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Staff Motivation for Green Behaviour and Environmental Initiatives

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Abstract: The main purpose of the study is to assess the use of motivational tools to green behaviour of employees and environmental initiatives in Ukrainian organizations. The results of the survey confirmed the working hypotheses: the practice of motivating staff to green behaviour and environmental initiatives in Ukraine has not become widespread. The research showed that a half of the organizations encourage environmental initiatives. At the same time, owners and managers of organizations prefer intangible rewards of encouraging employees to green behaviour and ecological initiatives. Although intangible rewards are more common in encouraging employees to participate in environmental activities than tangible ones, the practice of using them is still mediocre. The paper focuses on the necessity of paying more attention to both tangible and intangible incentives of encouraging employees to environmental activities by owners and managers. The study provides the important recommendations for encouraging employees to engage in green activities and environmental initiatives: increasing wages, paying bonuses, providing social benefits as tangible rewards; the publication of staff contributions to sustainable development, public recognition and awards for environmental efforts, green activities, encouraging the receipt of certificates and awards as intangible rewards; promotion of employees who have competencies in green management, involving employees in goal setting and the development of indicators of the environmental activities results, green corporate culture and green leadership as efficient corporate factors.

Keywords: Staff motivation, Green behaviour, Environmental initiatives

Introduction

Technical progress, population growth, irrational use of natural resources, their depletion and pollution lead to the deterioration of the ecological situation on the planet. Environmental protection becomes the task not only of public authorities but also of businesses, public organizations and every citizen. Today, some organizations are switching to alternative energy sources, resource-saving technologies, waste-free production, circular economy to meet the expectations of their consumers and customers.

In addition, the international community's increasing attention to environmental issues and the development of international environmental standards make it necessary for organizations to adopt green strategies and policies. A socially responsible organization should implement green practices, contribute to achieving sustainable development goals, and develop green corporate culture. To this end, the organization needs to have employees who share a green corporate culture, have self-motivation for environmental behaviour. At the same time, owners and managers should encourage employees to green behaviour, saving use of resources, and

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environmental initiatives, so they need to form an external motivation for green behaviour. To this end, owners and managers must use a variety of means of tangible and intangible rewards.

Literature review

Many researchers study the development of green HRM policies, green practices in personnel selection, adaptation, training and development, the impact of green HRM on the organizational environmental policies, encouragement of employees to green behaviour. The research of Dumont et al., (2017) empirically tests the influence of green HRM on employees' green behaviour. The study findings indicate that green HRM affects both employee in-role and extra-role workplace green behaviour; however, this occurs through different social and psychological processes.

Tsymbaliuk et al., (2021) develop a theoretical foundation for implementing environmental issues into HRM practices, including compensation and benefits, employee relations, corporate culture, communication etc. Rayner and Morgan (2018) assessed the environmental knowledge of employees and self-perceptions of ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) to practise green behaviours by operationalizing the AMO framework towards a pro-environmental agenda. The authors' findings show that pro-environmental AMO is positively associated with green behaviours and that these are more prevalent at home than in the workplace.

The research of Temminck et al., (2015) examines factors that may contribute to the emergence of green behaviour of an organization. The authors found a significant relationship between the green behaviour of an organization and such factors as employees' concern for the environment, organizational support for environmental efforts, and organizational commitment. Robertson and Barling (2013) study links environmentally-specific transformational leadership and leaders' workplace pro-environmental behaviours to employees' pro-environmental passion and behaviours. The authors' findings show that leaders' environmental descriptive norms and the leadership and pro-environmental behaviours they enact play a significant role in the greening of organizations.

The research of Pellegrini et al., (2018) empirically tests the relationship between employee perceptions of HR practices and their propensity to adopt sustainable behaviour for supporting organizational change for sustainability. The results show that when the organization and line managers value and promote sustainability, employees are more likely to internalize and make sense of sustainability, which cause a higher commitment to adopt sustainable behaviour.

Norton et al., (2017) examine the between-persons relationship of corporate environmental strategy and green psychological climate. The results show that corporate environmental strategy is positively related to green psychological climate that, in turn, moderates the relationship between green behavioural intentions and next-day employee green behaviour. Saeed et al., (2019) examine the effects of green HRM practices on employee's pro-environmental behaviour. Results reveal that green HRM practices positively affect employee's green behaviour, and pro-environmental psychological capital mediated this link. Employee's green knowledge moderated the effect of green HRM practices on pro-environmental behaviour.

The paper of Zibarras and Coan (2015) presents the survey results investigating current HRM practices used to promote pro-environmental behaviour in the UK. The authors' findings indicate that HRM practices are not used to a great extent to encourage employees to become more pro-environmental. The most prevalent practices incorporate elements of management involvement, supporting the idea that managers are the gatekeepers to environmental performance.

Al-Swidi et al., (2021) investigate the determinants and outcomes of green corporate culture and green behaviour of employees. The authors confirmed the effect of environmental concern, green HRM and green leadership behaviour on green corporate culture. Green corporate culture has a positive relationship with employees' green behaviour and environmental performance. Ababneh et al., (2021) investigate relationships between green HRM practices, transformational leadership, and employee engagement with environmental initiatives. The findings indicate that employee engagement is positively associated with Green HRM practices. The study provides findings on how the contextual-institutional interactions between transformational leadership behaviours and green HRM practices can foster employee engagement with environmental initiatives. Despite significant interest from scientists in ecological policy issues, green HRM practices, research on environmental behaviour in the workplace and the factors that influence it remains understudied.

Methodology

Working hypothesis: the practice of motivating staff to green behaviour and environmental initiatives in Ukraine has not become widespread (H). In order to confirm or refute the working hypothesis, we conducted a survey (in the form of a questionnaire) during April - August 2021. The survey purpose was to assess the use of motivational tools to green behaviour of employees and environmental initiatives in Ukrainian organizations.

Objectives of the survey:

- to assess the practice of using tangible rewards to encourage employees to participate in environmental activities in Ukrainian organizations;
- to assess the practice of using intangible rewards to encourage employees to participate in environmental activities in Ukrainian organizations;
- to assess the practice of promotion of employees with competencies in the field of environmental management.

204 managers and HR specialists from Ukrainian companies took part in the survey. For assessing the practice of using different tools to motivate employees to green behaviour in organizations, we used a standard symmetric scale of responses to the proposed statements: “strongly agree”, “rather agree”, “rather disagree”, “strongly disagree”, and “difficult to answer”.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model of the formation of employees’ green behaviour in an organization and place of employees’ motivation. The green behaviour of employees depends on the availability of necessary conditions, the development of green competencies in employees, staff motivation to green behaviour and environmental initiatives.

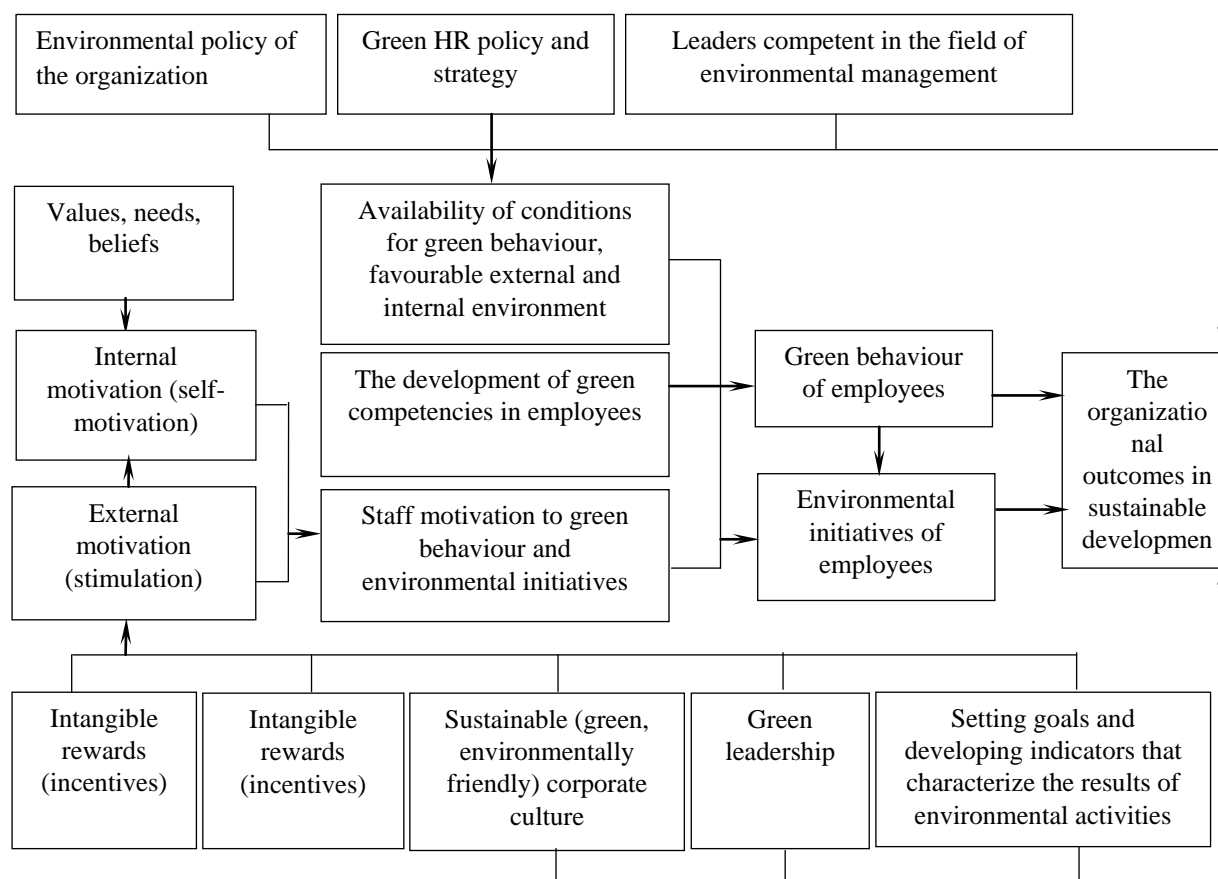


Figure 1. The theoretical model of the formation of employees green behaviour in an organization

The motivation of employees as an encouragement to green activities is determined by internal motivation (self-motivation). Internal motivation depends not only on the employee values, needs and beliefs but also on external incentives – a set of tangible and intangible rewards used by owners and managers to encourage staff to green behaviour, sustainable corporate culture, green leadership and setting green goals. Table 1 contains the survey results on the different methods used for motivating employees to green behaviour in Ukrainian organizations. Half of the respondents (50%) said that the organization encourages environmental initiatives to reduce carbon emissions (use of public transport, e-cars, work at home, etc.), waste reduction (use of recycling, electronic archives, etc.). It is a good practice that contributes to the effective implementation of environmental policies and green activities. In this regard, it is necessary to find out what motivational tools are used by owners and managers for encouraging employees to green behaviour and environmental initiatives. The use of tangible rewards (salary increases, bonuses, social benefits) by employers and managers for encouraging employees to environmental activities is quite limited. Only 18.6% of respondents confirmed the spread of such practices in the organizations in which they work.

Table 1. The survey results on the different methods used for motivating employees to green behaviour in Ukrainian organizations

Statements	Answers, % of respondents				
	strongly agree	rather agree	rather disagree	strongly disagree	difficult to answer
The organization encourages environmental initiatives to reduce carbon emissions (use of public transport, e-cars, work at home, etc.), waste reduction (use of recycling, electronic archives, etc.)	23.5	26.5	13.7	25.5	10.8
The organization encourages employees to participate in environmental activities through tangible rewards: salary increases, bonuses, social benefits	8.8	9.8	17.6	48.0	15.7
Top management uses public recognition and awards for environmental efforts, green activities	15.7	15.7	17.6	38.2	12.7
The organization publishes the contribution of staff to the sustainable development	20.6	22.5	12.7	29.4	14.7
The organization encourages the receipt of certificates and awards rewarded to employees by external organizations for green behaviour	12.7	14.7	11.8	44.1	16.7
The organization promotes employees who have competencies in the field of environmental management	3.9	9.8	19.6	45.1	21.6
The organization develops a sustainable (green, environmentally friendly) corporate culture	19.6	29.4	13.7	22.5	14.7
The organization develops goals and indicators that characterize the results of environmental activities	12.7	19.6	15.7	36.3	15.7
Employees participate in the development of goals and indicators that characterize the results of environmental activities and took part in the discussion of ways to improve them	10.8	18.6	20.6	34.3	15.7

In contrast to tangible incentives, intangible rewards are more common for encouraging employees to environmental activities. 43.1% of respondents said that the organization publishes the contribution of staff to the sustainable development. 31.4% of respondents claimed that the top management uses public recognition and awards for environmental efforts and the green activities of employees. In this way, the owners and leaders of the organization emphasize the importance of environmental behaviour and green initiatives. On the one hand, this practice makes it possible to meet the needs of employees in recognizing their results and contribution to the implementation of organization environmental policies. On the other hand, it is a good example for other employees to follow.

27.5% of respondents indicated that the organization encourages the receipt of certificates and awards rewarded to employees by external organizations for green behaviour. This practice is evidence that the owners and leaders of the organization foster a green lifestyle and green behaviour that goes beyond the organization and does not bring obvious direct benefits. At the same time, the green lifestyle and green behaviour of employees as conscious and socially responsible citizens contribute to the sustainable development of both the country and society as a whole.

An efficient method of encouraging employees to green behaviour and ecological initiatives is to promote employees who, in addition to professional and leadership competencies, have competencies in environmental management. This practice is good for several reasons. Firstly, it allows creating a sustainable (green, environmentally friendly) corporate culture. Secondly, such managers focus on green activities and encourage environmental initiatives of their subordinates. Thirdly, this practice promotes the development of green career skills and competencies in environmental management. Despite the effectiveness of this method of encouragement, only 13.7% of respondents said that the organization promotes employees who have competencies in environmental management. This does not contribute to the spread of green practices in various functional areas of the organization.

An efficient method of motivating employees to green activities is to encourage them by goal setting. At the same time, the motivational potential of goal setting increases in the case of involving employees in goal setting and the development of indicators that characterize the results of environmental activities. However, this method of encouragement is also not widely used in practice. 32.3% of respondents said that the organization develops goals and indicators that characterize the results of environmental activities. 29.4% indicated that employees participate in setting goals and indicators that characterize the results of environmental activities and discuss ways to improve them.

A significant factor influencing staff motivation for green behaviour is a sustainable (green, environmentally friendly) corporate culture. Slightly less than half of the respondents said that the organization develops a stable corporate culture, which is a good indicator. This practice also helps to attract employees with green competencies and share the company's values of resource efficiency, environmental safety and sustainable development. The results of the survey confirmed the working hypothesis: the practice of motivating staff to green behaviour and environmental initiatives in Ukraine has not become widespread (H).

Conclusions

According to the survey, half of the respondents said that the organization encourages environmental initiatives. At the same time, owners and managers of organizations prefer intangible rewards of encouraging employees to green behaviour and ecological initiatives. Although intangible rewards are more common in encouraging employees to participate in environmental activities than tangible ones, the practice of using them is still mediocre. As a result, owners and managers need to pay more attention to both tangible and intangible incentives of encouraging employees to environmental activities. Unchanged tangible rewards of encouraging employees to participate in environmental activities remain increasing wages, paying bonuses, providing social benefits. Among the intangible rewards should be the publication of staff contributions to sustainable development, public recognition and awards for environmental efforts, green activities, encouraging the receipt of certificates and awards rewarded to employees by external organizations for green behaviour etc. An efficient method of encouraging employees to engage in green activities and environmental initiatives is to promote employees who have competencies in green management. Green corporate culture and green leadership are efficient factors that motivate staff to behave green.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPSS journal belongs to the authors.

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