



Case study: How an organization can encourage employees' pro-environmental behaviors

By Elena Iovenitti

Background

We are in the middle of a climate crisis. The SDGs highlight that both individuals and organizations are called upon to play their part. In recent years, the importance of a change from a traditional style of entrepreneurship to a more sustainable one has emerged. However, little literature focused on the inner organization of the company and on the involvement of employees.

Objective

This paper seeks to identify factors that a company could use to enhance PEB among workers and it does so by seeking an answer to the following research question: How can an organization encourage employees' pro-environmental behaviors?. Moreover, it aims to enrich the existing literature on employees in sustainable entrepreneurship, specifically on their pro-environmental behaviors at the workplace. Lastly, it contributes to closing the theory-practice gap in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship by adding a practical perspective.

Theory

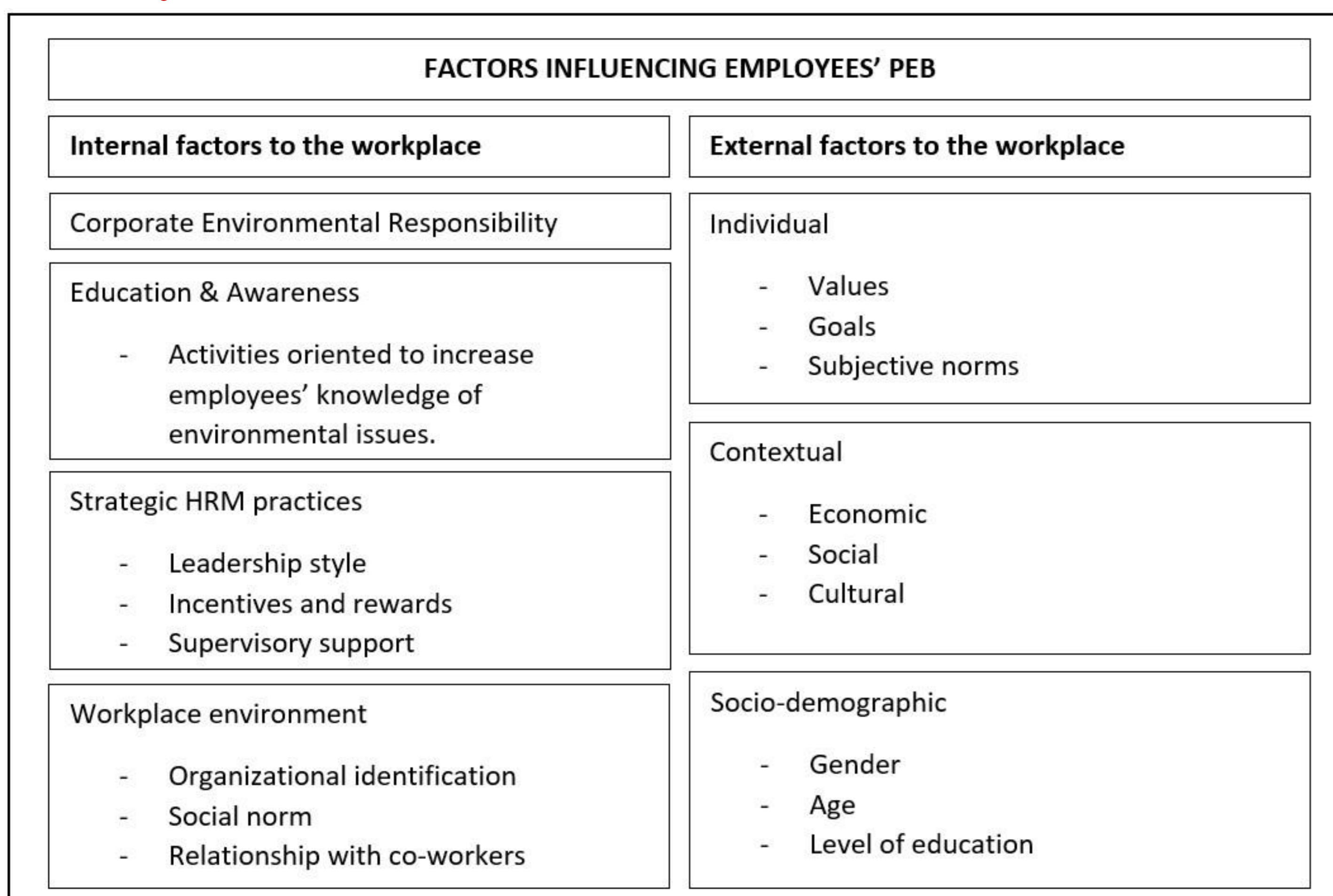


Figure 1. Proposed framework based on the literature, making the distinction between internal and external factors to the workplace environment that can influence the adoption of Pro-environmental behaviors.

Method

A qualitative case study approach was chosen to answer the research question. A sustainable waste and processor company was taken as a reference. Seven employees were interviewed through semi-structured interviews with the aim of understanding their point of view on activities implemented by the company and on other factors that could influence their adoption of pro-environmental behaviors. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, through the data analysis, it was possible to connect the literature to the collected and coded data.

Results

CER

- 7/7 are more willing to adopt PEB because of the company's CER.

Education & awareness

- 3/7 joined a training course focused on the wide concepts of sustainability.
- 7/7 believe that a follow-up and the use of both theory and practice in training courses could be useful to enhance the adoption of PEB
- 6/7 argued that training courses on sustainability should be mandatory
- Most participants argued that education and awareness is not the only factor to be considered.

SHRM practices

- 5/7 perceived a direct influence on the adoption of PEB from their manager.
- 6/7 positively perceived rewards
- 7/7 think incentives would positively affect their adoption of PEB (6/7 would prefer in-kind incentives)
- 6/7 positively perceived the introduction of a supervisor.

Workplace environment

- 7/7 are highly identified with the company.
- 7/7 have a good and supportive relationship with their co-workers
- 4/7 are influenced by co-workers' expectations.
- The concept of social value is not clear among the respondents

Individual

- 1/7 put the biospheric value as the last one
- 5/7 think that their adoption of PEB is affected by social pressure

Contextual and socio-demographic

- No relevant data

Conclusions

The study highlight five areas of intervention that decision-makers can take into consideration when deciding how to encourage the adoption of PEB in the workplace:

CER: employees should be aware of the company's CER activities

Education & awareness: the company should evaluate mandatory courses with practical implications and with a follow-up. Alternate different activities parallel to the courses would be useful.

SHRM: managers should be made aware and accountable for their influence on employees' behaviors. Rewards and in-kind incentives represent a useful means. a supervisor should be introduced.

Workplace environment: identification with the company, relationships with colleagues, and the presence of social norms are essential elements.

Individual factors: a company can activate specific values through activities. A behavioral standard that in turn creates social pressure could be introduced in the company to activate the moral obligation to act pro-environmentally.

