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MANAGING WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: In the current context of organizational sustainability, working conditions represent a key factor not only for ensuring employee well-being but also for achieving long-term sustainable performance. This article aims to explore how the management of working conditions can contribute to the development of organizations that are both competitive and socially responsible. The research applies a multidisciplinary approach combining theoretical analysis of sustainability models, a review of relevant literature on occupational management, and comparative evaluation of organizational practices in European contexts. Key indicators of sustainable performance are examined in relation to workplace quality dimensions, including health and safety, work-life balance, and opportunities for professional development. The study highlights that sustainable performance cannot be achieved solely through economic efficiency. It requires integrated management of working conditions, where environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects are embedded into organizational strategy. Organizations that invest in modern workplace conditions such as ergonomic environments, flexible working arrangements, and continuous learning opportunities demonstrate higher resilience, innovation capacity, and long-term value creation. Furthermore, this article underlines the importance of aligning employee welfare strategies with digital transformation and sustainability goals to create a holistic model of sustainable organizational development.



Introduction

Working conditions are the key to the performance, quality and safety of activities in a company. A healthy, balanced and well-organized workplace helps employees develop professionally. It also improves organizational processes and outcomes.

Studies show that the right staff size, psychological safety, open communication, teamwork and employee well-being are the most important elements that affect an organization's ability to provide quality goods and services.

Material resources and vocational education are not the only things that contribute to improving working conditions; Interpersonal relationships and teams are also important. At its core, work is an interactional process, and a company's ability to implement and sustain improvements depends on how these interactions promote an environment based on respect, safety, and cooperation.

Workers contribute to the creation of new goods and services for businesses, playing a key role in the process of value creation. High-quality jobs are good for the company, but they are also expensive. For this reason, public policies are aware of the importance of improving the quality of jobs.

Motivated employees demonstrate greater enthusiasm, creativity, and accountability. Conversely, lack of motivation results in inefficiency, absenteeism, and high turnover. Thus, employee motivation should be managed strategically, supported by recognition, fair pay, and opportunities for career growth. Workplace discipline also affects performance and organizational excellence.

Over the past three decades, sustainability and corporate social responsibility have gained increasing importance in research on business and organizations, highlighting the need for firms to take responsibility and find effective ways to manage and evaluate their social interactions.

Corporate social responsibility is considered a strategic investment, bringing benefits to both the company and the community. It contributes to strengthening relationships with the community (customers, suppliers, authorities), influencing the target audience, raising the company's social status, maintaining a good reputation, building customer loyalty, motivating employees and developing business excellence, thus providing a real competitive advantage

Material and method

To examine the relationship between sustainable performance and working conditions, the research used a blended approach combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. The theoretical background was built through an exhaustive review of the literature. It was based on a variety of scientific studies on sustainability, motivation and quality of work.

The empirical part used data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and focused on analyzing exposure to specific occupational elements by age and gender. The selected indicators included:

- work carried out at a rapid pace;
- lack of autonomy in professional activity;
- lack of prospects for professional growth;
- difficulty balancing work and family life

Descriptive statistics were employed to interpret the data, identifying patterns of inequality and demographic differences in exposure to demanding work environments. This methodological approach enabled a nuanced understanding of how age, gender, and occupation influence job sustainability and organizational performance.

Additionally, the study triangulated quantitative findings with qualitative insights from literature and case studies to strengthen the conclusions.

Results and discussions

Companies are increasingly attaching importance to their image and relationship with the social environment, as well as the advantages of adopting a socially responsible behavior, according to the current economic reality.

Contemporary companies emphasize fundamental human values and ethical commitment to society, considering them essential elements of competitiveness in an environment of increasing competition.

In today's digital economy, employees must possess both technical and soft skills. Technically, employees must have advanced skills in areas such as programming, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and complex digital skills. These skills are essential for operating smart, automated, and robotic systems today.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the picture is more complex: workers in agriculture, services, and sales encounter significant challenges in maintaining a satisfactory work-life balance.

This reality reflects, on the one hand, the labor-intensive nature of these sectors and, on the other hand, the limited implementation of flexible work arrangements and social protection policies. Consequently, the less favorable conditions in these regions underline the urgent need for modernization of human resource management practices.

In contrast, the Continental group displays positive associations for several occupational categories such as machine operators, professionals, and unskilled workers. This indicates that these countries maintain a culture of work that values equilibrium between personal and professional life, while also adhering to high standards of occupational safety and health.

The Nordic countries continue to represent a benchmark in terms of working time quality, especially for machine operators and technical occupations. These results reaffirm the region's reputation for implementing flexible labor policies, promoting gender equality, and encouraging autonomy and participation in the workplace.

Conversely, the Southern European countries show a visible polarization: professionals benefit from better conditions, while service workers, agricultural employees, and elementary occupations face disadvantages.

This structural inequality highlights a persistent gap between highly qualified sectors and traditional labor-intensive jobs, emphasizing the need for inclusive labor market policies and the reduction of physical strain in demanding professions.

Overall, the analysis confirms that the quality of working time is a crucial indicator of social sustainability, reflecting the balance between economic efficiency and employee well-being.

Countries that manage to sustain this equilibrium not only enhance organizational performance but also contribute to the development of a resilient, innovative, and motivated workforce.

Conclusions

The study shows that working conditions are an essential factor for a company's sustainable performance. Companies that prioritize employee well-being, fair treatment, and workplace safety are more efficient, innovative, and adaptable.

The analysis of the self-employed shows that age and experience do not necessarily guarantee poor working conditions. Exposure to demanding work environments, intense pace and lack of professional development opportunities continue to be a major problem after the age of 50. This fact shows how important it is to create labor policies that accept all categories of employees, regardless of gender or age.

The results also show that economic success is not the only way to achieve performance sustainability. It requires a comprehensive approach that integrates fair working conditions, social responsibility and continuous professional development. Organizations that implement workplace management methods that are sustainable improve the health of their employees and accelerate long-term economic and social progress.

In conclusion, economic success and sustainability must evolve together. Organizations that integrate ESG principles into their management of working conditions strengthen resilience, enhance employee satisfaction, and foster social progress.

Future research should focus on developing quantitative sustainability indices linking workplace quality to organizational performance, thereby providing policymakers and managers with evidence-based tools for continuous improvement.