



# RESP

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## Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

### Human Resources, "Green HR" and Job Satisfaction

*İnsan Kaynakları, "Yeşil İK" ve İş Memnuniyeti*

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#### ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Sürdürülebilirlik  
İK  
Yeşil Anlaşma  
Çalışan memnuniyeti  
Literatür analizi

#### KEYWORDS

Sustainability  
HR  
Green Deal  
Employee satisfaction  
Literature analysis

#### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, 21. yüzyılın başlarından itibaren sürdürülebilirlik ve çevre dostu düşüncenin İK (İnsan Kaynakları) alanına ulaşmış, hatta bu alana nüfuz ettiği bir dönemde, oldukça güncel bir konuyu ele almaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı, AB'nin Yeşil Mutabakatı'nı ve bunun sürdürülebilir bir İK politikasıyla olan bağlantısını sunmaktır. Yayıncının özel önemi, 21. yüzyılda çalışan memnuniyetinin koşulları çerçevesinde İK politikalarının sürdürülebilirlik bağlamında yeniden yorumlanmasıyla vurgulanmaktadır. Bu makale, rekabetçi sektörlerde, yükseköğretim ve sağlık sektörlerinde bu konularla ilgili son araştırma sonuçlarını, literatür analizi yöntemiyle ortaya koymaktadır. Makalenin sonuç düşüncesi olarak, çalışan memnuniyeti ve bağlılığının entegre bir başarı faktörü olduğunun yeniden hatırlanması önemlidir.

#### ABSTRACT

The present study is particularly timely as by the beginning of the 21st century, the idea of sustainability and green thinking had reached and even permeated the field of HR. The aim of the present paper is to present the EU's Green Deal, and its connection with a sustainable HR policy. The particular importance of the publication is emphasized by the fact that HR policies are reinterpreted in the context of sustainability, the conditions for employee satisfaction in the 21st century. The present paper is thus outlines the recent research results on these issues in the competitive-, higher education- and health sectors, based on the method of literature analysis. As a concluding thought of this paper, it is worth reiterating the integral success factor of employee satisfaction and engagement.

### 1. Introduction

Sustainability has become a buzzword not only in terms of relevant content, but also in terms of a growing number of disciplines (Pieccarini & Novitz, 2020: 7-8). While there is undoubtedly a case for research into sustainability, has it not been eclipsed by the question of the fate of workforce (Borim-de-Souza et al., 2015). Individuals establish organizations, companies, and manage them. Accelerated change has created a competitive environment where the workforce must also contend with the spread of automation (Schlogl et al., 2021; Upchurch, 2018).

Amid the workplace impacts of robotics, artificial intelligence, digitalization, pandemics, home office, inflation, human capital must remain the focus (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Despite the pressures on employees, it is also essential to discuss when employee satisfaction occurs and what components it depends on in order to meet future organizational goals (Klenert et al, 2023: 280-293). Human resources are still one of the most important factors in the operation of companies, and employee performance is highly dependent on their satisfaction, so employees need to be addressed (Mondolo, 2022; Chen & Li, 2024). People will still be working in the workplace, even if technological progress reaches the stage where they have to

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deal with artificial intelligence, society, organizations as human structures, will still function (Plastino & Purdy, 2018). Artificial intelligence is now an active mechanic of our day, despite the fact, that its regulation is still in its infancy and legislation is clearly unable to keep up with the pace of technological development (Falus et al., 2022).

The current industrial revolution is driven mainly by technological progress, digitalization, automation, and globalization. During these changes, however, the workforce is being hit by intensifying influences that also warrant the attention and care of employers. Former labor markets are fragmenting and becoming more personalized and traditional forms of employment are being partially or completely eliminated or transformed. At the same time, the dividing lines between private life and work are fading, while new methods of control, new occupational risks, occupational health effects such as techno-stress (Komlos & Falus, 2023), information overload, risks of human-robot interactions (Kardkovács, 2023).

While we are on the road to sustainability (Falus, 2024), or "sustainable development" as it was in earlier years, but is now a less important term, the question arises of what happens to people and the workforce along the way. This is also important because the need for soft skills is predicted to intensify in the future. Employee performance, motivation, and satisfaction have a significant impact on the success of a company. The focus of this study is therefore on human resources and, within this, employee satisfaction, for the reasons given above.

The analysis of the issue also covers trends that are intrinsically linked to the theme of a sustainable, renewable economy. These will be followed by a discussion of satisfaction issues in practice.

## 2. Sustainability and Green Deal, as well as HR

### 2.1. Green Deal

The European Green Deal is a set of policy measures intended to ensure the initiation of the green transition process in the EU and ultimately the realization of the climate neutrality goal set for 2050 (EU Commission, 2019). The Green Deal aims to stimulate investment in low-carbon technologies, increase energy efficiency and shift to zero-emission energy sources, as well as reduce consumption of natural resources and better protect natural habitats. The Green Deal adopted and favored by the European Union, will affect all areas of business, including manufacturing, procurement, supply chain management, finance, and human resources. Organizations will need to make complex and long-term efforts to meet the conditions set out in the agreement. However, less than half (40%) of companies are aware of the EU Green Deal and only around half (49%) consider their company to be prepared for the complex criteria dictated by the requirements.

In a survey, around 300 business leaders from ten EU

member countries, plus Norway, Switzerland and the UK, were asked about their companies' response to the EU agreement. The majority of companies do not yet have a coordinated action plan in place to adapt as effectively as possible to the forthcoming changes. Most companies are taking steps on sustainability initiatives in a piecemeal way, along a long-term program. The challenge for the managers interviewed is to understand and manage all the dimensions of the agreement across their company as a whole. According to the survey, the majority of companies are taking steps to become more sustainable: two-thirds have already earmarked financial resources for investments in sustainability over the next three to five years. However, investments are being made on an ad hoc basis rather than as part of an integrated plan. Among the priorities of the companies surveyed are to increase the use of clean energy sources (78%), reduce energy consumption (60%), reduce waste and plastic use (59%) and reduce carbon emissions (59%) (PwC, 2022).

### 2.2 Sustainability and the leaders of organizations

The intentions and attitudes of managers will be a key moment in the context of sustainability factors. A previous study showed that 95% of business leaders believe that their ability to manage change and crisis needs to be improved (PwC, 2021).

PwC's Global Crisis and Resilience Survey focuses on understanding today's threats and how organizations are focusing their resources, efforts and investments to become more resilient. Around 2,000 business leaders worldwide were surveyed on how they are preparing for and responding to this new way of operating. From the responses, it became clear that a clear paradigm shift in the understanding of resilience is needed. Whereas in the past it was understood to mean mitigating potential losses or meeting regulatory obligations, today it is about real resilience as a core competitive advantage and a prerequisite for any successful business strategy. Some explicitly stress the revolutionary nature of resilience. However, many also report that their organizations have not taken the necessary steps to implement a resilience agenda, and some have not even consciously addressed it. Overall, many organizations still lack the essential elements of resilience needed to succeed (PwC, 2023; Branicki et al., 2023).

It is also important to clarify the criteria for leaders who will manage future risks and crises with resilience built into organizational operations. This includes understanding the impact of stress and uncertainty and shaping their emotions and behaviors accordingly; reviewing less useful attitudes and building on their strengths; and developing more options for crisis management; examine how stress impacts on the dynamics and performance of the managed organization; identify catalysts to improve organizational and stakeholder performance and develop resilience in decision-making processes (PwC, 2024).

Organizational leaders' main considering for the near future is the disruption of supply chains, employee retention and recruitment, and the potential for cyber-attacks. In this difficult period, therefore, managers in organizations need to pay particular attention to their workforce. 80% of organizations identified investing in employee wellbeing as the most important action they took in the year. Taking into account the pandemic, economic turmoil, profound cultural changes and other challenges of the times, mental health was ranked number one (PwC, 2023).

### 2.3. Sustainability and HR Policy

The transition to green operations required by the agreement will affect all key processes of the organizations, including work management, human resources, and other management processes. The widespread adoption of digitalization and, subsequently, today's artificial intelligence-based administration has also transformed business. By automating office processes, companies can save money, time, and energy, and one of the benefits of digitalization is transition to paperless which is currently a trend (Lázár, 2023). However, sustainability does not stop there it also applies to HR processes.

The Green Deal's recommendations also cover energy efficiency, innovative solutions, recycling, and building people's skills. One of the four pillars of the plan is therefore specifically related to human capital. New skills and a skilled workforce will be needed in the sector as new technologies take hold. In order to develop the skills needed for the green transition, it is proposed to establish industry academies for the zero net emissions target, which will facilitate the introduction of training and retraining programs in strategic industries, and to explore how to combine an approach that recognizes and prioritizes the existence of real skills with current skills-centered approaches; review how to make it easier for non-EU nationals to enter a priority area of the EU labor market; and assess how public and private funding can be leveraged to support skills development (European Commission, 2023).

The growing role of sustainable development, and above all its ecological aspects, in creating a modern corporate competitive advantage is leading to the popularization of the issue of integrating environmental practices into the field of human resource management, the so-called Green HR. A survey of a representative population of around 150 young companies revealed that the more the impact of an activity is valued, the more often it is implemented in the companies surveyed. Thus, in order to expand the implementation of the Green HR concept in Polish young enterprises, it is necessary to raise awareness and disseminate knowledge about the impact that Green HR can have on the sustainable development of organizations (Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska, 2018).

By organizing skills development, HR can help to transfer the company's green approach. They can provide faster,

manageable, sustainable solutions from an administrative, process management, and communication perspective. The organization may prefer to offer electro-mobility (Józwiak & Falus, 2022) as an environmentally friendly fringe benefit that is also attractive to employees. There are already companies that offer an employee discount (GreenGO, 2024).

There can also be added value in terms of team building by organizing programs with employee participation that promote sustainability achievements, such as tree planting or workshops on sustainable cooking or housekeeping (Wilson-Powel, 2020). The sustainability ambitions of the organization can also be integrated into the performance appraisal system. It can also be included in the criteria of the formal evaluation method and, in this context and it can be used to validate these values, in addition to the qualitative and quantitative experiences of the past, in the definition of future tasks (Wolk et al., 2009).

Perhaps the easiest way to incorporate sustainability considerations into the training and development process is to include them in the training and development process. The objectives of green training and development may include: raising awareness of current environmental issues (e.g. newsletters, briefings by environmental organizations); educating employees on work practices that allow them to reduce waste, save energy and resources (e.g. recycling, switching off computers at the end of working hours); and promoting and organizing employee innovation programs to explore opportunities to become more sustainable in their workplace (Sárközy et al., 2023).

Reward schemes can integrate financial or non-financial rewards for sustainable employee activities, team benefits, and rewards for innovative activities. To successfully implement environmentally sustainable production processes, scientists and practitioners need to accept that organizations are made up of people. Human beings are driven by their emotions, instincts, life and career aspirations, identities, contexts, and relationships. Green HR is a tool for engaging people in sustainability and, consequently, a means to ensure that sustainability goals are met to the greatest extent possible. The dimensions of green HR can be green recruitment and selection; green education and training; pay and reward systems; green appraisal and performance management; green communication; green team building; empowerment and supportive leadership (Labella-Fernández & Martínez-del-Río, 2019).

The role of human resource management in sustainable development can be described along three dimensions:

- a) supporting environmentally conscious management: training, effective communication, motivating organizational members;
- b) developing organizational change: integrating environmental values into organizational culture, developing competences for sustainability management,

promoting environmental ethics; and

c) alignment of functional dimensions: enforcing environmental criteria in recruitment and selection, reflecting environmental aspects in job descriptions, environmental education, performance appraisal and rewarding based on a sustainable strategy (Csehné et al., 2021).

In order to achieve the above objectives, maintenance efforts must be made part of the organizational culture in organizational practice. As this requires the utilization of the employee's other software skills, a positive supportive attitude is important. However, employee satisfaction is also essential for meeting future organizational goals. The next chapter explores the issues, factors and context of employee satisfaction.

### 3. Satisfaction

The majority of Hungarian companies have problems with low levels of employee satisfaction and commitment to the company (Nagy, 2004). Job satisfaction is determined by the following factors: individual (personality, education, intelligence, interests, attitude); social (co-worker relationships, collaborative access); cultural (values, habits, beliefs); organizational (size, type of organization, human resource solutions, leadership); and environmental (economic, social, technological) (Klein & Klein, 2020).

Satisfaction can have endogenous factors, such as activity, independence, and creativity, as well as exogenous factors, such as human relations, remuneration, and working conditions. People are most likely to perform to the best of their ability in a place where they feel they belong. One of the most motivating factors, in addition to fair financial compensation, is a sense of organizational attachment (Lövey et al., 2008:59). Job satisfaction is also closely related to the performance and quality of the work done by the employee, and therefore has an impact on the success of the organization because a satisfied employee has a creative attitude (Sypniewska, 2014).

According to some, employee satisfaction is a relatively stable individual characteristic that is difficult to change (Nemes & Szlávicz, 2011). Others argue that employee satisfaction and commitment to the organization can change dynamically depending on the employee-friendly policies of the organization (Berkesn , 2018). According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, satisfaction and dissatisfaction should be separated. Motivators influence the development of satisfaction, while hygiene factors influence the presence or absence of dissatisfaction (Bakacsi, 2015). Satisfaction is said to occur when the employee gets what he or she expects (Klein, 2021).

#### 3.1 Employee satisfaction in the competitive sector

In addition to employing well-prepared staff, organizational communication also plays an important role in effective human resource management. As a result of

this consistent information, employees are aware that the organization is committed to looking after them. These experiences increase job satisfaction (Kinicki et al., 1992).

A study examined US construction industry managers in relation to empowerment, participation and satisfaction of the staff they manage. The results show that empowerment is significantly associated with autonomy and the power to solve problems that arise, which also underpins satisfaction (Halvorsen, 2005). Employees at AT&T, as well as other companies, reported increased job satisfaction and productivity when working from home, according to research from the Henry B. Tippie School of Business at the University of Iowa. They cited not only the savings of an average of one hour of driving time per day as the reason for this, but also the fact that they were no longer exposed to the distractions that co-workers caused (Stewart-Kenneth, 2011). Another US study examined telecommunication workers' job satisfaction in relation to their use of and satisfaction with different communication channels and their personality type. The results showed that extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness were positively correlated with job satisfaction (Smith et al., 2018).

In Britain, other approaches also emphasize that good work is an opportunity for development and fulfillment. In particular, skill-use, task variety and task discretion were found to be most important, but job security was also very important, while pay and job demands were found to be of medium importance (Williams et al., 2020: 29-50).

#### 3.2 Employee satisfaction in education

A study of Greek universities revealed the work environment aspects of satisfaction. The results concluded that satisfaction is higher for endogenous factors (e.g. activity, independence, creativity, etc.) than for exogenous ones (e.g. human relations, remuneration, colleagues, working conditions, etc.) (Karamanis et al., 2019).

Also in the field of education, the survey explored the satisfaction of young teachers working in leading universities in major cities in Turkey and their overall job satisfaction. Life satisfaction and overall job satisfaction are closely related to mobbing, time spent on research, formal and informal pressures, and subjective job security (Cerci & Dumdulag, 2019).

One study looked at transformational and transactional leadership in Iran. The results showed that transformational leadership and employees' job satisfaction and perceived organizational support positively and significantly influence employees' organizational behavior. In addition, employees' job satisfaction was shown to mediate the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and employees' organizational behavior (Asgari et al., 2020).

### 3.3. Satisfaction in the health sector

Turnover has a significant cost in any organization, so it is also important to look at the relationship between satisfaction and exit. One study looked at the impact of nurses' job satisfaction, job motivation, nursing practice environment, personal characteristics and absenteeism on their intention to leave the workplace in Croatia. Results show that nurses' job satisfaction and higher absenteeism rates are clear predictors of their future turnover (Smokrović et al., 2019).

And 212 health service organizations were inspected in hospitals in the north-east of Iran. It was shown that authentic leadership negatively influenced attachment insecurity, and attachment insecurity was found to be a factor affecting job satisfaction (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015).

### 4. Conclusion

After outlining the domestic trends in sustainability in Europe, we presented the requirements of the future leaders committed to our focus topic. We then looked at sustainability efforts that can be adapted to HR practice. However, "winning" HR as an organizational factor with free will is necessary for the success of the sustainability processes outlined, and we therefore consider employee satisfaction as a prerequisite for change. In order to illustrate the complexity of employee satisfaction, we have drawn on research findings from different areas of employment.

Transformation will bring to an end the era of strong technical skills and weak soft skills in the workforce. Skills that will be valued in the future include creativity, curiosity, compassion, collaboration and critical thinking. These factors can help HR to succeed in its sustainability education activities. The role of HR in sustainability can be seen in shaping the organizational culture, integrating values, creating a supportive HR system, developing competencies (Csehné, 2021).

Green HR practices are effective tools for greening organizations and their operations. Tools for green job design and job analysis are available to HR, such as incorporating environmental activities into job functions, including them in job specifications, and creating teams or positions that address sustainability issues (Arulrajah et al., 2015).

In Hungary, the "Best Workplace" survey showed that organizations can be successful if their employees are committed; their leaders are well prepared and credible in the eyes of their staff; they drive the whole organization towards clear and attractive goals; and they mainstream sustainability in their human resources strategy and day-to-day operations (Bukovics et al., 2014).

Preference for best practices is not possible for projects aiming to achieve complex sustainability. Only good

practices based on diagnoses adapted to local conditions can lead to results. Social marketing is essential for any local development related to sustainability and cannot be successful without the involvement of the community and the simultaneous development of human (knowledge) capital (Klausmann-Dinya, 2023).

As a concluding thought of this paper, it is worth reiterating the integral success factor of employee satisfaction and engagement, which Bukovics summed up excellently: "CSR = HR + PR. Or to restate the equation: CSR - HR = PR, i.e. if employees are not engaged, then CSR is just a PR gimmick. In such cases, the organization is quickly revealed to be discredited because they preach water and drink wine" (Bukovics et al., 2014).

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