

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals into HR Practices: Enhancing Employee Value Proposition in the Modern Workplace

Renu Jogdand

Assistant Professor, University of Mumbai, Mumbai, India
Renu.jogdand@mu.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

Transformation in the transportation sector is imperative to address the environmental issues and combat climate change. The study examined the determinants of intention to adopt cycling as a sustainable work travel mode among individuals in Mumbai city. The responses were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the theory of planned behaviour. Individuals riding a cycle or sometimes using a cycle to workplace were the target audience of the study. SEM technique was used to identify the significant determinants of intention to adopt cycling as a sustainable work travel mode. The analysis found the "perception of environment" as the only significant contributor to the intention to adopt cycling as a sustainable work travel mode. The study highlights the urgent need to augment the infrastructure for cycling. The findings of the study may help enhance the usage of cycles as a work travel mode.

Keywords: Bicycling, Cycling, SDGs 2030, Sustainability, Transportation, Vehicular Emissions

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations implemented the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to provide a common framework for addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change. The interest of businesses in terms of SDGs incorporation into their corporate strategies including HR practices is growing because they have a critical role to play in achieving these goals. In India, embedding SDGs into HR practices creates unique possibilities which can enhance Employee Value Proposition (EVP), defined as what an organization offers its employees for their skills, abilities and backgrounds. This approach not only aligns corporate objectives with global sustainability targets but also enhances the Employee Value Proposition (EVP), thereby attracting and retaining talent committed to sustainability (Gupta & Sharma, 2020).

This research examines how companies integrate SDGs into HR practices and subsequently improve EVP. To understand the benefits and barriers of sustainable HRM, this article investigates current trends and practices with some recommendations on how to better use SDGs for strengthening EVP within modern working environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

In the 1970s, the idea of "sustainability" was first related with the environmental and economic dimensions; then social dimension was added. The World Commission on Environment and Development's renowned Brundtland Report, which was released in 1987, established the concept of sustainable development and made the advancement of human resources (HR) a key priority in order to boost economic activity and support the sustainability of organisations and society as a whole. (Campos-García, et al, 2024) Since then, a dual perspective has led to an increase in interest in understanding the relationship between sustainability and HR. First, HR may contribute significantly to business sustainability—what people can accomplish for organizations—through their knowledge, methods of operation, abilities, values, and attitudes. Employees can, on the one hand, help create and preserve a sustainable competitive advantage (Ehnert, 2014).

The SDGs were adopted in 2015 as the sustainable development agenda for all countries as a response to the increasing global challenges of poverty, unsustainable development and related global crises by the United Nations (United Nations, 2015). With 17 interrelated goals and 169 targets, the SDGs retain economic, social, and environmental aspects against global challenges including climate change, social injustice, and sustainable

production and consumption, among others which were disclosed by Sachs et al (2019).

Importance of Integrating SDGs into HR Practices:

Incorporation of SDGs in HRM practices entails comparing and anchoring general managerial policies as well as programmes to sustainability (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). The integration is essential to guarantee that the sustainability culture is embraced across the organization, thus improve organizational image, and promote innovation for sustainable practices within the organization (Lalwani & Anand, 2019). In terms of Human Resource Management, it supports the delivery of the EVP that encompasses valuable work, advancement opportunities, employee values and attitudes toward work and respective organizational culture (Bansal & Sharma, 2018).

Enhancing Employee Value Proposition (EVP):

The concept the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) relates to the various forms of incentives given by the organisation to the human capital in exchange for their ability, proficiency and loyalty as stated by Armstrong and Taylor (2014). This way, by implementing SDGs into EVP, organizations can distinguish themselves as organized and responsible employers of choice that align with the framework of sustainable development (Jain & Sharma, 2017). This alignment does not only help to ensure that the organisation attracts the most qualified candidates, but employee participation, morale, and working stability are improved as well (Sharma & Gupta, 2020).

Objective: The purpose of this research is to explore the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into HR practices within Indian organizations and to assess its impact on enhancing the Employee Value Proposition (EVP).

Research methodology: The present study is based on secondary data. The data is collected from sources like journals, articles and internet.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

This conceptual framework can help represent how companies in India are bringing in the SDGs into the HR processes as a way of making improvements in the EVP. The framework consists of four main components: SDGs, sustainable importance of HRM, effective communication of the EVP and results. All of these components are backed by relevant literature and practical case studies hence offering a good insight of the interconnectivity of all these parts so as to support sustainable and competitive work place.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015)	Sustainable HR Practices Cohen, Taylor, and Muller-Camen (2012)	Employee Value Proposition (EVP) Deloitte (2016), (TCS, 2023)	Outcomes (Kramar (2014), (TCS, 2023)
Economic Goals - Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) - Industry innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9)	Diversity and Inclusion - Equal opportunity policies - Initiatives for underrepresented groups	Compensation and Benefits - Competitive salaries - Health insurance	Employee Satisfaction - Alignment with personal values and organizational practices
Social Goals - Quality education (SDG 4) - Gender equality (SDG 5) - Reduced inequalities (SDG 10) - Good health and well-being (SDG 3)	Employee Well-being - Health programs - Work-life balance initiative	Career Development - Professional growth - Leadership training	Employee Retention - Lower turnover rates - Valued and engaged employees
Environmental Goals - Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) - Climate action (SDG 13)	Continuous Learning and development - Training and development program - Upskilling and reskilling	Work-Life Balance - Flexible working hours - Remote work options	Organizational Performance - Improved productivity and innovation - Competitive advantage
	Sustainable Work Environment - Environmental sustainability initiative	Organizational Culture - Positive work environment	

		- Inclusivity and engagement	
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Fig. 1: Conceptual framework- Integrating Sustainable Development Goals into HR Practices

Explanation of the Framework

1. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The starting point of the framework, indicating the various economic, social, and environmental goals that guide sustainable HR practices. **(United Nations, 2015)**

Economic Goals:

- **SDG 8:** Decent work and economic growth.
- **SDG 9:** Industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

Social Goals:

- **SDG 3:** Good health and well-being.
- **SDG 4:** Quality education.
- **SDG 5:** Gender equality.
- **SDG 10:** Reduced inequalities.

Environmental Goals:

- **SDG 12:** Responsible consumption and production.
- **SDG 13:** Climate action.

2. **Sustainable HR Practices:** This component demonstrates how HR policies and initiatives are designed to align with the SDGs, promoting diversity and inclusion, employee well-being, continuous learning, and a sustainable work environment. (Cohen, Taylor, and Muller-Camen (2012)

Human resources or HR management practices that are sustainable are significant in building an organizational climate that maximizes economic results while uplifting individuals and the environment at the same time. Cooper, Walker & Wootton (2012) have revealed the ways in which the institution of sustainable HRM practice may be facilitated into organizations. Here is a breakdown of these practices in relation to diversity and inclusion, employee health, wellness, and engagement, learning and development opportunities, and providing a sustainable workplace.

- 2.1 **Diversity and Inclusion:** It will also be important to inform the analysis by noting that diversity and inclusion are important categories of sustainable HR management. They make sure all the workers or staffs regardless the colour, race, gender, or origin they come from in the society have the chance to perform to the best of their abilities and produce.
 - 2.1.1 **Equal Opportunity Policies:** Employees also demand that their organizations protect their rights and grant them equal employment opportunities during recruitment as well as equal pay for equal work. This refers to establishing an equitable hiring procedure to make sure that no one is a favoured employee and making equal provision of tools and incentives to everyone.
 - 2.1.2 **Initiatives for Underrepresented Groups:** Certain and particular diversity programs and policies are implemented with a view of targeting a class or a category of employee who has been marginalised or has received less opportunity in the workplace and these include; women, gender, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities. These efforts might encompass sponsoring of a prototype, establishment of a patronage programme and capacity for diversity projects and a demonstrative search to forward diversity in the company.
- 2.2 **Employee well-being :** Promoting for the wellness of the workers is often a fundamental part of maintaining long-term sound HRM strategies. Taking care of the health of its employees will not only improve the statistics achieved per employee, but also improve the general satisfaction of employees at the workplace.
 - 2.2.1 **Health Programs:** Promising health care provision services and programs provide health care with physical, community and mental health embraced. This can encompass medical privileges where one is taken care of in terms of physical health, therapy, nutrition, and exercise such as Yoga classes, are some of the ways through which one can receive care.

- 2.2.2 **Work-Life Balance Initiatives:** Managers encourage the corporate management of time by providing flexible working hours, home-working opportunities, and practicable employment policies that include parental leave and paid leave. But beyond revenue generation, work-life balance can prevent burnout, attract and retain top talents, and enhance overall organizational performance.
- 2.3 **Continuous Learning and Development:** This is an essential part of the corporate learning process, particularly it is critical for developing a competent and flexible workforce. These practices help maintain that employees remain competitive to serve the organization as well as to continue feeling motivated.
- 2.3.1 **Training and Development Programs:** Continued investment in training along with offering relevant new courses or workshops ensures employees acquire new and adequate skills. Technology begins to develop may encompass headedness skills as well as other personality refinements.
- 2.3.2 **Upskilling and Reskilling:** Employment is fluid and so upskilling which is a process of improving on the skills applied when carrying out one's current job and or reskilling which is the process of acquiring new skills so that one can carry out a different job are paramount in today's job market.
- 2.4 **Sustainable Work Environment:** Sustainable work environment in this respect refers to practices adopted in order to reduce impacts on the environment and at the same time enhance sustainability at the place of work.
- 2.4.1 **Environmental Sustainability Initiatives:** Organisations implement measures that will help them conserve resources, reduce their carbon footprint or use environmentally friendly ways of completing their production processes. They can also comprise of the concepts like sustainably sourcing and thereby bringing down the carbon intensity.
- 3. **Employee Value Proposition (EVP):** This component illustrates how sustainable HR practices enhance the EVP, covering compensation and benefits, career development, work-life balance, and organizational culture. Deloitte (2016), (TCS, 2023)

An Employee Value Proposition or a Employee Benefits Proposition, simply puts is the concept whereby an employer avails certain attributes that will attract certain talent. Thus, it might be stated that a well-developed and sound EVP contributes to the company's success in recruiting and maintaining the best employees, increasing employee commitment, and promoting the overall satisfaction and effective organizational climate. This concept has had most implementations done extensively in organizations and it is supported by some of the biggest organizations including Deloitte as captured in their 2016 report as well as Tata Consultancy services or TCS as captured in their 2023 report.

3.1 Compensation and Benefits

- 3.1.1 **Competitive Salaries:** Pay is simply one of the most basic and essential concepts of a viable EVP. Employees have to be assured and satisfied with compensation received in terms of their efforts put in and market competitiveness. Another advantage of competitive pay is its impact to enable the organization attract and retain talented employees. From Deloitte (2016), organizations with frequent comparison in their compensation packages ensure the organizations are also able to attract the best employees.
- 3.1.2 **Health Insurance:** Employment benefits can be broadly defined as employee privileges that have monetary value and health insurance falls underneath this definition. Offering full medical, dental and vision insurance for employees exists as proof of a company's care for employee welfare in today's world. The TCS (2023) posited that compensation with a focus on health insurance is a key aspect that enhances the employee's level of satisfaction with their job and provides them with job security to ensure that they are valued.

3.2 Career Development

- 3.2.1 **Professional Growth:** Promotion opportunities can play an important role in crafting an EVP statement. Employees look for ways to receive further training and education to enhance their career paths. This ranges from training opportunities, certifications, and mentoring to knowledge sharing. According to Deloitte (2016), it lies in the interest of organizations to ensure they spend on development of its human capital because such investment would help organizations retain its best performers and also gain a competitive advantage in the market.
- 3.2.2 **Leadership Training:** Organisation management believe that leadership training are crucial to build future leadership professionals within organisations. They assist the workers to develop behaviours and

competencies to enable them to undertake additional responsibilities and become leaders. TCS (2023) acknowledges the EVP's improved to include leadership development as part of their career ladder.

3.3 Work-Life Balance

3.3.1 Flexible Working Hours: It also suggest that regime flexibility is favourable for both employees and companies because it helps one manage both the business and personal commitments well. It is observed that this flexibility can mean high job satisfaction and high productivity levels because of managing own time.

3.3.2 Remote Work Options: flexibility in work location is also relevant nowadays, including after the COVID-19 is considered quite appropriate. Teleworking enables the employees to perform their work from remote places, thus leading to improved work and personal satisfaction. Remote working has been considered in TCS (2023) widely as awareness of the need for flexibility at present-day work scenarios and with profound impact on the morale of employees, all have been taken into consideration.

3.4 Organizational Culture

3.4.1 Positive Work Environment: A positive work climate could therefore be defined as an environment in which the employees are accorded the respect, appreciation, as well as the desire to perform their duties. This is comprised of a management support team, working culture and reward systems.

3.4.2 Inclusivity and Engagement: Everyone should feel welcome and encouraged to participate in the life of a given organization for an organization to have a healthy corporate culture. It increases organizational relation by maintaining personnel' equality where all employees irrespective of their diversity receive equal treatment. A committed employee has more interest in his job or the goals of the company or organisation in which he works. TCS (2023) adopt a policy that allows it to support diversity in the workplace by embracing the recognition of the different departments within the company and encouraging people to practice their rights through numerous incentives and departments.

4. Outcomes: The final component shows the positive outcomes of integrating SDGs into HR practices, including increased employee satisfaction, improved retention rates, and enhanced organizational performance. (Kramar (2014), (TCS, 2023)

4.1. Employee Satisfaction: This shows that when the employees perceive the organizational HR practices that are often espoused with their personal values and organizational culture; their job satisfaction is significantly boosted. Employees' rewards include a fair remuneration package, employee recognition, and career development, making them feel proud to work for the organization. When employees are satisfied, they would be more productive and motivated as they support the organization in a positive way.

4.2. Employee Retention: A workplace that focuses on the need of its employees by implementing talent management programs, health promotion policies, and a healthy organizational culture, experiences less turnover from its employees. Also, when employees trust that their employers appreciate them, they are likely to have longer tenures, thereby decreasing expenses related to recruitment and enhancing organizational stability. It also saves institutional memory and contributes to work culture and climate.

4.3. Organizational Performance: Satisfied and engaged employees are not only productive, but they also bring creative solutions to the workplace. HR management practices that include learning, training and organisational climate positive development are important in attaining high efficiency and increased creativity. This way, the workers will be motivated to work harder in their respective positions thus improving overall company's performance and development.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a structured approach to understanding how integrating Sustainable Development Goals into HR practices can enhance the Employee Value Proposition. By aligning HR practices with SDGs, organizations can foster a supportive and inclusive work environment, leading to higher employee satisfaction, retention, and overall organizational performance.

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