

## Environmentally sustainable organizations: present potential and future promise

The concept of “sustainability” assumed worldwide significance when it was documented for the first time in the Brundtland Report released in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Sustainability aims at meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In the present-day context, it has assumed enormous significance owing to people’s awareness of the impact businesses and individuals can have on the environment. Consumers and organizations alike are seeking options to alleviate urgent environmental demands resulting from constant population and economic growth (de Medeiros *et al.*, 2014). Seidel *et al.* (2013) discuss how the deterioration of the environment is a pressing concern for our society and business organizations continue to remain a significant contributor to this challenge. It is observed that numerous organizations have an opportunity to engage in sustainable development practices while enhancing efficiency, boosting productivity, minimizing costs and maximizing profitability. Their poor business practices lead to detrimental effects for the environment in the forms of waste: unused or underused resources, energy inefficiency, elevated noise levels and harmful emissions, all of which are waste products causing negative externalities and diminution in economic efficiency (Watson *et al.*, 2010). “Greening” organization theorists have tailored existing paradigms of organizational tactics to embrace environmental demands and organizational responses, from the standpoint of making firms more proactive (Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995). Thus, there is considerable understanding and recognition that the economic sustenance of a firm is entwined with environmentally sustainable development (Bauer *et al.*, 2012).

Supporting the contention that organizational effectiveness is contingent upon environmental sustainability (Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995). Sarkis (2001) points that the long-term viability of an organization depends on the sustainability of the natural environment; organizations, therefore, are obliged to take on a worldwide perspective, neither merely departmental nor a single project at a time, while assessing environmental concerns. Customers, too, are mindful and have concerns for environmental protection and preservation (Sheth *et al.*, 2010). Organizations realize this and appreciate that an opportunity exists for them to stand distinct among competitors based on their commitment to environmental sustainability. They are increasingly facing the necessity to transform their businesses for attaining environmental objectives (Marcon *et al.*, 2017).

The main objective of this special issue is to know how organizations encounter uncertainties for transforming their current practices and the steps they take to attain the desired goals of environmental stewardship.

## Papers in our issue

In the direction of accomplishing the objective as mentioned earlier, the first article in this special issue, “Enhancing Business Performance through Green Human Resource Management Practices,” quantitatively identified green HRM practices as the drivers of environmental and business performance in the Malaysian manufacturing businesses. The study used natural resource-based view theory to propose eight hypotheses to understand the relationships of green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green reward and compensation, green performance and appraisal, green employee empowerment



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and participation, green organizational culture on business performance mediated by environmental performance. Data collected from 179 employees confirmed that all the hypotheses are statistically significant. Thus, by improving environmental performance through green policies, practices and management, the business performance of manufacturing organizations can be improved.

The second paper, “Do Knowledge and Attitude Influence Youth Green Purchasing? Theory of Planned Behavior”, revealed the extent to which green knowledge and attitude influence purchase behavior through green trust and value among the youth of Ghana. The authors proposed the hypotheses using the theoretical underpinning of the theory of planned behavior to seek the relationship between green knowledge as well as a green attitude with purchasing behavior. Additionally, the authors also mediated these relationships with green trust and green value. The primary data collected from 417 respondents contributed to the theory of predicting pro-environmental behavior. The results will help business managers to think about using green practices and green products to influence the purchase decisions of youth in Ghana.

The third paper, “Developing Framework for Evaluating Sustainability Index for Logistics Service Provider: GTMA Approach,” used a graph theory matrix approach (GTMA) to assess sustainability index for logistics service providers (LSP) especially in the context of India. The authors aimed at identifying and analyzing sustainable practices followed by LSP in the Indian context, evaluating a sustainable index using GTMA and, as a result proposing a framework. The authors used a case-based approach for a company that manages resources at ecological, societal and economic levels. Results confirm that the sustainability index of the given LSP’s is comparatively lesser than the possible value of the sustainability index, which indicates a scope of improvement in the area of sustainable practices and logistics operations.

The fourth paper, “What influences intention to purchase sustainable products? Impact of advertising and materialism”, examined the role of materialism and attitude toward environmental advertising in the relationship between attitude toward social and environmental accountability of firms and intention to purchase environmentally sustainable products among Indian students. The study answers an interesting research question: “What are the mechanisms through which the attitude towards social and environmental accountability impacts the intentions to purchase environmentally sustainable products?”. The authors collected primary data of 205 students from India to test the hypotheses. The results contribute to extending the attitude, social influence and efficacy model and elaboration likelihood model. Furthermore, the study helps in extending cognitive consistency theory as well.

The fifth paper, “Enablers of Green Business Process Management in the Oil and Gas Sector,” used expert data from Gulf Cooperation Council to prioritize the key enablers driving Green Business Process Management (GBPM). The study critically examines enablers and subenablers of GBPM and prioritizes them using analytical hierarchy process. The research question is grounded in the theory of contingency. The study explored six enablers, namely, strategic, managerial, people and culture, information technology, methods and governance. The results paint an administrative picture as it helps firms to measure economically feasible and commercial practices to promote a greener environment.

The sixth paper, “A study on the behavioral factors affecting household solar adoption in Kerala India,” used neural network technique to subsidies as a key motivator that encourages risk-taking in investing in new technology. The study uniquely positions itself by building upon behavioral finance and institutional theory and makes claims that in addition to a rational evaluation of economies of investment opportunities, various nonfinancial factors affect the household’s decision to invest in renewables. The study uses two primary datasets of 237 and 387 families in Kerala (India). It documents the role of government subsidies as the

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most crucial motivator when it comes to overcoming the initial risk of investment in any new technology.

The seventh paper, “Green Service Production in Healthcare and Role of Value Chain Flexibility,” used a multiple case study approach to provide insights into how each dimension of the value chain flexibility plays a role in green practices. The authors position their paper uniquely by using an exploratory case study of three national-level healthcare firms in India. The research is grounded in the principles of resource-based view theory and evaluates the relationship between value chain flexibility and green service production. It presents a theoretical framework that captures the subdimensions of requirements of a new supplier, factors contributing to production efficiency, and radical changes in service offerings.

The eighth paper, “Role of Employee Relations and HRM in Driving Commitment to Sustainability in MSME Firms,” used a cross-case technique to propose a framework for developing commitment toward sustainability. The study explores the role of employee relations and human resource management practices on micro, small and medium enterprises’ (MSME) commitment to sustainability. It extends the arguments of ability, motivation and opportunity and psychological contract theory and proposes an awareness, action, comprehensiveness and excellence framework. Additionally, the results also highlight the role of leaders in removing information asymmetry, empowering human resource strategy and using informal employee relations to improve culture.

The ninth paper, “Revisiting Environmental Degradation and Economic Growth Nexus using ARDL Approach,” used advanced statistical techniques to explain the nexus among economic growth, carbon emissions, trade openness, financial effectiveness and foreign direct investment (FDI). It analyzed the linkages between financial development, foreign direct investment and energy consumption toward environmental stability for India, China, South Africa, Brazil, the USA, Japan and the UK. Secondary data are sourced from World Development Indicators from 1965 to 2016 to test the relationships. The results present interesting relationships between financial development, FDI and carbon emissions. Lastly, the study contributes to the pollution haven hypothesis in an Indian context.

The tenth paper, “Green Knowledge Management and Strategic Renewal: A Discursive Perspective on Corporate Sustainability,” applied discourse theory to review knowledge management literature and address each element of strategy renewal. The authors build upon the concepts of strategic renewal with three key elements of idea generation, initiative development and strategic reintegration, thereby offering a broad and dynamic view of green knowledge management (GKM). The proposed conceptual model also contributes to the sustainability literature, suggesting that an organization’s commitment to sustainability is a strategic outcome that may be influenced by discourse and GKM.

## Conclusion

The special issues offer a multidimensional perspective of sustainability by drawing tenants from conceptual studies, empirical studies, case-based studies and modeling-driven papers. The special issue posts interesting arguments in a different applied area ranging from health care, logistics management, technology adoption, knowledge management, etc. The diversity in papers opens up doors for researchers to explore multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach toward the key concepts of sustainability. Moreover, the special issue unwraps interesting theoretical debates and offers insights from case studies from different organizations. It also posts theoretical and conceptual models that can be explored from both organizational theories like resource-based view theory, knowledge management theory, institutional theory, theory of contingencies, theory of planned behavior. Thus, the special issues paint the canvas of environmental sustainability for its readers to interpret and extend the findings of each of the 10 studies. Lastly, it also presents critical debate and

arguments that will help the readers to revisit the concepts of sustainability from the both telescopic and microscopic lenses.

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