firms such as McKinsey, Gallup, Deloitte, and PwC, which offer insights into current trends and practices regarding employee engagement and well-being within the context of sustainability.

Government and NGO Publications: Reports from governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations that focus on sustainability and employee welfare initiatives, often containing data and case studies from various industries.

Company Case Studies and Sustainability Reports - Annual sustainability reports and case studies published by organizations, which provide practical examples of how employee engagement and well-being are integrated into corporate sustainability strategies.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, a qualitative content analysis approach will be employed to identify recurring themes, trends, and relationships between employee engagement, well-being, and sustainability outcomes. This method involves systematically analyzing the textual data from the sources to draw relevant insights and conclusions. The analysis will focus on extracting key findings that align with the research objectives.

In addition to qualitative analysis, a comparative analysis will be conducted to identify differences and similarities in the implementation of employee engagement and well-being initiatives across various sectors and organizations. This comparative approach will help to highlight best practices, challenges, and lessons learned in integrating employee well-being into sustainability efforts.

Where applicable, descriptive statistics may be used to summarize quantitative data available in industry reports, such as employee satisfaction scores, sustainability performance metrics, or employee retention rates. This will aid in providing a broader understanding of the impact of employee engagement and well-being on organizational performance and sustainability.

Justification for Using Secondary Data

The use of secondary data in this research is justified by several factors. Firstly, secondary data provides access to a vast range of information that has already been rigorously collected, analyzed, and validated by previous researchers and organizations. This enables the study to

leverage existing knowledge without the need for primary data collection, which would be both time-intensive and costly.

Secondly, secondary data offers insights from a wide variety of industries, regions, and organizational contexts, making it possible to conduct a more comprehensive and generalized analysis of the role of employee engagement and well-being in organizational sustainability. The breadth of available data ensures that the study can offer valuable insights into global trends and practices.

Finally, secondary data sources such as industry reports and government publications often provide data on organizational practices and outcomes that would otherwise be difficult to access, especially when dealing with sensitive topics like employee well-being and corporate strategies.

Discussion

The findings from the secondary data analysis highlight that employee engagement and well-being are not only essential to organizational performance but are also fundamental to achieving long-term sustainability. Through the review of relevant case studies, reports, and academic research, several key themes emerge that underline the significant relationship between these factors and the success of sustainable business practices.

Impact of Employee Engagement on Sustainability

A recurring finding from the data is the pivotal role that employee engagement plays in advancing sustainability within organizations. Engaged employees contribute more actively to both the operational efficiency and strategic direction of a company, which directly supports sustainable business practices.

For instance, Patagonia, an outdoor apparel company, has made employee engagement a cornerstone of its sustainability efforts. Patagonia fosters an environment of high employee engagement through its commitment to social and environmental responsibility. This includes providing employees with opportunities to volunteer for environmental causes and offering benefits such as on-site child care and outdoor activity programs. As a result, employees are not

only more engaged but also act as ambassadors for the company's sustainability initiatives, demonstrating how engaged employees can drive an organization's sustainability goals.

Moreover, research from Gallup highlights that organizations with higher employee engagement levels are 21% more profitable and experience 17% higher productivity than those with low engagement. These figures underscore how employee engagement can directly influence the financial sustainability of an organization, contributing to both short-term performance and long-term viability.

Role of Employee Well-being in Organizational Performance

The relationship between employee well-being and organizational performance is another critical finding. Organizations that prioritize employee well-being see improvements not just in individual productivity but also in overall organizational performance. For example, **Google** has been a pioneer in offering comprehensive well-being programs that range from on-site wellness facilities to mental health resources. Google's focus on holistic well-being, including physical, mental, and social aspects, has contributed to its reputation as one of the best places to work globally. Their wellness initiatives have been linked to increased employee satisfaction, reduced turnover, and greater innovation—all of which support the company's long-term sustainability goals.

A study by Harvard Business Review found that companies investing in employee well-being programs saw a 29% reduction in turnover rates and a 20% increase in productivity. This directly aligns with the broader concept of sustainability, as organizations that foster well-being are more resilient and able to retain skilled employees, which is essential for long-term success.

Interdependence of Employee Engagement and Well-being

An essential insight from the data is the interdependent relationship between employee engagement and well-being. Companies that simultaneously invest in both factors tend to experience superior outcomes in terms of sustainability. Salesforce, a global leader in customer relationship management (CRM) software, is a strong example of this synergy. The company integrates well-being initiatives—such as flexible work schedules, mental health days, and comprehensive healthcare coverage—with employee engagement strategies that focus on

creating a sense of purpose and belonging. As a result, Salesforce has been able to maintain a highly engaged workforce, which, in turn, supports its broader sustainability objectives, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental impact.

The relationship between engagement and well-being was also evident in a report by McKinsey & Company, which found that organizations that invest in employee well-being tend to have a more engaged workforce, resulting in higher levels of innovation, reduced absenteeism, and greater organizational loyalty. This mutually reinforcing relationship between engagement and well-being is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage and meeting long-term sustainability goals.

Barriers and Challenges to Integrating Engagement and Well-being with Sustainability

While the benefits of integrating employee engagement and well-being into sustainability efforts are clear, several challenges remain. The reviewed data suggests that many organizations still face barriers in aligning these initiatives with their broader sustainability goals.

For example, General Electric (GE) has made strides in employee engagement through initiatives like leadership development programs and health benefits. However, the company has faced challenges in integrating well-being efforts with its sustainability practices due to budget constraints and the complexity of measuring the long-term impact of these initiatives on sustainability outcomes. As with many large corporations, there is often a disconnect between sustainability initiatives and employee-centric programs, with some organizations struggling to align the two effectively.

Additionally, the lack of clear metrics for measuring the impact of engagement and well-being on sustainability often results in fragmented efforts. For instance, while many companies recognize the importance of employee engagement and well-being, they may not have established comprehensive frameworks to track how these factors influence sustainability outcomes over time.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The discussion suggests several avenues for future research and practical applications in the field of employee engagement, well-being, and sustainability. Future studies could focus on

identifying the most effective practices for integrating employee engagement and well-being within sustainability frameworks, particularly in industries with unique challenges (e.g., manufacturing or retail).

Moreover, organizations should consider adopting a more holistic approach to sustainability—one that not only focuses on environmental and financial aspects but also incorporates the social dimensions, particularly employee well-being and engagement. Unilever, for example, has integrated well-being into its core business strategy, where they focus on promoting a healthy workplace, fair wages, and opportunities for employee growth as part of their sustainability agenda. Unilever's approach demonstrates the potential benefits of adopting an integrated framework that brings together employee engagement, well-being, and sustainability.

By fostering a more engaged and healthy workforce, organizations can improve their long-term sustainability performance and create value for both their employees and the broader community.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of employee engagement and well-being in fostering organizational sustainability. Through the analysis of secondary data from a variety of industries, it has become evident that organizations that prioritize these factors not only achieve higher levels of employee satisfaction and productivity but also enhance their long-term sustainability. The findings of this research, drawn from case studies and academic literature, emphasize the interconnectedness between employee engagement, well-being, and the achievement of sustainability goals.

Findings

The key findings from the analysis can be summarized as follows:

1. **Employee Engagement as a Driver of Sustainability:** Organizations with high levels of employee engagement are better positioned to achieve sustainability goals. Engaged employees are more productive, committed, and aligned with the organization's values, particularly when it comes to sustainable practices. Companies such as Patagonia and Google have demonstrated that fostering employee engagement is crucial for both short-term success and long-term sustainability.

2. **The Influence of Employee Well-being on Organizational Performance:** Employee well-being is directly linked to improved organizational performance. Companies investing in holistic well-being programs see enhanced employee morale, lower absenteeism, and higher retention rates. For instance, Google's well-being initiatives have led to higher employee satisfaction and productivity, which in turn support the company's sustainability goals.
3. **Interdependence Between Engagement and Well-being:** The research reveals that employee engagement and well-being are not standalone factors but are deeply interdependent. Companies like Salesforce show that integrating engagement and well-being strategies leads to better overall performance and more sustainable business practices.
4. **Challenges in Integration:** Despite the clear benefits, many organizations face challenges in integrating employee engagement and well-being with sustainability. Barriers such as budget constraints, lack of management support, and inadequate measurement frameworks hinder the full realization of these initiatives. The example of General Electric highlights the difficulty in aligning these efforts with broader sustainability agendas, especially in large organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for organizations seeking to improve both employee engagement and well-being as part of their sustainability strategy:

1. **Adopt a Holistic Approach:** Organizations should treat employee engagement and well-being as integral components of their sustainability strategy. This includes offering wellness programs, promoting work-life balance, and creating a culture that prioritizes both employee satisfaction and environmental responsibility.
2. **Invest in Leadership Development:** Leaders play a critical role in driving employee engagement and fostering well-being. Companies should invest in leadership training that emphasizes emotional intelligence, employee well-being, and sustainability practices, as seen in companies like Salesforce and Patagonia.

3. **Measure and Track Impact:** Organizations should develop clear metrics and frameworks for measuring the impact of employee engagement and well-being on sustainability outcomes. For example, using data analytics tools to track employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity in relation to sustainability goals can provide valuable insights for continuous improvement.
4. **Foster a Culture of Transparency and Communication:** Transparency in communication about sustainability initiatives and employee well-being can strengthen trust and engagement. Organizations should regularly communicate the value of these efforts to employees and stakeholders, as demonstrated by Unilever's commitment to sustainability and employee welfare.
5. **Focus on Continuous Improvement:** Sustainability is a long-term goal that requires ongoing efforts. Organizations must continually assess and adapt their engagement and well-being strategies to ensure they are aligned with evolving sustainability challenges and employee needs.

Future Scope

While this study has shed light on the importance of employee engagement and well-being in promoting organizational sustainability, several areas remain open for further research:

1. **Industry-Specific Studies:** Future research could focus on exploring how employee engagement and well-being contribute to sustainability across different sectors, such as manufacturing, healthcare, or technology. Each industry may face unique challenges and opportunities in integrating these factors with sustainability.
2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Long-term studies are needed to understand the lasting impact of employee engagement and well-being on organizational sustainability. Such studies could track the effects of well-being programs over several years to measure their impact on sustainability metrics like profitability, employee retention, and environmental performance.
3. **Exploring Digital Transformation and Remote Work:** With the rise of digital transformation and remote working, research could explore how these shifts impact

employee engagement and well-being, and how these factors can still support sustainability goals in a hybrid or virtual environment.

4. **Cross-Cultural Studies** : Given the global nature of modern organizations, future research could explore how cultural differences affect the relationship between employee engagement, well-being, and sustainability. Understanding these nuances could help multinational organizations design more effective, culturally-sensitive engagement strategies.
5. **Employee Engagement in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** : Most existing studies focus on large corporations. Future research could investigate how SMEs approach employee engagement and well-being in relation to sustainability, which could provide insights into the unique challenges faced by smaller organizations.

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