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Sustainable Entrepreneurship Project

Exploring the Relationship Between Employee Sentiment and Commitment to Corporate Sustainability Strategies: A Case Study Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Businesses are increasingly integrating sustainability into their practices, commonly driven by top-down management while often overlooking the crucial role of employees in their success. This study investigates employees' sentiments towards top-down corporate sustainability strategies and how these sentiments influence their commitment and support. A qualitative approach facilitating a sentiment analysis was employed through a case study analysis. The findings reveal a wide range of employee sentiments at the case company, influenced by factors such as individual beliefs about sustainability, perceptions of the work environment, management-employee relationships, and awareness of the company's sustainability initiatives. Positive sentiments were linked to increased engagement, motivation, productivity, improved retention, and the adoption of sustainable behaviors. In contrast, negative sentiments resulted in reduced engagement, frustration, and resistance to sustainability initiatives. These results highlight the importance of effective communication, employee engagement, and change management strategies in aligning employee sentiments with corporate sustainability goals. Addressing these factors is crucial for enhancing organizational commitment to sustainability and achieving long-term sustainability objectives.

Keywords: Corporate Sustainability, Sustainability Transitions, Sentiment Analysis, Organizational Commitment, Employee Engagement, Sustainable Entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change and ecosystem degradation have escalated to unprecedented levels, with global temperatures rising rapidly and biodiversity declining beyond natural extinction rates (Ten Have, 2019). These environmental challenges have led to more frequent and severe natural disasters, emphasizing the urgent need to protect the environment (Shaw & Neef, 2013; Thomas, 2017). Consequently, there has been a growing recognition of businesses' significant environmental impact as major pollutants, sparking discussions on integrating sustainability into corporate practices (Neri et al., 2021; European Commission, 2022). Corporations increasingly acknowledge the importance of balancing economic performance with environmental responsibility in response to competition, regulations, and public opinion. Driven by this increased awareness and stricter regulations, such as the forthcoming Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) from the European Union, there is a global trend of incorporating environmental principles into strategies and operations, along with investments in new technologies for environmental protection (Long et al., 2016; Bassetti et al., 2021; Natarajan & Ramarajan, 2022).

It has become evident that sustainability needs to be on the agenda of corporations, and transitioning towards more sustainability in corporate practices often begins with top-down initiatives (Heyden et al., 2017; Minbaeva et al., 2018; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). The strategies and goals advocated by the top management are frequently exemplified in mission statements, codes of conduct, and corporate communications (Minbaeva et al., 2018). Yet, the stakeholder group essential for successful sustainability implementation, employees, is often overlooked (Wolf, 2012; Klapper et al., 2020). Consequently, there are common differences between the ambitions of the top management, and how such goals are upheld within the organization's divisions (Minbaeva et al., 2018).

Research findings reveal that employee support and positive behavior are necessary to realize change (Heyden et al., 2017) and the long-term effectiveness of sustainability strategies (Pellegrini et al., 2018). Furthermore, literature suggests that employees' positive perceptions of corporate sustainability strategies may significantly enhance their organizational commitment and citizenship behavior, leading to desirable corporate outcomes (Choi & Yu, 2014). These perceptions can be

associated with company performance, and the degree of employee integration positively influences this relationship (Wolf, 2012; Pellegrini et al., 2018; Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2019).

However, such desired outcomes are often lacking: Studies indicate that top-down sustainability initiatives can elicit negative sentiment among employees, attributed to, for example, perceived forced changes in work dynamics and a misalignment of values regarding sustainability (Minbaeva et al., 2018). Such negative sentiments may reduce employee engagement, productivity, and overall impact, thereby hindering sustainability efforts (Quiros, 2009; Lenberg et al., 2019). Without adequate commitment and support from employees, organizations may face challenges in implementing and realizing change, specifically for sustainability objectives, leading to diminished effectiveness of top-down efforts, and ultimately affecting the organization's overall sustainability goals and impact (Heyden et al., 2017; Klapper et al., 2020).

Recognizing the importance of addressing individual sentiment at the micro-level towards structural changes, such as corporate sustainability strategies, is critical for successful organizational transformation (Ture & Ganesh, 2018; Klapper et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to better understand workforce sentiment formation towards top-down sustainability initiatives and its impact on workforce commitment and support. Such insights are important for developing effective solutions to enhance alignment in organizational sustainability efforts.

While extensive research has focused on individual versus organizational values (Ludolf et al., 2017; Lenberg et al., 2019), there remains a noticeable gap in understanding the alignment of sentiments concerning sustainability within organizational contexts. Traditional Corporate Social Responsibility literature primarily concentrates on structural changes, such as implementing sustainable business models, overlooking the sentiments of employees towards such efforts and their potential engagement in the sustainability transition process (Klapper et al., 2020). While studies have underscored the significance of employees' contributions to conventional entrepreneurship (Wolf, 2012; Choi & Yu, 2014; Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2019), similar inquiries have not been extended to sustainable entrepreneurship, where emphasis is placed on the triple-bottom-line approach, which integrates economic, social, and environmental factors into corporate decision-making (Belz & Binder, 2017).

Despite its significance, this issue remains underexplored in academic literature (Parisi, 2013; Kim et al., 2020). Therefore, the central research question guiding this study is:

How does employees' sentiment relate to their commitment to corporate sustainability strategies and how can these sentiments be effectively aligned?

This question is addressed using a qualitative approach. Beginning with a review of relevant academic literature, the study progresses to a case study facilitating a sentiment analysis. Firstly, it evaluates the multifaceted factors influencing employees' sentiments towards sustainability strategies enacted by top management, focusing on their perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations of the organization and its objectives. Secondly, it explores the impact of employees' sentiments regarding sustainability efforts on their commitment to organizational sustainability strategies. Commitment encompasses employee's dedication to support and actively participate in sustainability initiatives. Finally, the research aims to identify potential strategies for bridging the perceptual gap between employee sentiments and corporate sustainability goals. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to existing literature on the topic and offers recommendations to enhance companies' sustainability impact potentially.

The structure of this paper comprises several sections. First, the theory section explores relevant theories, offering insights into concepts crucial to addressing the research question. Subsequently, the method section elaborates on the methodologies utilized, including the case study approach and data analysis techniques. After, the results are presented and analyzed. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion and synthesis, providing interpretations of the results considering the research question and offering valuable implications for future research and practice.

THEORY

Implementation of Corporate Sustainability Strategies

Corporate sustainability strategies represent the proactive integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations into business operations, reflecting a commitment to sustainable

development (Steffen et al., 2015). Corporations, recognizing the importance of sustainable practices, are increasingly adopting diverse approaches to incorporate these strategies into their business models to balance corporate objectives and societal well-being (Natarajan & Ramarajan, 2022; Gotsch et al., 2023). These strategies encompass a range of initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, support charitable causes, launch awareness campaigns, and promote sustainable behavior, among others (Long et al., 2016; Gotsch et al., 2023).

To ensure the success of such initiatives, literature highlights the critical role of employee commitment. Choi and Yu (2014) argue that employee commitment is pivotal for the efficacy of such strategies, with employees' perceptions positively influencing organizational commitment and citizenship behavior. Similarly, Kucharska and Kowalczyk (2019) advocate for fostering employee commitment towards sustainability goals as fundamental to organizational success. Additionally, research by Heyden et al. (2015) emphasizes the necessity of employee support in realizing organizational change, particularly concerning sustainability. Engaging employees across all hierarchical levels is deemed essential to cultivate support and motivation for pursuing corporate interests. These findings underscore the significance of employee commitment in effectively implementing sustainability strategies.

The commitment of employees and the success of corporate sustainability strategies heavily rely on management's role, with bottom-up and top-down strategies emerging as prominent paradigms (Heyden et al., 2017; Minbaeva et al., 2018).

Bottom-Up vs. Top-Down Sustainability Approaches

In sustainability transitions, companies can typically adopt two approaches: bottom-up approaches within a company involve empowering employees across all levels to participate in and drive sustainability initiatives. This includes encouraging employee involvement in decision-making, providing training, fostering a collaborative culture, or promoting continuous improvement efforts (Heyden et al., 2017; Gotsch et al., 2023). In contrast, top-down approaches entail senior management initiating change (Heyden et al., 2017) by establishing sustainability objectives and disseminating them throughout the organization. This should provide clarity in direction and ensure alignment of goals across the organization (Gotsch et al., 2023).

While top-down approaches have gained prominence in driving sustainability initiatives (Heyden et al., 2017; Minbaeva et al., 2018; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019), literature suggests they can evoke negative sentiments among employees and subsequent adverse corporate outcomes (Heyden et al., 2017; Klapper et al., 2020). Such consequences are more prevalent with top-down strategies (Bakker & Leiter, 2017; Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Therefore, this study will prioritize examining the implications of top-down approaches for sustainability within organizations.

The Genesis of Employee Sentiments Towards Corporate Sustainability Strategies

In this study, sentiments encompass a wide spectrum of linguistic expressions, ranging from opinions, beliefs, and emotions to evaluations and attitudes towards sustainability practices. Sentiments can vary widely, spanning from strongly positive to strongly negative, reflecting the diverse perspectives individuals hold (Taboada, 2016; Wankhade et al., 2022). These sentiments are shaped by multiple factors, making them inherently subjective. Personal experiences, shaped by cultural background, education, upbringing, and other ideologies or interests, among others, significantly contribute to the formation of sentiments. Therefore, to comprehensively analyze sentiments, it is imperative to consider not only the subjective viewpoints of individuals but a diverse range of perspectives (Liu, 2020).

This research aims to identify the specific factors shaping employee sentiments and assess the influence of positive and negative sentiments on their commitment to top-down sustainability strategies. While neutral sentiments are acknowledged, their significance is comparatively limited due to their lesser influence. These insights form the initial framework for this study and will later be juxtaposed with primary data from the case study.

Factors Influencing Employee Sentiments

Research by Guerci et al. (2015) suggests that employees' perceptions of organizational policies significantly influence their sentiments towards corporate sustainability initiatives. Similarly, a study by Ng et al. (2019) indicates that such perceptions indicate their overall view of organizational sustainability activities. Moreover, alignment of values regarding sustainability can evoke positive sentiments among employees, as highlighted by Minbaeva et al. (2018). When employees understand and share a common goal related to sustainability, it fosters a sense of unity and purpose, resulting in

favorable attitudes towards the organization's efforts. Effective communication regarding the purpose, procedures, and scope of organizational sustainability strategies has been shown to foster positive sentiment and thus promote employee engagement in sustainable behavior, according to research by Pellegrini et al. (2018) and Raza et al. (2021). When employees are adequately informed and understand the rationale behind sustainability initiatives, they are more likely to support and contribute to them.

Supervisors or managers also play a crucial role in influencing employee sentiments. They can exert a positive influence by promoting competency development, transparent communication, and clear management objectives (Minbaeva et al., 2018). Additionally, they can involve employees in decision-making processes to cultivate positive sentiments towards sustainability efforts, as shown by Stankevičiūnė & Stanisūkienė (2018) and Raza et al. (2021). It motivates them to contribute and instills a sense of ownership and responsibility towards achieving sustainability goals. Conversely, top-down changes perceived as forced alterations to work dynamics may evoke negative sentiment among employees, as noted by Minbaeva et al. (2018).

Additionally, dedicated training programs focused on sustainability have been shown to yield positive sentiments among employees, as indicated by Pellegrini et al. (2018). Such programs enhance employees' understanding of sustainability issues and motivate sustainable behavior. Similarly, well-designed reward systems can significantly impact employee sentiments towards sustainability by reinforcing job attitudes and motivating sustainable behavior among employees.

These factors can collectively impact employees' sentiments, which, in turn, affect their commitment to sustainability. Given the significance of personal commitment in driving support and success for sustainability initiatives, understanding the impact of employee sentiments on their commitment to sustainability is crucial for organizational change towards sustainability.

Employee Sentiments and Their Effect

Positive sentiments play a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and performance. According to Ajzen (1991) and the theory of planned behavior, positive sentiments significantly influence behavioral actions. Raza et al. (2021) also argue that employees with a positive attitude demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental concerns and exhibit proactive engagement in

addressing ecological challenges within the organization. Furthermore, Guerci et al. (2015) and Pellegrini et al. (2018) found that positive perceptions of the company's internal sustainability orientation and policy positively influence employees' understanding of the significance of sustainability objectives, stimulating support and engagement in sustainable behavior. Favorable sentiments also foster a sense of satisfaction and pride among employees, as highlighted by Barakat et al. (2016) and Ng et al. (2019). When employees perceive their organization's social initiatives as evidence of high capability and resourcefulness, it enhances their pride and commitment to organizational goals, increasing employee retention and stability. Positive sentiments also inspire greater passion for enhancing environmental performance, driving environmental behavior among employees, as shown by Raza et al. (2021). Moreover, Serrano Archimi et al. (2018) suggest that such sentiments enhance employee motivation and productivity, thereby contributing to a competitive advantage in the organization. Employees who identify with the corporate values demonstrate increased energy and passion in their daily tasks, resulting in heightened productivity and organizational performance. Lastly, according to Guerci et al. (2015), positive sentiments play a crucial role in organizational change for sustainability since employees emotionally attached to the change initiatives are more likely to invest time and energy in supporting such goals. Their commitment and dedication contribute to the successful integration of environmental and social concerns into the workplace, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

While sustainability strategies aim to promote positive change, they can also elicit *negative sentiments* among employees, presenting challenges for organizational sustainability efforts. According to Graves et al. (2019) and Wang & Wang (2020), employees may develop cynical attitudes towards sustainability initiatives if they perceive a disconnection between top management's rhetoric and the actual implementation of sustainable practices. This disconnect can breed feelings of anger and annoyance, diminishing employees' motivation to engage in pro-environmental behavior. Moreover, when sustainability goals are imposed from the top-down without considering employee input, it can lead to disengagement and skepticism among the workforce, as highlighted by Minbaeva et al. (2018). Negative sentiments may also arise when employees perceive sustainable innovation as challenging or

problematic, leading to decreased motivation and productivity. Delmas & Pekovic (2018) suggest that sustainability initiatives often require knowledge transformation and collaboration across diverse fields, which can pose significant hurdles to innovation within the organization. This perceived difficulty can dampen employee motivation to innovate and participate in sustainability.

Extensive literature focuses on the benefits of sustainability initiatives for employees and organizations (Guerci et al., 2015; Serrano Archimi et al., 2018; Ng et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2021), however, there is comparatively less emphasis on identifying and addressing negative sentiments among employees. Consequently, this research seeks to qualitatively examine both positive and negative sentiments among employees within the case company to gain a deeper understanding. This approach extends knowledge within a novel and context-specific setting in the Netherlands. Specifically, primary data from the case company will provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to sentiments and their implications for sustainability implementation. This will inform the development of customized solutions aimed at mitigating negative sentiments and fostering organizational alignment with sustainability objectives. By addressing negative sentiments effectively, organizations can enhance employee engagement and commitment to sustainability, ultimately driving long-term success and competitiveness in a rapidly changing global landscape (Ture & Ganesh, 2018; Klapper et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This section provides a concise overview of the case company Omrin, and the methodologies utilized in this study. The concept of sentiment analysis is introduced and its relevance to the research question discussed. Subsequently, the research and analysis procedures are outlined, alongside ethical considerations.

The Case Company: Omrin

Omrin, a Dutch waste management company, serves over 1.5 million Dutch individuals and 10,000 companies. The company views waste as a valuable resource, extracting raw materials and converting them into sustainable energy. Renowned for its innovative approach and high-tech facilities,

Omrin stands as a leader in waste processing in the Netherlands, committed to driving a fossil-free future and pioneering renewable energy production, contributing to a circular economy (Omrin, n.d.). While formulating a new 4-year sustainability strategy, Omrin's management is pursuing ambitious sustainability goals, underscoring the company's commitment. Guided by top-down directives, these objectives shape Omrin's operational framework, reflecting a proactive approach to sustainability (Omrin, n.d.).

With a diverse workforce from frontline workers in street-level operations to office-based professionals driving strategic initiatives, Omrin faces the challenge of ensuring coherence between its sustainability objectives and the values held by its employees. This challenge accentuates the importance of understanding employee sentiments surrounding sustainability initiatives, enabling Omrin to seek alignment with its sustainability goals and identify areas for improvement (Personal Communication, 2024). This examination offers valuable insights into the dynamics between corporate sustainability strategies and individual perceptions, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable business practices. Hence, Omrin is an ideal candidate for this research endeavor.

Research Process

The methodology adopted in this study employs qualitative data collection and analysis techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question. Given the intricacies involved and the need to examine contextual factors, a case study approach was deemed most suitable (Baškarada, 2014).

Primary data was collected through a case study of Omrin. Using neutral and non-leading questions, an interview guide was created to prevent assumptions and obtain unbiased responses. After, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight employees, strategically selected based on relevant characteristics ensuring a representative sample of the workforce. The selection criteria were guided by the practical supervisor of this study, the head of communications at Omrin, who possesses detailed knowledge about workforce dynamics. The study focuses on workforce members in lower-level roles, such as those operating trucks and working in production plants. This decision is informed by research highlighting the disparities in perceptions of sustainability strategies among employees at different organizational levels (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2019).

The interview pool comprised seven men and one woman, reflecting the male-dominated nature of the lower-level workforce (see Table 1). The age range of interviewees spanned from 25 to 61 years, encompassing both newer employees and those with extensive tenure at the company. Omrin's operational locations across Leeuwarden, Harlingen, and Heerenveen in the north of the Netherlands, were visited by the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the varied workplace environments. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, enabling a thorough exploration of the topic. The interviewees comprised two individuals from the public recycling center, two truck drivers, and four employees stationed within the facilities. Each interview session lasted up to 45 minutes, allowing time for detailed discussion.

Table 1: Overview of Interview Details (Int.)

Int.	Gender	Age	Tenure	Location	Job Function
1	Male	58	25 years	Harlingen	Operator at the Incinerator Plants
2	Male	50	10 years	Harlingen	Operator at the Incinerator Plants
3	Male	27	5 years	Leeuwarden	Coordinator at the Recycling Center
4	Male	61	29 years	Leeuwarden	Truck Driver
5	Male	25	4 years	Leeuwarden	Truck Driver
6	Female	41	5 years	Heerenveen	Operator at the Recycling Plants
7	Male	49	6 years	Heerenveen	Operator at the Recycling Plants
8	Male	26	1 year	Leeuwarden	Coordinator at the Recycling Center

Analysis of Case Study

Once the interviews were completed, the transcription process commenced with Otter.ai, followed by manual corrections by the researcher to ensure accuracy. The complete transcripts were then imported into Excel for further sentiment analysis.

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion analysis or opinion mining, is a method used to interpret and analyze sentiments expressed in textual data. By categorizing sentiments as positive (+1), neutral (0), or negative (-1), sentiment analysis provides information from the language used to convey emotions, opinions, and assessments (Taboada, 2016; Wankhade et al., 2022). This approach holds importance across various industries, serving as a valuable tool. For instance, companies utilize sentiment analysis to understand customer sentiment by analyzing reviews, social media posts, and feedback, helping them improve products and services. Market researchers rely on sentiment analysis

to uncover market trends, consumer preferences, and competitor strategies, providing data for strategic decision-making (Taboada, 2016). As a result, sentiment analysis has gained widespread recognition and adoption in research communities (Wankhade et al., 2022).

In the context of this study, sentiment analysis was chosen as the preferred method for examining employees' perceptions of sustainability strategies at the case company. Understanding the sentiments expressed by employees is essential for assessing their alignment with organizational goals and identifying areas for improvement. By utilizing phrase-level sentiment analysis, this study aims to delve deeper into the nuances of employees' opinions, allowing for the classification of sentiments based on single or multiple aspects. This approach enables the exploration of both positive and negative statements within interview transcripts, providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of sentiments expressed by employees regarding sustainability initiatives (Wankhade et al., 2022).

The first step of analysis was the phrase-level sentiment analysis utilizing Azure machine learning, an artificial intelligence tool integrated within Excel. It generated sentiment scores ranging from -1 to 1, aligning with the methodology of sentiment analysis (Taboada, 2016). Manual adjustments were made to rectify any inaccuracies, particularly concerning terms like "waste," which may carry negative connotations but are viewed as valuable resources at Omrin. Following the sentiment analysis, coding techniques were employed to delve deeper into the data. Inductive coding, an iterative process refining data into codes, was utilized to identify patterns and themes within the primary data (Smolka, 2022). This approach incorporated descriptive codes, providing literal descriptions of the data in a straightforward manner, and in-vivo codes, reflecting participants' language, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the sentiments expressed (Saldaña, 2016).

Upon completion of coding, responses were organized into clusters to discern emerging patterns and themes. These clusters were correlated with emotional categories and incorporated into a model. Each category was defined, and relevant quotes were selected and presented in tables to facilitate analysis and interpretation. This systematic approach facilitated data organization and comprehension, enabling the formulation of the findings and ultimately recommendations.

Ethics

Adherence to ethical standards set by the researchers' university was paramount throughout the research process. Prioritizing transparency and informed consent, participants were provided with comprehensive written information detailing the study's objectives, duration, and potential implications. Verbal and written consent was obtained from each participant, with full assurance of their right to decline or withdraw from participation without repercussion. To safeguard participant anonymity, interview recordings were strictly utilized for transcription purposes and deleted thereafter. A record of consent was maintained, and the case company will receive an anonymized version of the findings to uphold transparency and trust.

RESULTS

The analysis of primary data has revealed several insights, some reinforcing findings from secondary sources discussed in the theory section, while others introduce new perspectives. This section outlines the sentiments of employees at the case company towards corporate sustainability strategies, the factors influencing these sentiments, and their effects.

Employee Sentiments Towards Corporate Sustainability Strategies at Omrin

This study identified a range of sentiments, reflecting the diversity of the workforce: several interviewees expressed positive sentiments, highlighting a personal connection to the company's sustainability goals and a commitment to environmental stewardship in their personal lives. One interviewee noted, *"In my private time, I am also busy with biodiversity and the use of less plastic, I recycle everything I can, I am also trying to play my part"* (Int.3). Others emphasized the urgency of collective action for the planet's preservation. For instance, one respondent stated, *"Yeah, but I also think that, well, as people, we need to [pursue sustainability], otherwise there won't be a planet left anymore"* (Int.5). For some participants, the company's focus on sustainability was a significant motivator for joining the organization.

There were also more neutral stances towards sustainability, with some employees viewing their work primarily as a means to an end. One interviewee remarked, *"At the end of the day, it's still a job*

for me. That it entails sustainability is a plus, of course, but it isn't really a deal breaker for me if they wouldn't do it. Because yeah, at the end of the day, it's still a job. You're getting paid" (Int.2). Similarly, another noted, *"Not all people are interested in that [sustainability]. They want to work; they want to have their money and they go home"* (Int.6). Some employees were not familiar with sustainability concepts employed by the case company, such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals or circular economy, indicating a lack of awareness and interest, leading to more neutral sentiments.

Negative sentiments also emerged, with some respondents expressing skepticism about the impact of organizational and personal actions on sustainability. Comparisons to larger-scale contributors and concerns about the perceived insignificance of personal efforts were common. One interviewee stated, *"If you see people like Taylor Swift flying for 30 minutes, multiple times a day, I don't think the efforts I would take are really that impactful"* (Int.8). Others were critical of the efforts required for sustainability, questioning the necessity and practicality. For example, one interviewee mentioned, *"But some things are going too far. I don't think we should pay for it. For sustainability. Well, I don't know if it's always a good idea. I have my thinking about it"* (Int.4). This skepticism also affected how employees felt about changes in their work environment, such as the transition to electric vehicles. One employee shared, *"Other colleagues, they were diesel heads. They didn't want to go that way. But we have to because that's the company's strategy"* (Int.1).

In conclusion, employee sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies at Omrin are diverse and influenced by various factors, as detailed below.

Factors Influencing Employee Sentiments

The aforementioned sentiments were influenced by several factors, with the first significant one being a *personal stance towards sustainability*. This reflects employees' beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding environmental responsibility and sustainable practices, showing their connection to sustainability goals and perceived role in addressing environmental challenges. This factor significantly affects employee sentiments, as shared values foster unity and purpose within the organization, aligning with findings from Minbaeva et al. (2018). Employees with a favorable personal stance towards sustainability likely feel positive about the company's sustainability strategies, showing greater interest and awareness. As one interviewee stated, *"Most people who are working here know that it is good for*

the environment and the future, that we will have a better life and no garbage anymore" (Int.6). Conversely, if an employee has a neutral stance towards sustainability and does not prioritize it, they will likely be less aware of the company's initiatives and exhibit more neutral sentiments. Similarly, those who view sustainability negatively and are skeptical about its importance or necessity will have more negative sentiments towards the organization's sustainability strategies.

Another significant factor influencing employee sentiments is the *perception of the organizational and work environment*. This includes employees' subjective views, interpretations, and evaluations of various aspects such as organizational culture, values, job satisfaction, and overall work enjoyment. When employees emphasized positive qualities such as the company's supportive culture, effective problem-solving methods, the meaningful impact of their work, enjoyment of a diverse job environment, and growth opportunities, they also tended to have positive sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies. These positive perceptions often coincide with heightened awareness of sustainability strategies, driven by increased interest and a sense of trust and reliability in the organization's endeavors. However, negative feelings of depersonalization and decreased connectivity emerged, with concerns about becoming "*just a number*" as the company grows larger (Int.3). Additionally, challenges related to workload intensity, shifting team dynamics, and the physical demands of production work were noted. Analysis showed that such negative perceptions of the organizational and work environment correlate with decreased interest in sustainability strategies, potentially leading to perceptions of such initiatives as forced or undesirable, and therefore fostering negative sentiments towards the company's sustainability strategies. These findings align with prior research by Guerci et al. (2015) and Ng et al. (2019), underscoring the impact of employees' perceptions on organizational sustainability strategies. This research uncovers an additional dimension: even when individuals exhibit less interest or value for sustainability, a positive perception of the organizational and work environment can compensate for this deficit.

Primary data also suggested that the *management-employee relationship and communication* influence employee sentiments regarding sustainability strategies. This factor encapsulates the dynamics between the organizational leaders and employees, showing the quality of interactions, trust, and mutual understanding. It also includes the effectiveness of communication to exchange information, feedback,

and directives within the organization. Positive sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies often accompanied an appreciation for the transparency and responsiveness of management in communicating such initiatives. However, there was also notable criticism, particularly concerning communication flow between different levels of the organization. Some employees feel disconnected from the decision-making process, highlighting the need for improved communication and clarity, as expressed by one respondent, *"It's only because you have bottom up and top down. Sometimes, not everything is floating between each other. The bottom has no idea what the top is doing and sometimes we think in the bottom, that the top doesn't know what the bottom needs"* (Int.6). When such disconnection exists, sentiments towards corporate sustainability initiatives are likely to be negative, as management is less valued and trusted, and in cases, even resented. Previous research underscores the significance of good management-employee relationships and effective communication in fostering employee engagement and trust, as emphasized by Pellegrini et al. (2018), Stankevičiūnė & Stanisūkienė (2018), and Minbaeva et al. (2018).

Another influence on sentiments is *communication channels*, which represent the specific mediums and platforms employed by the organization to facilitate interactions and exchanges between management and employees. It encompasses traditional and digital tools for delivering news and sustainability-related content to employees. This research primarily focused on these channels for mitigation strategies, since analyzing the effectiveness of current communication channels and understanding employee preferences are essential indicators of success and opportunities for enhancement. An examination of these channels will therefore be provided in the ensuing discussion section.

Lastly, employees' *awareness* of the company's sustainability initiatives, the *implementation* of these strategies, and their *impact* on the workplace environment influence sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies. Although this factor was not extensively covered in existing literature, its importance became evident in data analysis: high awareness correlates with greater interest in sustainability strategies and more positive sentiments. Conversely, limited awareness leads to resistance to change and fosters negative sentiments. Interestingly, resistance to change was not solely attributed to sustainability initiatives but also extended to general changes within the workplace. For instance,

when truck drivers were required to use tablets to log their routes, initial opposition arose due to concerns about added workload and surveillance. However, with adequate explanation from management resistance diminished. This insight underscores the significance of the way change is introduced and the pace at which it occurs. Several interviewees emphasized the importance of gradual change, with one stating, *"If management would immediately change to what they want, sustainability and zero waste, then most people would be: whoa, we don't want that. But if it is through little steps, then it is better"* (Int.5). Rapid, poorly communicated changes can lead to negative sentiments among employees. Conversely, a slow adoption with thorough explanations is crucial for fostering positive sentiments. Furthermore, the impact of sustainability strategies also varies. While some jobs might not be directly affected, others can experience significant changes. A greater impact can lead to negative sentiments, underscoring the importance of careful implementation.

These factors collectively underscore the intricate interplay between organizational culture, communication practices, and individual beliefs in shaping employee sentiments towards sustainability initiatives at the case company. For a summarized overview, refer to Table 2.

Employee Sentiments and Their Effect

The analysis has revealed the effects of positive and negative sentiments among employees regarding corporate sustainability strategies: First, positive sentiments drive *proactive engagement, motivation, and productivity*, as employees become actively involved and motivated to contribute within the organization. Conversely, negative sentiments arise when sustainable strategies appear challenging or problematic, leading to *diminished employee motivation and engagement* towards sustainability initiatives. This dichotomy in sentiment reflects differing perceptions of sustainability initiatives' feasibility and impact on job satisfaction, aligning with prior research by Delmas & Pekovic (2018), Raza et al. (2021), and Serrano Archimi et al. (2018). Some employees demonstrate a deep personal connection to the company's sustainability goals, embracing the opportunity to address waste issues locally and reduce their environmental footprint. Such proactive engagement underscores a sense of ownership and commitment to organizational objectives. However, contrasting sentiments exist, with some employees viewing sustainability as an additional task not essential for job satisfaction, and

Table 2: Factors Influencing Employee Sentiment

Factors	Definition	Positive Sentiments	Negative Sentiments
Personal Stance Towards Sustainability	Employees' beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. It reflects their personal connection to sustainability goals and perceived role in addressing environmental challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yeah, but I also think that, well, as people, we need to, otherwise there won't be a planet left anymore." - "In my private time, I am also busy with biodiversity and the use of less plastic, I recycle everything I can...I am also trying to play my part in that, so I feel a personal connection with that goal." - "The most people who are working here know that it is good for the environment and for the future, that we have a better life and that we don't have any garbage anymore. That's nice. And the most beautiful thing you want." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...everyone says we need to cut down our emissions and stuff like that, but I don't think we matter as a player on the international scale, because you have huge countries like India or China...And we're like, oh, yeah, we're going to recycle this small stuff. And I could eat less meat and I could watch my own stuff, the company could pollute less, but on the grand scale of things if we don't do it all together, I don't see the use for it." - "If you see people like Taylor Swift flying for 30 minutes, multiple times a day...I don't think the efforts I would take are really that impactful. I mean I try, but sometimes I am like: meh..."
Management-Employee Relationship and Communication	The dynamics between organizational leaders and employees, encompassing the quality of interactions, trust, and mutual understanding. It also includes the effectiveness of communication utilized by both management and employees to exchange information, feedback, and directives within the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Our CEO is very open and sharing all kinds of stuff with us. I think that's very good." - "...and I try to complain and to tell them how maybe it can work if they do so. And they listen." - "So, in that way they're trying to motivate and help people with all kinds of little things to use at home and that's always a great way to connect with people and to help them or show where you stand for as a company." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yeah, it's only because you have bottom up and top down. Sometimes, not everything is floating between each other sometimes. Yeah, the bottom had no idea what the top is doing. And sometimes we think in the bottom, that the top doesn't know what the bottom needs." - "That's really nice, but sometimes it's for the people a little bit like ... oh yeah, nice, but when, how? In front of us, we don't see it as bright. Omrin does not always communicate in detail."
Communication Channels	The specific mediums and platforms employed by the organization to facilitate information dissemination, encompassing traditional and digital channels. These channels deliver news, updates, and sustainability-related content to employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yes, I think it's effective. Some things make people realize that what we see here we can do at home. And I think that works." - "No, I think most of the people really read it, because it's an attractive magazine. Looks good...A lot of pictures also helps. Visuals make things so much better to remember for people and to get their attention." - "But if you have intranet there's always little news pages and then you can click on the things that you like and you are curious to learn more about. So that way you can always, and if there are new people here, you can always look at them and look it up...So, most of the time, I am very satisfied with the way things go." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "But that's also a thing I complained about it. On the weekend as drivers, we cannot see on an intranet on our phone or at home. We must see and hear it on that TV in the canteen or something, but we cannot see it on our phone or so. Yeah, others have a working place and then you can see that, but I cannot see that because I don't have a working place. They are working on changing that, they say. But it's not working." - "Yeah, well, mostly the news, that kind of thing, or Omrin TV, for me, I mostly all the time, think it's too long. Not everything is interesting for me, at least, so I skip parts of it often."
Perception of the Organizational and Work Environment	Employees' subjective views, interpretations, and evaluations of various facets such as organizational culture, values, job satisfaction, and overall work environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It's a company where practically everything is possible. They are very well in helping you find the right job for you. If you have problems, everything is very well organized to help you with problems." - "But Omrin doesn't mind, they want to invest in us, because they want to have healthy people in their company because healthy people are happy people." - "And some days, you're like, oh, yeah, I've fished quite a lot of trash, and I sorted it correctly and you've made even if it is a small bit, you've made some impact. Even if it is small." - "The work itself, it's growth. So that's very positive. At least I'm going almost every day happy to work. That's a positive thing." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "...that's becoming a little more of a problem, I think, when it's getting bigger and bigger. And well, that's kind of a shame because then you don't have that connection with everyone. You feel a little bit like you're becoming well a number is a little bit negatively, but well, that's where it's heading, I think." - "A lot of changing people in the office. Team changes, every two three years people come or go. ...We get some new managers, and they have also ideas, and some do not work and then they go away again...And that's a pity sometimes." - "To make things better now because it is hard to work in production. Hard work. Physical work. And back pain, sleeping disorders sometimes because you have night, morning, or afternoon shifts."
Awareness and Implementation of Corporate Sustainability Strategies	Employees' knowledge and understanding of the company's initiatives, objectives, and policies related to sustainability, as well as how these strategies are introduced, executed, and integrated into the workplace. It also evaluates the impact of sustainability strategies on the employee's workplace environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "We see garbage not as garbage but as a resource. Omrin wants to be a good employer for a lot of different employees...They want to be CO2 neutral. Be good for the environment." - "Try to get zero waste only, get zero wasted. That's almost impossible. But yeah, that's one of the biggest goals...That's why we all run everything on natural and electric." - "I think if management will change from what we want, sustainability right now, so zero waste, then most people would be: whoa, we don't want that. But if it is, yeah, by little steps, I think then is getting better." - "It's smaller changes that are happening, and it's not one big. It's a lot of smaller changes that make at the end of the year, after two years, a big difference. But it's going in small steps. Not a big difference at once." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I must say I'm not really familiar with the exact ones that they're promoting." - "I should know about five of them, but no, sorry." - "Then at first everybody is no...Well, of course we don't want extra work and control. And then eventually somebody from management just explained why...and then it was fine by everybody. Okay, but it's more it's new and they need a bit of explanation." - "And yeah, other colleagues they were diesel heads. They didn't want to go that way. But we have to, because that's the company's strategy."

prioritizing financial gain over environmental considerations.

Second, positive sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies result in a sense of *satisfaction and pride* among employees. They derive personal fulfillment from contributing to sustainable practices within their organization and perceive their efforts as meaningful contributions to a larger environmental cause. For instance, one employee expressed, "*That's one of the reasons that I work here. You can make a difference here*" (Int.7). Moreover, employees find accomplishment in actions that contribute to sustainability, such as cleaning streets or implementing eco-friendly practices. One employee shared, "*Especially when the street is very dirty, you go through it with your sweeper, you're looking in a mirror and it's clean. It's nice. Satisfaction*" (Int.5). Furthermore, positive sentiments towards sustainability initiatives were accompanied by expressions of approval and encouragement for such practices, demonstrating a collective endorsement of sustainability efforts and a desire to see them implemented more widely. However, negative sentiments towards sustainability strategies lead to feelings of *anger and frustration* among employees. Perceived as burdensome or imposed without adequate explanation or consideration for concerns, such initiatives may evoke skepticism or resistance, undermining employee motivation. This indicates a reluctance to fully embrace sustainability initiatives, often stemming from concerns about their perceived costs or feasibility. Unclear communication or lack of transparency and involvement also exacerbates negative sentiments, leading to feelings of demotivation and frustration. As one employee emphasized, "*So, it's better to be clear about it because then they know about it, and they don't have to gossip about it. And their motivation is gone. They are irritated sometimes, and they don't understand some decisions*" (Int.6). These findings resonate with prior research. Positive sentiments towards sustainability initiatives contribute to employee satisfaction and pride, as noted by Barakat et al. (2016) and Ng et al. (2019). Conversely, a perceived disconnect may foster cynicism, diminishing motivation, as highlighted by Graves et al. (2019).

Positive sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies also significantly impact *employee retention and overall workplace stability*. This became evident when several employees expressed positive feelings towards Omrin's organizational culture and sustainability objectives, enhancing their job satisfaction and inclination to remain with the company for extended periods. For instance, one respondent highlighted the enduring tenure of employees, noting that most have been with

the company for decades. This suggests a high level of employee satisfaction and loyalty among the workforce. Additionally, those with positive sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies viewed the company as a "*very safe organization*" to work for (Int.7), motivating them to seek long-term contracts and commit to their roles. As one respondent noted, "*And then I thought, well, Omrin is a very good company. It's a strong company. It's a nice job. So, I thought, well, I will try to get a contract*" (Int.3). Empirical evidence further reinforces these insights, with studies by Graves et al. (2019) and Wang & Wang (2020) demonstrating how positive perceptions of organizational initiatives strengthen employee commitment, ultimately bolstering retention rates and fostering a stable work environment. This underscores the importance of aligning employees' sentiments with corporate sustainability strategies.

A counterproductive *resistance to sustainability change* emerges when negative sentiments pervade corporate sustainability strategies. This resistance includes sentiments marked by reluctance or opposition to alterations within the organizational framework. Employees may feel overwhelmed or apprehensive about sudden changes, preferring a more gradual, step-by-step approach to change implementation. The way changes are introduced and communicated significantly influences employees' reactions, as shown, "*I'm not always positive at first, but later on. It takes a while for me to say, okay it is interesting, to get used to it*" (Int.1); or "*That's why it's better to have little steps. Because if you go too fast, it's going to get you backlash faster*" (Int.6). This observation underscores that understanding employees' reactions to change management becomes particularly crucial in the context of sustainability, as successful alignment of employee sentiments with sustainability goals is essential for effective implementation and commitment to sustainable practices.

Lastly, favorable sentiments towards sustainability initiatives lead to *sustainable behavior both at the organization and in their private life*, as employees internalize the organization's values and mission, often extending beyond the workplace to their private lives. For instance, one respondent mentioned, "*By being in this environment, you're also adopting some [sustainable behavior], you will be affected by the spirit that Omrin has, to be good for the environment. I think people also take that home*" (Int.7). Employees may seek opportunities to integrate sustainable practices into their personal lives, such as seeking advice from colleagues on biodiversity or becoming more conscious of waste

management due to their professional expertise. This integration of sustainability into personal habits can become ingrained over time, as noted by another respondent: *"Because I am in the field of waste for 25 years, I think automatically more about it. I know the process. Recycling becomes a part of you, it's normal. That effect does Omrin have"* (Int.1). Secondary research supports this. Guerci et al. (2015) and Pellegrini et al. (2018) found that positive perceptions of internal sustainability efforts motivate employees to engage in sustainable behavior. Raza et al. (2021) also emphasize the role of positive sentiments in driving voluntary environmental actions among employees, extending to their private lives. However, negative sentiments lead to *limited sustainable behavior and extension to private life*, as skepticism or perceived insignificance of individual efforts deter active engagement in sustainability practices. This sentiment extends to personal habits, as employees may question the efficacy of their actions for global sustainability challenges. As one respondent articulated, *"I could eat less meat and I could watch my own stuff...but on the grand scale of things, if we don't do it all together, reality for me doesn't make sense in that regard. I don't really see the use for it"* (Int.8).

These findings illustrate the factors influencing employee sentiments (Table 2) and the corresponding outcomes (Table 3), as summarized in Figure 1 below. The detrimental effects of negative employee sentiments highlight the critical need for effective mitigation strategies, which will be explored in the following discussion section.

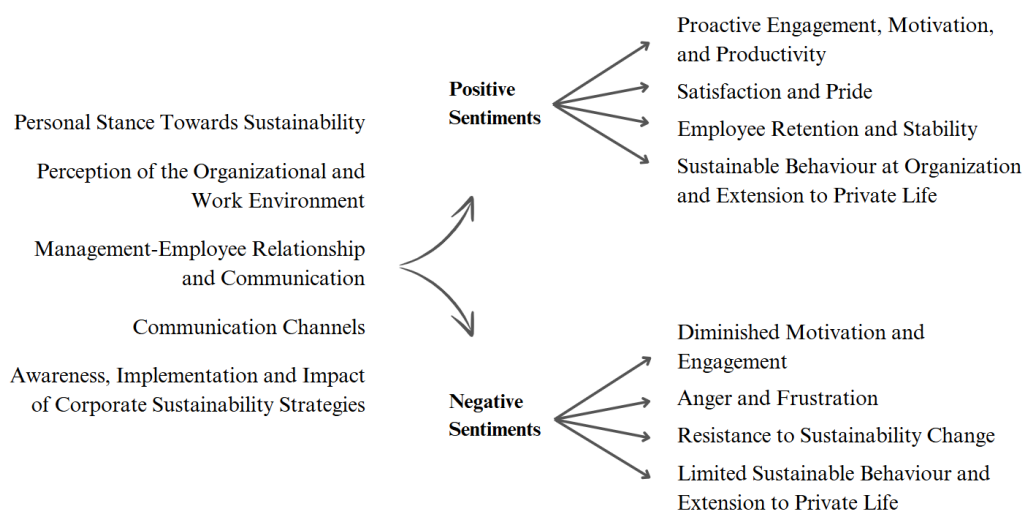


Figure 1: Factors Influencing Employee Sentiments and their Effect.

Table 3: Employee Sentiments and Their Effect

Effects of	Category	Definition	Quotes
positive sentiments	Proactive Engagement, Motivation, and Productivity	Active involvement, motivation to contribute, and enhanced productivity within the organization.	- "The first time I was looking at all the garbage who was coming here, I think Holy moly. We made that as humans and why so much? So, it makes some difference in in your mind. Why do I always have to buy new things, you can always sell second-hand things? And what can we do to make the big amount of garbage less? Well, and here we can help to make from garbage good stuff. We can use it again. I think that's very important." - "I am comfortable with the fact that Omrin has these goals. I am also trying to play my part in that, so I feel a personal connection with that goal." - "Yes, you're working towards a goal. I support it because when I was young, most of the garbage was going to China. We are making this stuff, and we are sending away to an outside country. That's not nice. We need to have it in our own. We are responsible for our mess."
	Sense of Satisfaction and Pride	Employees derive personal fulfillment and take pride in contributing to sustainable practices within their organization.	- "That's one of the reasons that I work here. You can make a difference here." - "Yeah. Especially, when sweeping the street is very dirty. Well, you go through it with your sweeper you're looking in a mirror so it's clean. It's nice. Yeah, satisfaction." - "It's a good thing. Yeah, more companies should do this."
	Employee Retention and Stability	Contribution to employee retention and fostering of a stable work environment.	- "Because there are just a few people who leave Omrin, most of them are working here for 10, 20, 25 years. That says something about the culture in Omrin and the amount of people that are sick is below 3%. That always says something about a culture." - "It's a very safe organization, not safe like injuries but safe to work for." - "And then I thought well, Omrin is a very good company. It's a nice job. So, I thought, well, I will try to get a contract. " - "A lot of changing people in the office. Team changes, every two three years people come or go...We get some new managers, and they have also ideas, and some do not work and then they go away again...And that's a pity sometimes."
	Sustainable Behavior at Organization and Extension to Private Life	Sustainable behavior and decision-making within the organization, often extending to employees' private lives.	- "By being in this environment, you're also maybe adopting some yeah, you will be affected with the spirit that Omrin has, to be good for the environment, I think people also take that home." - "But the new guy, that's the biodiversity coach, I thought about it because I thought well, I have some questions for my own garden and then maybe he has some tips for me, maybe. So, in that way, it's always a little bit. Some things yeah, you can use for yourself in private." - "Because I am in the field of waste for 25 years, I think automatically more about it. I know the process. (...) Recycling becomes a part of you, its normal. You know exactly where everything goes. That effect does Omrin have." - "(sustainable behavior also in private life) Yes. For sure. And not only for me, but also my neighbours. Yeah. And also with my children."
Effects of negative sentiments	Diminished Employee Motivation and Engagement	Decrease in employee motivation and engagement towards sustainability initiatives. Perception of initiatives as secondary to their primary job responsibilities, feeling of indifference or skepticism.	- "Yeah, well, it is important but not all people are interested in that (sustainability). They want to work; they want to have their money and they go home." - "At the end of the day, it's still a job for me. That like entails recycling and stuff like that is a plus, of course, but it isn't really a deal breaker for me if they didn't do it. Yeah. Because yeah, at the end of the day, it's still a job. You're getting paid." - "So, it's better to be clear about it because then they know about it, and they don't have to gossip about it. And their motivation is gone. They are irritated sometimes, and they don't understand some decisions."
	Anger and Frustration	Anger and Frustration towards sustainability initiatives can arise when employees perceive them as burdensome or imposed without adequate explanation or consideration for their concerns.	- "...but some things are going too far. I don't think we should pay for it. For sustainability. Well, I don't know if it's always a good idea. I have my thinking about it." - "No. It's like, we have to do work with it, and they say: you have to do it." - "And yeah, other colleagues they were diesel heads. They didn't want to go that way. But we have to, because that's company's strategy." - "So, it's better to be clear about it because then they know about it, and they don't have to gossip about it. And their motivation is gone. They are irritated sometimes, and they don't understand some decisions."
	Resistance to Sustainability Change	Resistance or reluctance towards changes in sustainability practices within the organization. Employees may feel overwhelmed or apprehensive about sudden changes, preferring gradual, incremental steps instead.	- "...that's why it's better to have little steps. Because if you go too fast, it's going to get you backlash faster." - "Then at first everybody is no... Well, of course everybody doesn't want extra work and control. And then eventually somebody from management just explained why...and then it was fine by everybody. Okay, but it's more it's new and they need a bit of explanation. I think that's the biggest thing here in Omrin." - "But yea, I'm not always positive at first, but later on. It takes a while for me to say, okay it is interesting, to get used to it."
	Limited Sustainable Behavior and Extension to Private Life	Limited sustainable behavior and decision-making within the organization and in employees' private lives.	- "I don't really think the efforts I would take are really that impactful. But that's a bit of a pet peeve. I mean I try, but sometimes I am like: meh..." - "And I'm like, I could eat less meat and I could watch my own stuff, the company could less pollution, but on the grand scale of things if we don't do it all together, reality for me doesn't make really sense in that regard. Doesn't mean it is a negative aspect to strive for, of course, but I don't really see the use for it."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings suggest several factors influencing employees' sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies, including perceptions of the organizational and work environment, the quality of management-employee relationships, individual beliefs regarding sustainability, and awareness and implementation of sustainability strategies within the company. These elements significantly shape employee sentiments, which in turn have various effects.

Positive sentiments are associated with proactive engagement, heightened motivation and productivity, a sense of satisfaction and pride, improved employee retention and workplace stability, as well as the adoption of sustainable behaviors within the organization and in employees' personal lives. Conversely, negative sentiments can lead to reduced employee engagement, motivation, and productivity, as well as anger and frustration, resistance to sustainability initiatives, and limited adoption of sustainable behavior. Given the adverse impact of negative sentiments on organizational outcomes, it is imperative to address these challenges effectively. Drawing from these insights, organizations, including Omrin, can benefit from the two recommendations discussed below.

Mitigation Strategies and Recommendations

To address the identified need for *enhanced communication and engagement*, the first recommendation centers on optimizing communication channels. Open and transparent communication channels between management and employees must be established to ensure clarity, alignment, and mutual understanding regarding sustainability objectives and initiatives. Active participation and feedback mechanisms are encouraged to empower employees and cultivate a sense of ownership and commitment towards sustainability goals. Omrin's experiences revealed shortcomings in accessibility to internal communication platforms, such as the Intranet, particularly for employees working outside the office environment. To address this, communication avenues should be made equally accessible to all staff, regardless of their work location, to eliminate potential reasons for negative sentiments. For instance, if employees in operational roles do not have a work PC and cannot access communication as easily as their colleagues, alternative methods should be provided. This could include access through available iPads, logins on their mobile phones, or additional public screens.

Communication methods must also be tailored to suit the diverse needs of employees. For instance, Omrin observed challenges with lengthy content on Omrin TV, which did not engage all employees and aired outside regular working hours. To address this challenge, Omrin and other organizations should prioritize concise and impactful visuals to effectively capture employee attention and communicate messages. Moreover, scheduling these communications during working hours, such as during lunch breaks, and tailoring them to specific locations can further enhance their effectiveness and relevance to the workforce.

Moreover, leveraging existing communication platforms that resonate well with employees is crucial. Therefore, implementing feedback rounds on communication channels can be instrumental in receiving input and making necessary improvements. For instance, Omrin's company magazine got positive feedback for its quality and visual appeal. Utilizing channels that have received favorable responses for information sharing is advisable. To further boost employee engagement, it should be considered to integrate more information about sustainability strategies and individual employee contributions into these platforms. Highlighting the collective positive impact on the environment and society can address concerns raised by several employees regarding their perceived influence on environmental and societal issues. This proactive approach emphasizes the tangible contributions of both individuals and the organization as a whole towards sustainability goals.

Finally, it is essential to cultivate a workplace culture that encourages employees to openly express their concerns and ideas. Omrin's effective open-door policy exemplifies the significance of fostering transparent communication between management and staff. For instance, by establishing dedicated office hours for employee-manager meetings, implementing anonymous suggestion boxes, conducting regular feedback surveys, and offering suggestion forms, a smooth flow of information across all organizational levels can be ensured. This practice minimizes disconnects in overarching organizational goals and sustainability endeavors. Ultimately, this can positively influence employees' sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies and thus enhance their commitment and engagement.

These recommendations align with research findings, for example by Engert and Baumgartner (2016), who emphasize the importance of steadily realized interactions and meetings in addressing

sustainability topics. Lack of meaningful engagement with sustainability initiatives was found to undermine overall motivation and willingness to support social and environmental changes, emphasizing the importance of proactive communication and employee involvement.

An essential finding of this research is that while sustainability change may progress slowly within the workforce, it is not always due to hesitance or resistance specific to sustainability initiatives, but rather a general reluctance towards change itself. Numerous studies on change management underscore the challenges and strategies for positively engaging employees in change processes. They suggest that a successful strategy implementation relies heavily on motivated employees (Doppelt, 2009; Galpin et al., 2015; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016). Therefore, the second recommendation is to implement efficient *change management strategies* tailored to the context:

Adopting strategic change management approaches to facilitate the smooth integration of sustainability practices into organizational processes and culture entails adopting a phased and inclusive approach to change implementation. For instance, involving employees in decision-making processes related to sustainability initiatives, such as brainstorming sessions or focus groups to gather insights and feedback. Additionally, providing adequate support and resources, such as training programs or access to experts, to help employees navigate transitions effectively.

It is also crucial to emphasize the benefits of sustainability initiatives to employees, addressing their concerns and highlighting the gradual nature of change. For instance, one can showcase successful case studies or testimonials from other employees who have embraced sustainability practices, demonstrating tangible benefits such as cost savings or improved work environment. By managing change effectively and emphasizing its positive outcomes, organizations can minimize disruptions, enhance employee acceptance, and a culture of continuous improvement towards sustainability goals.

Implementing strategies such as lighthouse projects, qualification programs, internal competitions, and reward systems can effectively stimulate employee engagement in sustainability endeavors. For instance, establishing a recognition system for employees' sustainability contributions or hosting internal contests to generate innovative sustainability ideas can significantly enhance motivation and involvement. However, it is essential to note that reliance solely on extrinsic motivators—such as

performance targets or bonuses—may undermine company principles (Pellegrini et al., 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to thoughtfully design these reward systems to reinforce positive job attitudes and inspire sustainable behaviors among employees. For example, employees could be offered the opportunity to participate in professional development workshops related to sustainability and recognize their efforts through awards and public acknowledgment. This approach would provide rewards while also fostering a deeper connection to the company's sustainability goals and encouraging ongoing personal and professional growth.

Lastly, regular meetings and workshops with the strategy department can support internal communication and alignment with organizational goals. These sessions provide opportunities for employees to stay informed about strategic initiatives, ask questions, and provide feedback, fostering a sense of involvement and ownership in the organizational strategy.

In summary, this research has identified the key factors shaping employee sentiments (Table 2) and their impact on both employee commitment and organizational outcomes (Table 3). Drawing from the experiences of Omrin, it is evident that addressing negative sentiments towards sustainability initiatives necessitates a multi-faceted approach encompassing enhanced communication, employee engagement, and adept change management strategies. By implementing these recommendations, organizations can navigate negative sentiments among the workforce and effectively address communication challenges, foster employee engagement, and garner support for sustainability efforts.

Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged to ensure a nuanced interpretation of the findings. Firstly, the study's reliance on a single case study approach and the modest sample size raises questions about the saturation of the gathered data and the sufficiency of the results in broader organizational contexts. Efforts were made to mitigate this concern by carefully selecting Omrin, a company renowned for its sustainability focus, and by ensuring diversity in the selection of interview participants through the assistance of an insider. While these steps enhance the validity of the findings, caution should still be exercised when extrapolating them to different

organizational settings. For example, the results may not apply similarly to companies without an existing sustainability focus, who may want to initiate sustainable practices.

Research inherently faces challenges of bias and subjective interpretation, potentially impacting the accuracy of findings. To address this, researchers must acknowledge their positionality and take measures to minimize potential biases. This sustainability-focused thesis employed an introspective research approach to ensure objectivity and reliability. It involved reflecting on decision-making processes and analyzing diverse data sources, encompassing academic journals, books, and online resources. Additionally, when participants expressed negative views towards sustainability during interviews, the researcher aimed to maintain a non-judgmental stance, framing questions neutrally to avoid influencing responses.

By reflecting on these limitations, future research endeavors may address these aspects to strengthen the robustness and applicability of the findings in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate sustainability strategies.

Directions for Future Research

There are several implications of this study that call for further research: firstly, enhancing the external validity of the results could be achieved by increasing the sample size and diversifying the participant pool. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to track changes in employee sentiments towards sustainability initiatives over time. This approach would provide insights into the sustainability impact of organizational interventions and the long-term effectiveness of strategies in shaping employee attitudes. Moreover, incorporating multiple case studies or conducting a comparative analysis could offer a more comprehensive understanding of employee sentiments towards sustainability strategies. Comparing employee sentiments across different industries, organizational sizes, or geographical locations could identify variations in perceptions and responses to sustainability strategies, thereby informing tailored approaches for diverse settings.

Additionally, research should prioritize investigating effective strategies for enhancing employee engagement with sustainability initiatives. Due to the scope of this research, only two strategies were being explored. Future research could delve into the role of leadership, training programs, incentive structures, and other factors in fostering a culture of sustainability within

organizations. Furthermore, studies should evaluate the tangible outcomes of positive employee sentiments on organizational sustainability performance on a larger scale, potentially utilizing quantitative methods. Understanding the link between employee attitudes, behavior change, and sustainability can provide empirical evidence of the benefits of prioritizing employee sentiments in sustainability strategies.

These implications underscore the importance of ongoing research and concerted efforts to support organizations in their successful transition towards more sustainable practices while addressing employees' needs. By pursuing these future research directions, scholars and practitioners can deepen their understanding of the complex interplay between employee sentiments and corporate sustainability strategies, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable business practices.

Final Conclusion

The research on employee sentiments towards corporate sustainability strategies provides valuable insights into the factors influencing employee perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability initiatives and their effect. Through a case study analysis, several key conclusions can be drawn: The study identified various factors influencing employee sentiments, including organizational culture, job satisfaction, work environment, and perceptions of sustainability initiatives. It underscores the significance of open, transparent communication channels, employee engagement initiatives, and change management strategies in addressing negative sentiments towards sustainability initiatives. These recommendations aim to align employee sentiments and corporate sustainability objectives.

The research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical implications in the field of organizational sustainability. By exploring the role of sentiment in sustainability engagement and commitment, the study advances knowledge of the psychological mechanisms underlying employee attitudes towards sustainability initiatives. Exploring the relationship between sentiment and commitment deepens comprehension of how organizational culture shapes employee attitudes towards sustainability. On a practical level, the study's findings inform organizational strategies for promoting sustainability engagement among employees. These recommendations can inform organizational strategies for promoting sustainability engagement among employees. Of particular significance is the

relevance of the research to the case company, Omrin, which is committed to incorporating the findings into its operations, facilitating stronger alignment between employees and organizational goals.

The research aligns with pre-existing evidence on the importance of employee engagement, communication, and change management in driving sustainable business practices. By building upon previous literature and empirical studies, the research enriches the understanding of how organizational culture shapes employee attitudes towards sustainability and contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable business practices. Ultimately, by bridging the gap between employee sentiments and corporate sustainability goals, the research seeks to amplify the impact of Omrin and other companies on sustainability. By fostering a culture of sustainability rooted in positive employee sentiment and commitment, organizations can effectively address environmental challenges and contribute to a more sustainable future.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of addressing employee sentiments towards sustainability initiatives through effective communication, engagement strategies, and change management practices. By leveraging the insights of this study and tailoring them to their specific organizational context, organizations can enhance employee acceptance and commitment, foster a culture of sustainability, and contribute to a more sustainable future for both their business and the broader community.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. Explanation of Research and Consent Form
2. Introduction:
 - Can you tell me about your role and responsibilities within the organization?
 - How long have you been working at Omrin?
 - What initially attracted you to work at Omrin?
 - Can you tell me a bit about your overall experience working here?
 - Do you enjoy it?
 - With which couple of words would you positively describe Omrin?
 - With which couple of words would you negatively describe Omrin?
 - Are you familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals? And with the seven pillars of the circular economy?
3. Top Management Sustainability Goals/Strategies:
 - Are you familiar with the sustainability goals or strategies set by top management at Omrin?
 - If yes, what do you know about them concretely?
 - How do you think and feel about these goals/ strategies?
 - Why do you think or feel that way?
 - Do you personally resonate with these goals/strategies? Why or why not?
 - Can you describe any experiences or interactions you have had with these initiatives?

- Have you observed any changes in work dynamics or organizational culture as a result of these sustainability initiatives?
 - If so, how have they impacted you and your colleagues?
4. Employee Strategies for Sustainability:
- Are you aware of any activities that Omrin employs to engage its workforce in sustainability initiatives? (e.g., Omrin TV, Intranet, magazines, Omrin App...)
 - What do you think and feel about them? Would you say they are effective...?
 - What aspects of these strategies/mechanisms work well, and which ones could be improved?
 - How effective do you think the communication regarding sustainability initiatives has been within the organization?
 - Have you noticed any significant impact from these strategies/mechanisms?
 - Have you noticed that they impact others' employee engagement or behavior?
 - Do you feel personally connected to these initiatives? Why or why not?
 - In your opinion, what additional strategies or approaches could Omrin adopt to further enhance employee involvement in sustainability efforts?
5. Closing and Thanks
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't discussed?
 - Do you have any questions for me about the research or the interview process?
 - ...

Interview Transcripts

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ce2IrxfdByDA_e1BCrbeOP2ylSeGVAiP2E0v1u-QInE/edit?usp=sharing

Consent Form**Master Thesis from Klara Riehle**

Title: *Exploring the Relationship Between Employee Sentiment and Commitment to Corporate Sustainability Strategies: A Case Study Analysis*

Name participant:**Assessment**

- I have read the information sheet and was able to ask any additional question to the researcher.
- I understand I may ask questions about the study at any time.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that at any time I can refuse to answer any question without any consequences.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

Confidentiality and Data Use

- I understand that none of my individual information will be disclosed to anyone outside the study team and my name will not be published.
- I understand that the information provided will be used only for this research and publications directly related to this research project.
- I understand that data (consent forms, recordings, interview transcripts) will be retained on the Y-drive of the University of Groningen server for 5 years, in correspondence with the university GDPR legislation.

Future involvement

- I wish to receive a copy of the scientific output of the project.
- I consent to be re-contacted for participating in future studies.

Having read and understood all the above, I agree to participate in the research study: yes / no

Date

Signature

To be filled in by the researcher

- I declare that I have thoroughly informed the research participant about the research study and answered any remaining questions to the best of my knowledge.
- I agree that this person participates in the research study.

Date

Signature