



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FOR THE FORMULATION OF PROBLEM

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ABSTRACT

Engaged employees has the ability to make big differences if the organisations are able to provide positive psychological climate, resources for the job, management support as well as good working conditions. So, there is need to understand how the employee commitment for the environment protection can be enhanced related to protection and improvement of environment (Cantor, et al. 2015). The review of literature suggests that the research focussing on participation of employees in pro-environmental behaviour is very scarce and leads for additional research to better understand pro-environmental behaviour within the firm in general and employee behaviour in particular. Manager's attitude towards environmental issues has great impact on environmental performance (Pagell and Gobeli, 2009). Therefore, the present study attempts to analyse that which type of behaviours of the supervisors are necessary to initiate eco-initiatives among its employees. Moreover, the present study has proposed a framework to analyse the associations and the impact of various managerial factors on employee's eco-initiatives in the firms. Keeping this consideration, the tentative title of the proposed study is formulated as "**Employee engagement in environmental protection: A study of selected companies in Punjab**".

KEYWORDS: Employee engagement, Eco-initiatives, Environmental issues, Pro-environmental behaviour etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The human beings are over- exploiting the natural environment to fulfil their needs. Over the past few decades the needs of the humans have reached so high that they have started degrading the eco- systems which supports their health and their livelihood. These types of activities have contributed to the phenomena known as ecological backlash (Jerath,1995). Environment Pollution is mainly caused by over use of natural resources, over population of people and live stock in congested areas, over use of chemicals, industries vehicular movements, burning of fossil fuel, etc. Pollution changes the composition of environment and results into ecological imbalance (Sandhu and Sidhu, 2015)

Sustainable Development has been defined by UNESCO as a process of change that is heavily dependent upon local contexts, needs and priorities. The global dimensions and impacts of the challenges that face 21st century demand extensive international cooperation, political commitment and enthusiasm to step into a sustainable future. The concept of sustainable development has been defined in many contexts still it can be said that sustainable development owes the moral obligations of the present generation towards the future generations (Sandhu, V. & Sidhu, A. S., 2015). The organisational activities are performed by the humans so, the role of employees become very important and crucial

for the organisation to contribute for the activities relating to the protection and improvement of the environment. The employee engagement has to be encouraged by the organisation to devise means and measures for the protection of the environment. This leads to the assumptions that organisational transitions towards environmental sustainability can be enhanced by organisation to create and implement environmental solutions (Ramus, 2000).

1.1 Employee's engagement:-

Employee engagement is considered as a relatively new term in human resource literatures and this term came into prominence after the year 2000. The term 'Employee Engagement' has gained importance as it has shown a statistical relationship with major human resource terms such as productivity; profitability; employee retention; safety; employee satisfaction as well as customer satisfaction (Buckingham and Coffman 1999; Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina 2002). The absence of engagement in the employees results into 'engagement gap' which is detrimental for the productivity and growth of the organisations (Kowalski, 2003).

Employee engagement makes the employee to 'go the extra miles' for the benefit of the organisation. Engaged employees are readily and happily involved; and perform their work with full devotion and concentration. Engaged employees has the ability to make big differences if the organisations are able to provide positive psychological climate; resources for the job; management support; as well as good working conditions. *Employee engagement* refers to the positive feeling that the employees develop towards their jobs and act as source of motivation for enhanced efforts made by them. It is a condition of employee when he feels involved; committed; passionate; and empowered. It also influences the demonstrations of their feeling in their work behaviour (Bakker et al., 2010). The organisation must strive to develop and enhance this level of commitment and involvement. The organisation can achieve employee engagement by creating and maintaining organisation environment where these positive emotions are encouraged.

Buyse and Verbeke (2003) discussed that employees serve as a vital resource for the organisation for the successful adoption of environmental protection policies. There is significant difference among the employees while possessing environmental behaviour vis-a-vis traditional work behaviour. Environmental behaviour is voluntary in nature where as work behaviour is mandatory. Further, environmental behaviours are not mentioned in job description as compared to traditional

work behaviour which is in written form. Likewise, environmental behaviour is not tracked in routine manner whereas conventional work behaviours are routinely measured. Moreover, environmental behaviour are not rewarded (or punished) in many organisation whereas there exist formal reward and disciplinary mechanism for traditional work behaviour. There is great influence of personal in environmental beliefs on environmental behaviour whereas traditional work behaviour is not much affected by personal environmental values and beliefs. Therefore, it indicates that implementation of environmental management system depends on employee's willingness to participate voluntarily in environmental activities. At the same time it creates biggest challenge for the organisations to directly involve employees in environmental activities. Due to these reasons, there is need to understand how the employee commitment for the environment protection can be enhanced; and more number of employees can be involved in activities related to protection and improvement of environment. As discussed earlier, the environmental behaviour can be represented as extra- role behaviour because they are discretionary; not providing direct benefit to the organisation; and are beyond the traditional work behaviour (Cantor et al., 2015). The organisations are the largest contributors to the pollution of the environment. Therefore, it becomes important for these polluters to identify the activities which are causing pollution; and should involve in providing solution to mitigate and eliminate the pollution.

1.2 Employee eco-initiatives:-

Employee eco-initiatives are the actions of the employees (either individual or in group) directed towards the protection and improvement of environment for improving the environmental performance of the organisations. These actions or the work targeted towards the protection and improvement of environment occurs at all the levels of the firm, as well as for all the employees (Ramus, Steger, and Winder, 1996).

Employee's willingness to eco-innovate depends on both organisational and individual factors (Hostager, Neil, Decker, and Lorentz, 1998). The organisational factors can indicate desirability of the firms by providing various incentives to employees for encouraging eco-initiatives. This can also be signalled from the environmental policies as well as supportive behaviours from supervisors. Likewise, individual factors include the skills and competencies of the employees that are utilised for enhancing their abilities for participating in environmental initiatives (Amabile et al., 1996 and Ramus, 2000). The purpose served by the

environmental reports is to encourage employee engagement in environmental management by motivating, guiding and increasing moral of the employees (Lober, Bynum, Campbell, and Jacques, 1997). Many pro-active organisations are continuously publishing sustainability reports mentioning the contributions made by them in social, economic and environmental sectors.

The successful implementation of environmental policies as well as environmental management system largely depends upon environmental responsibility of both employee and the managers working at all levels of organisations (Hutchinson, 1996). The environmental responsibility of the employees should be stated clearly but even if it is not there, the employees should try to perform their respective jobs in a way that contributes for the protection and improvement of the environment directly or indirectly. At the same time the supervisor should acknowledge and motivate the employees for their environmental efforts. Supervisory/ Managerial Behaviours that support environmental initiatives by the employees influence the willingness of the employees to make efforts for environmental activities. The managers have important role to play especially, in those organisations which want to grow; change; and innovate (Cavaleri and Fearon, 1996). Furthermore, it is pertinent to mention that the managers are the mentors for empowering the employees (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Garvin, 1993; Kimberley and Evanisko, 1981; Pearn, Roderick, and Mulrooney, 1995; Redmond, Mumford, and Teach, 1993; Senge, 1990).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Afsar, B. et al. (2015) in their research study framed and tested a theoretical model in which they linked spiritual leadership with employee pro-environmental behaviour through several intervening variables. The study found that spiritual leadership affected workplace spirituality in a positive manner and workplace spirituality further influences intrinsic motivation and environmental passion. These two variables moreover, influence pro-environmental behaviour in a positive manner. Fraj, et al. (2015) in their research paper proposed and tested a model for examining the linkage between proactive environmental strategies; organizational capabilities; and competitiveness. The findings of the study confirmed that a proactive environmental strategy as well as innovation favours organizational competitiveness. Blok, V. et al. (2014) in their research paper attempted to identify factors which help to predict pro-environmental behaviour of the employees in the workplace. They identified two groups of factors namely; internal factors and external factors.

They tested the model on employees of a green university in Netherlands. The study concluded that the pro-environmental behaviour in the workplace can be explained by the theory of planned behaviour. The study further highlighted that the factors influencing pro-environmental behaviour in households are different from the factors at workplace.

Chen, Y. et al. (2014) in their study found that marked orientation of the firm effects environmental strategy of the firm in positive manner. This has resulted to influence both environmental product quality and employees environmental involvement. The study also found that these two variables positively influence environmental performance of the firm. Further, the study revealed that the link between market orientation and market strategy is made by environmental commitment. Tung, A. et al. (2014) in their research paper examined the relationship between organizational factors, namely; top management support, training, employee participations, teamwork, and link of performance to reward with the effectiveness of environmental management. They found that there was relationship between organizational factors and environmental performance. They also recognised the importance of environmental performance for environmental management processes. The findings of the study provided managers an insight into the factors responsible for increasing the effectiveness of environmental management. Graves, L. M. et al. (2013) in their study attempted to study the linkages between transformational leadership and environmental issues. They also studied the relationship between external motivation and Pro-Environmental Behaviours (PEBs). Further, they concluded that the autonomous motivation was positively related to PEBs. The study suggested that interplay of environmental transformational leadership; autonomous motivation; and external motivation play important role in influencing employee's PEBs. Teixeira, A. A. et al. (2012) in their research study attempted to study the relationship between green management and environmental training as well as the factors contributing to their relationship. They conducted case studies of ISO 14001 certified companies and recommended higher level of adoption of environmental training activities for green management practices. They also explained the relationship between green management and environmental training for the company at proactive stage.

Bakker, A. B. et al. (2011) in their study discussed the concept of work engagement and summarizes their research on its most important antecedents. For this, the

authors formulated ten key questions for engagement. In addition to conceptual development and measurement of ending work engagement, the author also discussed the importance of state work engagement. Engaged employees conserve their own engagement through a process of job crafting. The study also discussed the organizational interventions to increase work engagement. Gruman, J.A. & Saks, A.M. (2011) in their research study described a new approach related to the performance management process that incorporates employee engagement as well as key drivers that are related to employee engagement at every stage. They also presented a model of engagement that suggests a new perspective for increasing and managing employee engagement for achieving high level of job performance. Joshi, R.J. and Sodhi, J. S. (2011) in their study discussed that employee engagement had a direct relationship with employee performance and business results. They attempted to analyze that what type of organizational climate drives employee engagement in Indian organizations. The study found that work-life balance; job content; monetary benefits; and team orientation (scope for advancement and top management employee relations) were common drivers of engagement. Some other key drivers identified by them for non-executives were Union/Association Management relations; recognitions and rewards; and welfare facilities.

Bhatnagar, J. & Biswas, S. (2010) in their research paper suggested resource based view of the organization to employee engagement and also explored the linkages of the same with the organizational performance. They argued that employee engagement interacts with other intangible variables like; sense of justice and psychological contract which the individual employees feels and expects, respectively. Further, they revealed positive effect of employee engagement on Organizational Commitment (OC) as well as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). Jabbour, C.J. C. et al. (2010) in their research study analyzed the contribution of human resource management in the early stages of environmental management. The study revealed that the companies with ISO 140001 certification were recognizing the contribution of Human Resource dimensions in all the stages of environmental management system of the company. Pati, S. P. and Kumar, P. (2010) in their study discussed that in present times, engaged employees are considered as strategic asset for organizations. The authors argued through theoretical arguments and empirical support that self-efficacy levels in employees are primarily responsible for the differences that occur in displaying engagement. Based on findings,

the authors defined engagement as expressed empowerment pertaining to a role. Steg, L. and Vlek, C. (2009) in their research paper reviewed the contribution and the potential of environmental psychology so that the pro-environmental behaviour could be understood and promoted in a better manner. They proposed a general framework which comprises of four factors namely; identification of the behaviour to be changed; examination of the main factors underlying this behaviour; design and application of interventions to change behaviour to reduce environmental impact; and evaluation of the effects of interventions. They discussed the manner in which environmental psychologists empirically studied these four factors; identified the apparent shortcomings; and indicated major issues for future research. Ramus, C. A. & Killmer, A. B. (2005) in their research paper proposed a conceptual framework that included the result of empirical research within behavioural intent model as well as the concept of value-creating pro-social behaviours. They further argued that if the corporate greening was conceived as a pro-social behaviour, it acts as dominant factors that help to motivate employees to engage in eco-initiatives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this review was to explore the current state of knowledge about employee engagement and environment protection at work. To extract meaningful information regarding the study, pertinent research from the published literature; the electronic databases for Human Resource Management; Social Science; Psychology; and General Management were scanned prior to more detailed searches. Keywords used in the literature searches included engagement; engagement at work; employee engagement; job engagement; personal engagement; work engagement; environment protection; sustainable development; and environmental concerns. Reference lists of articles were reviewed for additional publications that may have not been indexed properly and not found via electronic searches. Internet searches of professional organizations (i.e., www.jstor.org, www.emeraldinsight.com, www.wikipedia.org, www.google.com) and government sites (i.e., www.trst.com, www.teriin.org) were also conducted.

3.1 Objectives of the study:-

Consequently, the objectives of this paper are to accomplish the following:

1. To identify the problems regarding the employee's engagement for the protection and improvement of environment.

2. To present systematic review of the existing literature related to employee's engagement for the protection and improvement of environment.
3. To formulate statement of the problem for further research.

3.2 Limitation of the Study:-

There are limitations to every research. Likewise, there are also limitations to review for the present study. The key words that are used to describe employee engagement and environment protection may have led to missing published research. The present research was also limited to peer-reviewed journals, social science, organizational psychology, and management journals to identify the state of the science of employee engagement and environment protection at work and to identify antecedents and consequences of the same. The research papers were collected and consulted through some of the available search engines as well as online and offline journals like; Google scholar, jstore, Emerald, Springer and many more. Additional research reports that could have met the inclusion criteria may have been available in other online as well as offline publications.

3.3 Scope and Importance of Study:-

The present study has taken into consideration all the similar supervisory behaviours that are present in learning organisations; and the organisations that had supported eco-initiatives by the employees successfully in various research studies conducted in past. There also exist needs to identify the types of supervisory behaviour that exist in the firms supporting eco-initiative. The review of literature suggests that there are good numbers of studies conducted in India regarding the contribution of the industrial organisations towards the protection of environment. But a very limited effort has been made to study the organisational as well as managerial factors which encourage eco-initiatives among the employees. Therefore, the present study will attempt to plug this particular research gap.

4. FINDINGS FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature suggests that the problem solving capabilities regarding the environmental issues can be enhanced by proper flow of environmental information. For this the manager provides accurate, understandable, easily available and related information to all the internal and external stakeholders regarding the environmental issues. The environmental information creates its value if it is available at the time and place where it is desired. The common environmental related

information includes environmental reports, environmental targets, emission or discharge of pollutants, devices or processes used to reduce the environmental pollution etc. The environmental information is shared by the employees through emails, electronic, bulletin boards, notice boards, announcement, poster, pamphlets etc. The environmental information is very useful for the employees to know about vision, policies, strategies, resources and achievement toward the environmental goals. The significant changes related to environmental aspects are informed to the employees. So, that they are able to know the nature and source of needed information. It leads to effective decision-making capabilities of the employees related to any environmental issues. It leads to generate proper environmental solutions by the employees thus, increasing employee engagement on environmental issues.

Environmental issues are becoming very important for the organisation in the present time. The environmental issues provide advantages to the organisations if they are dealt with in proper manner otherwise it will lead to negative impacts and cost (Russell, 2006). The organisations are recognising and motivating the contribution of employees in the overall protection and improvement of environment so that the employees can be engaged in environmental behaviours. The major reasons and interest for the same is due to potential benefits of the environmental behaviours like reduce packaging waste; decreased labour cost; reduced wastage of raw materials; decrease in movement of material; increase in efficiency of machines and humans; and improvement in reputation with stakeholders of the organisations. Employee engagement in environmental behaviour includes activities related to recycling; conservation of energy; minimisation of waste; and introducing and adopting eco-initiatives etc. Employee engagement is effected by the attitude of managerial and line level employees. The literature review has shown that many organisations meet the legal requirements framed by law of land regarding environmental protection whereas many organisations tend to be proactive in nature that is; they work beyond regulatory requirements (Buisse, 2003). In both the cases the major challenges for the firm includes how to motivate the employees to engage in environmental behaviours. There is growing interest among the organisation to examine the factors at individual level that contributes to promote employee engagement in environmental behaviour.

5. RESULTS AND PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH AGENDA

It is possible to weigh the strengths and weaknesses in the literature based on the results. It is also possible to consider the opportunities for planning employee engagement in protection and improvement of environment studies. In review of literature, the well-studied issues and the subjects that still need to be explored are highlighted.

The review of literature suggests that the research focussing on participation of employees in pro-environmental behaviour is very scarce and leads for additional research to better understand pro-environmental behaviour within the firm, in general; and employee behaviour, in particular. The employee engagement in environmental behaviour is greatly influenced by supervisor's support and training. Manager's attitude towards environmental issues has great impact on environmental performance (Pagell and Gobeli, 2009). To achieve this it is highly desirable to develop environmental innovations among the employees through the effective support from the supervisors and firms. The review of literature suggests that there are good numbers of studies conducted in India regarding the contribution of the industrial organisations towards the protection of environment. But a very limited effort has been made to study the organisational as well as managerial factor which encourages eco-initiatives among the employees.

The proposed research study will be designed to comprehensively examine the efforts made by the organisation through their supervisors to encourage their employees for eco-initiatives. Therefore, the proposed research study will attempt to analyze that which types of behaviours of the supervisors are necessary to initiate eco-initiatives among its employees. It is further highlighted that encouraging environmental actions is not the part of duty of the supervisors rather it is done voluntarily to make the firm environmentally sustainable. As a result, the proposed research study will attempt to analyze the associations and the impact of various managerial factors on employee's eco-initiatives in the firms. Keeping this consideration, the proposed research study is titled as **"Employee engagement in environmental protection: A study of selected companies in Punjab"**. The empirical study will be conducted in Punjab (India) to examine the nature and extent of the employee engagement for environmental creativity and innovation. So, the present study took an initial step in using an empirically validated relationship model to find relationship between employee willingness

to promote eco-initiatives and dimension of support for work environment, The dimension of organisational and supervisory encouragement are used in the study to determine whether these dimensions are related to employee creativity for demonstrating eco-initiatives in the region of Punjab (India) or not.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to present the results of a systematic literature review on employee engagement and environment protection in organisations. This type of literature review will prove useful for the scientific community. As a result of the gaps in the current literature, this framework may guide and strengthen the state-of-the-art research and, consequently, improve employee engagement and environment protection in organisations. This proposed framework may also complement the research on environmental management.

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