

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: MODERN THEORIES AND BEST PRACTICES



Teadmus OÜ

Sustainable Development: Modern Theories and Best Practices

Materials of the Monthly International Scientific and Practical
Conference (July 28-29, 2022)

Tallinn
2022

Sustainable Development: Modern Theories and Best Practices : Materials of the Monthly International Scientific and Practical Conference (July 28-29, 2022) / Gen. Edit. Olha Prokopenko, Aleksander Sapiński, Tallinn: Teadmus OÜ, 2022, 63 p.

ISSN 2733-2942

Reviewers:

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Inna Osadchenko, Pedagogy and Educational Management Department, Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Uman, Ukraine

Doctor of Economics, Professor Olena Sadchenko, Department of Marketing and Business Administration, Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University, Odessa, Ukraine

The collection consists of materials from the Monthly International Scientific and Practical Conference “Sustainable Development: Modern Theories and Best Practices”. They represent scientific research results in such scientific areas as financial and economic, managerial and legal, social and cultural, ecological and technical, educational and pedagogical issues of sustainable development on local, regional and international levels.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Financial Issues of Sustainable Development, Economic Issues of Sustainable Development, Managerial Issues of Sustainable Development, Legal Issues of Sustainable Development, Social Issues of Sustainable Development, Cultural Issues of Sustainable Development, Ecological Issues of Sustainable Development, Technical Issues of Sustainable Development, Regional Features of Sustainable Development, International Cooperation for Sustainable Development, Educational Institutions and Pedagogy for Sustainable Development.

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SUSTAINABLE HRM IN WAR AND PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

Hanna Sereda, PhD

Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University, Ukraine

The beginning of the 2030-s seemed like new global challenges for humanity: the COVID-19 pandemic and the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which has an impact on the security and economic situation in the world. According to the forecast of World Bank, global growth is expected to slump from 5.7 percent in 2021 to 2.9 percent in 2022— significantly lower than 4.1 percent that was anticipated in January (Stagflation, 2022). Ukraine's economy is expected to shrink by an estimated 45.1 percent this year, although the magnitude of the contraction will depend on the duration and intensity of the war (Russian, 2022). The defined context of external conditions actualizes the search for models of sustainable HRM, which will help enterprises and organizations to face global and regional challenges.

The concept of sustainable HRM was developed as a response to the formation of the paradigm of sustainable development, which is declared as the goal of meeting the needs of current generations without threatening the needs of future generations, taking into account social and environmental implications of human and organizational activities. Many researchers (Podgorodnichenko, 2020; Aust(Ehnert), 2020) in the field of sustainable HRM insist on its much broader understanding than purely ecological (green) HRM (HRM practices and policies that take into account the impact of the organization and the environment), socially responsible HRM and employee-oriented HR practices (aimed at the development of human capital).

The research, provided by Podgorodnichenko et al., 2020 contributes to the sustainable HRM literature by providing support for the proposition that elevating the status of employees, as an organizational stakeholder, is best exacted through promotion of a sustainability agenda, and recognizes employees as an important HRM stakeholder in different roles, such as: i) a pivotal driving force of organizational performance; ii) recipients of organizational HR policies and practices; iii) members of a community (Podgorodnichenko, 2020).

The research of Guerci et al. claims that the members of the HR professional community can increase their job satisfaction and decrease their intention to leave by implementing sustainable HRM: when HR professionals and managers are involved in sustainable HRM perceive their job to become more meaningful as it has a broader

scope(Guerci, 2019).

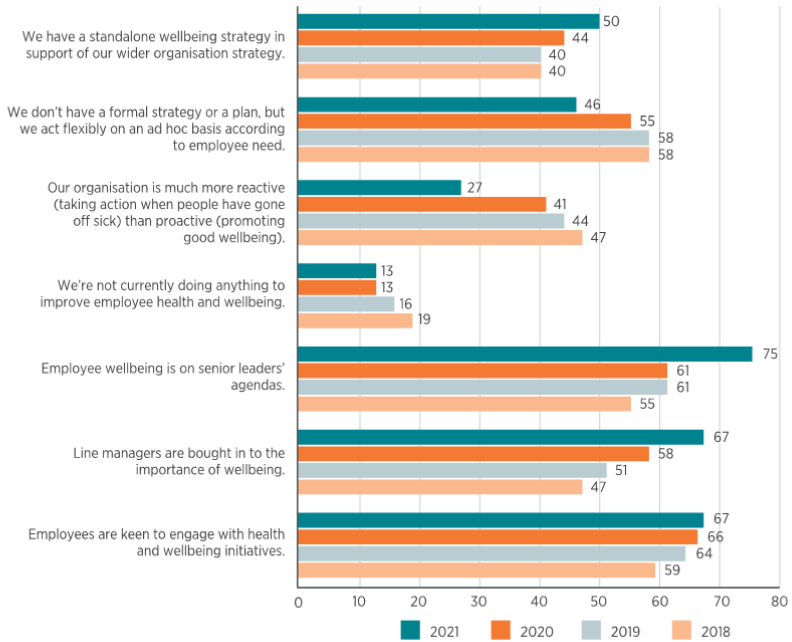
In XXI century organizations must take into account that they cannot exhaust and exploit ecological, social, or human resources to achieve their organizational goals. Sustainable HRM is based on the pluralism of voices from the organization's stakeholders - shareholders, employees, trade unions, state bodies, environmental protection organizations, municipalities, representatives of public organizations that take care of social problems and ecology(Nuis, 2021).

The most interesting view on the conceptualization of sustainable HRM is offered by the study of Aust (Ehnert) et al., which proves the separation of the new concept of Common Good HRM from among the concepts of Green HRM, Social Responsibility HRM, and Triple Bottom Line HRM. The concept of Common Good HRM has a different direction of focus – not inside the organization to outside, but on the contrary – from the outside – the task of contributing to the solution of "grand challenges" – to inside – using HRM competencies, skills, knowledge, and attitudes to contribute to the common good. In this study, the authors provide examples of Common Good HRM practices in response to challenges: i) in-work poverty and exploitative working conditions in supply chains; ii) Lack of labor voice; iii) (youth) unemployment and job insecurity (Aust, 2020).

Let's see how the concept of sustainable HRM develops in new global challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, and because of it, the strengthening of the energy crisis and migration of refugees in Europe.

As the pandemic went on, well-being remained paramount in organizational leaders' minds. Conversations about the toll of social isolation and economic recession on workers' mental and emotional health entered the public dialogue, and keeping workers physically healthy and safe continued to be a top priority. According to the 2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, well-being had the largest gap between importance and readiness across this year's trends, with 80% of organizations saying worker well-being is important or very important for their success over the next 12–18 months, but only 12% saying they are very ready to address this issue. 61% of respondents said that their organizations are not measuring the impact of well-being on organizational performance at all, and those respondents whose organizations did measure well-being's impact on performance were most likely to report that that impact lay largely in improving the workforce experience. The 34% companies have programs around workers' physical, financial, and even emotional health (Schwartz, 2022).

In the 21st survey report exploring absence and wellbeing practices in UK workplaces, in partnership with Simplyhealth, the strengthening of well-being strategies can be observed in pandemic 2020-2022 years (figure 1). However, report their allocated budget for wellbeing benefits has increased as a consequence of the pandemic (only 26% say it), with the majority saying it has remained the same – 59% of respondents. Most organizations make some effort to promote 'good work', collective/social relationships, values/principles and physical health; Financial wellbeing remains a more neglected area (Health, 2021).



Base: 668 (2021); 1,018 (2020); 1,056 (2019); 1,016 (2018).

Source: Health and wellbeing at work 2021

Fig. 1. The position of health and wellbeing in organisations (%)

In the 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, executives identified “the ability of their people to adapt, reskill, and assume new roles” as the top-ranked item to navigate future disruptions, with 72% selecting it as the most important or second most important factor. Workers themselves recognize the imperative to change as well, with 60% of the 10,000 workers in this year’s Voice of the European Workforce study identifying “capacity to adapt” as the most relevant skill they will need to thrive in the labor market (Schwartz, 2022).

Research on how HRM-strategies and practices are changing in relation to the challenges of the intensification of international population migration processes, especially those caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war, is still ongoing, gathering current data for analysis. Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe since 24 February 2022, as of 29 June 2022 have reached 5,493,437 people (Ukraine, 2022). Hirst’s review (Hirst et al., 2021) concludes that HR professionals not only recruit refugees directly (which belongs to the concept of traditional resource HRM), but may also champion changes in industrial relations laws to streamline visa and employment processes and initiate internship programs to gain professional experience by refugees. HR professionals play a role in the social responsibility initiatives adopted by many organizations to foster social inclusion and diversity, and address systemic social problems (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Applying the theory of cumulative disadvantage to examine more than 10,000 respondents from nine post-socialist countries, Ivlevs and Veliziotis (2018) found that displaced people who had fled conflict, especially women,

are more likely to be long-term unemployed, experience job loss or work informally (Hirst, 2021). The authors of a study on Ukrainian migrants and refugees in Poland (Adamczyk, 2022) come to a similar conclusion: Ukrainian refugee women have a less desirable worker profile than Ukrainian labour migrants. In this context, the employer can act as an information intermediary, so to speak, setting a path for the legalisation of the migrant's stay. It is possible because that legal act, in fact, has equalised access to the labour market for war refugees (Adamczyk, 2022).

Possible programs of Common Good HRM in the plan of integration of refugees in the receiving country can be:

- direct employment of refugees as a manifestation of diversity and inclusion policy;
- programs to confirm and formalize existing qualifications of refugees, which will facilitate employment in decent work. For example, the "USE-IT" program developed by the NHS in Sandwell and West Birmingham aimed to overcome skills shortages in the health professions. I by hiring disabled or unemployed refugees with medical qualifications. By offering work experience and assisting participants to gain registration with a relevant professional health institution, the program has identified a previously untapped workforce pool (Eastwood, 2006; Stewart, 2007);
- language course programs (use of linguistic competences of employees to teach the language of the host country);
- coaching programs to help refugees develop a "life resume" that clearly articulates their experiences and opportunities (Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland, & O'Neill, 2011), apply "life space mapping" to encourage refugees to value their biographical and professional experiences (formal, informal and non-formal) while building one's career (Słowik, 2014);
- psychological adaptation programs to overcome depression, psychological confusion and stress;
- volunteer housing assistance programs for refugees as social responsibility programs that promote greater integration and cohesion (Hebbani, Khawaja, & Famularo, 2016);
- professional training programs for refugees. Thus, German corporations (such as Daimler, Telekom, Allianz, and Siemens) have responded to the European refugee crisis by working with governments to develop employment programs that address the specific needs of refugees and benefit the organization (Weber & Larsson-Olaison, 2017);
- organization of cooperation of HRM units and specialists with governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve access to health care, education and public services to support the needs of refugees and their families;
- organization of educational programs on combating labor exploitation, human trafficking, discrimination at work based on familiarization with international and national labor legislation, humanist corporate cultures and HR policies;
- promoting the social integration of refugees by organizing and holding social events for refugees and their children (tourist and industrial excursions, master classes, cultural events). [10]

Green HRM involves undertaking environment-friendly HR initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and better employee engagement and retention which in turn, help organizations to reduce employee carbon footprints by the likes of electronic filing, car-sharing, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training, energy-efficient office spaces etc. (Mandip, 2012).

The EU has agreed to cut its gas consumption by 15% in an attempt to stave off a winter crisis triggered by a sharp reduction or total shutdown of Russian gas supplies to the bloc from August, 2022 until the end of March 2023. Such unexpected challenges of a national scale encourage the actualization of the "outside-inside" approach of the Common Good HRM concept. This can be implemented by:

- digitization of HR procedures: virtual interviews, teleconferences, processing, online training of employees, remote work;
- initiation of programs for energy-saving redesign of office premises;
- organizational support of employees' environmental initiatives and their proactive environmental behavior;
- formation of ecological thinking not only among employees, but also among the general population at their locations by conducting educational environmental training, master classes on the use of energy-efficient technologies in households;
- inclusion of environmental competence in corporate models of competences and relevant HR practices: recruiting, evaluation, training and development of corporate culture and eco-awareness.

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Scientific edition

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The language style and spelling of the authors are preserved. Teadmus OÜ made some changes in the design of the materials provided.

The editorial board and Teadmus OÜ are not responsible for the content of the materials provided.

The collection of conference materials was formed by the computer algorithm teadmus.org automatically based on the materials submitted by the authors after their review. RushApp OÜ developed this algorithm.

Publisher:

11412 Majaka 24-102

Tallinn, Estonia

info.teadmus@gmail.com

<https://teadmus.org>

