Impact of Green Training on Ecological Sustainability in the Presence of Employee Resistance as a Moderator: Evidence from Textile Sector of Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of green training on ecological sustainability through a moderating role of employee resistance. The study was conducted in ISO-14001 certified textile manufacturing organizations of Pakistan which augments the contextual novelty of this research. The data was collected through a non-probability sampling technique by using self-administered questionnaires from 100 managerial level employees. Further, the data was analyzed by employing the linear and multiple regression analysis. The regression equations were developed to understand the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The findings of the study show that green training positively influences the ecological strategies of a business organization. It further reveals that employee resistance significantly moderates the relationship between green training and ecological sustainability. Hence, there is a dire need to lessen this divergent force of employee resistance if an organization wants to embrace sustainable business practices for long-term sustainable development.

Key Words: ecological sustainability; green training; employee resistance; sustainable development; textile sector; Pakistan

1. Introduction

In the late 20th century, a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, with participants from 176 countries, was held to propose long-term environmental strategies for sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). The conference urged the need for business organizations to become environmentally responsible in business operations to reduce the negative footprints caused by the business activities. The unprecedented pressures caused by irresponsible business activities on the natural environment have resulted in global issues including climate change, deforestation, melting of glaciers, depletion of natural fossil fuels and much more (Weinstein, Turner, & Ibanez, 2013).

An advanced cognizance about the potential impacts of business processes on the natural environment has forced the business organizations to adopt responsible strategies for protecting the environment. Many business organizations have tried to adopt responsible business operations which has helped these organizations to become 'Green'; an environmentally responsible approach for businesses. According to Rockstrom (2009), humanity can have a long-term freedom for social and economic development, provided the ecological thresholds are not crossed. A combined focus on social, economic and environmental concerns is a requisite for sustainable development which allows us to meet our needs without compromising the needs of our future generations (Brundtland, 1987). Thus, business organizations can opt for long-term value creation by considering social, ecological and economic factors of sustainability, altogether.

While focusing on ecological sustainability, Green Management practices primarily encompass the environmental management and environmental management systems within an organization (Peng & Lin, 2008). A strategic transformation of a business organization to protect the natural environment depends on its green management practices (Loknath & Azeem, 2017). In this regard, training and development of employees to deal with the ecological challenges faced by the organization is pivotal and an integral part of green management practices. Green training is a program designed by the environmentally responsible organizations to enhance the competencies of their employees for environmental protection measures. Thus, a main drive of green training programs is to equip the employees with relevant knowledge to adopt eco-friendly business practices.

Furthermore, effective strategies are needed to prepare the employees of an organization to embrace environmental sustainability. According to Eccles, Perkins and Serafeim (2012), sustainable

organizations execute their strategies through employees by providing them with proper execution mechanisms such as training. Less prepared employees may create an opposing force of resistance within an organization that can hinder the adoption of any organizational change such as sustainability measures. Hence, employees' resistance can also impact the organizational strategy to adopt resilient business practices to ensure sustainability. This implies the need to understand the impact of employees' resistance for embracing the ecological sustainability measures. Further, it is significant for progressive organizations to understand the effectiveness of green training to achieve the ecological sustainability goals in the presence of employees' resistance.

Lastly, Pakistan is a developing country with some progressive organizations working towards sustainability challenges. Pakistani textile sector is prominent to include few environmentally sustainable organizations which are ISO 14000 or ISO 14001 certified. The research will examine the variables of this study in textile sector organizations of Pakistan. The objectives of the study would be to examine the association of green training with ecological sustainability. In addition to this, the study aims to investigate if employee resistance moderates the association of green training and ecological sustainability, or not.

Furthermore, the study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

i. Is there any association between green training and ecological sustainability?

ii. Does employee resistance moderate the association between green training and ecological sustainability?

1.1 Significance of the Study

Pakistani textile sector being an important and progressive industrial sector of Pakistan has a large international clientele. Many organizations in this industrial sector are struggling to adopt resilient business operations that can enable these organizations to achieve their environmental sustainability goals. However, investing in training and development for environmental protection still seems to be an undermined strategy within Pakistani manufacturing organizations, including the textile sector (Gull, 2015). A main reason might be credited to the lack of awareness among the practitioners about the importance of training and development in general, and specifically when it comes to achieving the environmental sustainability goals. Thus, it is pertinent for the local practitioners to understand the role of training and development to embrace sustainability in their business practices. With this understanding, Pakistani textile organizations can adopt necessary mechanisms to smoothly implement their ecofriendly business strategies. Moreover, studying the impact of employee resistance on an organization's sustainability efforts can pave a way forward for the local practitioners to preparing their employees for sustainability challenges. However, there is a very limited research being done that may guide the Pakistani business organizations about the significance of green training programs and their influence on ecological sustainability goal achievement; in a developing country's context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Green Training

Learning of employees through training and development programs generates the human capital for the organizations. This human capital differentiates the great organizations from the good ones (Maimuna & Yazdanifard, 2013). Training provides the opportunities to enhance the knowledge base of the employees for positive application of business strategies (Frost, 2019). According to Carucci (2018), responsible leaders consider training as a panacea to learning opportunities that enables to instill the requisite skills among the employees. Investing in training and development addresses the strategic learning needs to implement the changing business paradigms (Nassazi, 2013).

Furthermore, effective human resource practices enable the employees to cater the ecological challenges faced by the organizations (Aragão & Jabbour, 2017). According to Aragão and Jabbour, environmental training which may be refered to as 'green training' has an influence on sustinable business practices. Green training increases the employees' capacity to adopt an organizational change and then develop a committed approach to resolve the environmental problems (Carter & Dresner, 2001). The required level of knowledge, skills and attitude to deal with the environmental challenges can only be imparted by offering the green training to the employees (Obaid & Alias, 2015). According to Obaid and Alias, green training facilitates the employees to acquire new knowledge essential for innovative business practices. Such innovative practices allow an organization to design and implement its goals including the environmental sustainability goals. In light of this, environmentally responsible organizations train their employees to improve their environmental quality management systems (Uddin

& Islam, 2015). Organizations can achieve their ecological sustainability goals through green human resource practices including the green training. Additionally, designing green training programs facilitate an organization to adopt environmental initiatives as a contribution towards sustainable development.

However, the benefits of green training can be uncertain if the employees show resistance against innovation or change within an organization (Zwick, 2002). Employees show resistance when they fear of challenging the status quo (Maurer, 1996) and this necessitates the need for readiness of the employees to embrace new business practices. Moreover, it is essential to understand the impact of such resistance on emerging business paradigms such as green training and environmental sustainability.

2.2 Ecological Sustainability

It is one of the biggest challenges faced by the planet earth, primarily cause by the irreversible effects of human activities such as deforestation, urbanization, industrialization, depletion of fossil fuels, pollution and much more (Arora, 2018). The concept mainly includes the body of knowledge, practices and efforts that lead to improve the natural environment (Goni, Shukor, Mukhtar, & Sahran, 2015). Long recognized but recently acknowledged damage caused to the natural environment has strongly urged the need to rethink the environmental protection strategies for safeguarding the future generations (Stevens, 2017). Thus, industrial practices must also be redesigned to adopt environmental friendly business operations to reduce the negative environmental footprint. For instance, developing the innovative substitutes for natural fuels and creating an equilibrium between consuming and replenishing of natural resources (Gull, 2014).

In light of this, an organization needs to inculcate a shared sense of responsibility among its employees for implementing the ecofriendly practices. This emphasizes a need of developing formal procedures, policies and systems that equip the employees of an organization to embrace sustainable business practices (Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2011). According to Eccles, Ioannou and Serafeim, sustainable organizations are relatively more concerned about the skill development of their employees. This ultimately results in increased motivation and commitment of the employees to act responsibly towards sustainable practices. Hence, green training can pose a substantial impression on environmental performance of the organizations as shown by a research conducted in Jordanian health organizations (Rawashdeh, 2018). Similarly, another research accentuates the provision of green training for the employees to reduce the ecological degradation and contributing towards sustainability of the environment (Jehan, Hussain, Batool, & Imran, 2020).

2.3 Employee Resistance

There are certain barriers including employee resistance that hinder the ecofriendly initiatives of an organization (Fayyazi, Shahbazmoradi, Afshar, & Shahbazmoradi, 2015; Khidir & Zailani, 2009). Hence, it is important to comprehend the impact of these barriers on ecological or environmental sustainability measures taken by an organization. Employee resistance can be termed as an employee behavior that challenges, disrupts and invert the organizational course of actions and change processes (Drechsler, 2008; Dijk & Dick, 2009). A study on public sector employees on steel industry in India reveals that reducing or managing the employee resistance is a requisite for successful application of organizational changes (Ganta & Naidu, 2020). Therefore, understanding the factors causing employee resistance and their respective resolves must be addressed for positively transforming the employee behaviors towards organizational changes such as implementing environmental sustainability strategy.

Weak communication, lack of trust, fear of unknown and poor timing are few of the main reasons for employee resistance (Paycor, 2019). This resistance can be reduced through effective organizational measures which should be comprised of open communication, employee engagement, and other such techniques. According to Kotter and Schlesinger (1979), training and development can also play a vital role in reducing the employee resistance. Furthermore, business organizations need to adopt proper change mechanisms that reduce the resistance and implement sustainability measures through employees (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). Thus, it is vital to know the effect of employee resistance that it may have on environmental safety initiatives.

Finally, this study will focus on determining the moderating role of this force in defining the connection between green training programs and ecological sustainability. Lack of significant literature available on these variables from a developing country's perspective will make this research significant both for the researchers and the practitioners. Pakistani textile sector will serve as a novel context for this study which enhances its

implication. Lastly, this research will help to reduce the literature gap on these variables in a developing country's context for a better and effective contribution to global sustainable development.

Following are the hypotheses developed for this study:

- **H1:** Green training has a significant and positive relationship with ecological sustainability.
- **H2:** Employee resistance significantly moderates the relationship of green training with ecological sustainability.

3. Conceptual Framework

The framework shown as Figure 1 proposes green training as an independent variable and ecological sustainability as a dependent variable. Additionally, employee resistance is presented as a moderator which potentially moderates the association of green training programs and ecological sustainability. Thus, the research variables include:

- Green Training (X): Training programs of an organization to support environmental strategies.
- Ecological Sustainability (Y): Environmental friendly initiatives of an organization to develop resilient business operations without exceeding environmental thresholds.
- Employee Resistance (M): An opposing behavior of employees that acts as a force against organizational change and innovation.

4. Research Methodology

It is a quantitative study and follows a cross-sectional research design. Primary data collection was done from the managerial level employees of textile manufacturing organizations of Lahore, Pakistan. The organizations included were ISO 14000 or 14001 certified leading textile manufacturers to effectively serve the purpose of this study. Furthermore, self-administered questionnaires were used for collecting the data. The questionnaire was adapted from the previous studies conducted by different researchers. The items for green training and ecological/environmental sustainability were developed by Jabbour (2015), whereas, employee resistance questions were adapted from a study by Lertdechdecha (2008). The questionnaire included 33 questions in total with 13 items for green training, 12 items for ecological sustainability and 8 items for employee resistance. A five-point likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree equals to 1 and Strongly Agree equals to 5) was used to quantify the responses.

Moreover, the sample size for the study was calculated by using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977). The sample size was calculated to be 323 (e=0.05 and p=0.3). In total, 330 questionnaires were sent to the organizations in the same proportion keeping in view that almost same number of employees work in these organizations. The individual respondents were chosen by the organizations themselves according to the availability of the employees. The responses received were 100 with a response rate of 30% (N=100). Respondents could not be pursued further due to awake of covid-19 and the time limitation. Finally, SPSS software was used as a data analysis tool for this study. The results were gathered by applying the linear and multiple regression analysis.

Table 1 shows the demographical information of the respondents. The significant aspects of this information show that 83% responses attribute to the male respondents and only 17% were female respondents. These results may point towards a general observation about a high percentage of male employees in manufacturing industries.

Additionally, 59% of the respondents represent the lower level of management while, 30% respondents were middle and 11% respondents were the top level managers. The reason of this difference can be explained as the organizations chose the respondents on the basis of their availability. Last but not least, 79% of the respondents had studied or taken some kind of training course on environmental sustainability. This result enhances the worth of the respondents included as they were in a better position to understand the meaning and significance of the variables used in this study.

5. Data Analysis and Findings

The statistical model (Baron & Kenny, 1986) shown as Figure 2 was used to perform the data analysis of this study. The application of this model helped to test the hypotheses generated for the study. This model suggests that green training and employee resistance act as independent variables for ecological sustainability. The interaction of these two independent variables is represented by

X*M. This interaction of the independent variables will help to study the moderating role of employee resistance in determining the association between independent and dependent variables of this study (Statistics Solution, 2020). Finally, as the literature review shows that these variables are significantly understudied in the current context, therefore, only first order analysis will be performed to assess the hypotheses of the study.

5.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha value for each variable is shown in Table 2. The values are above the acceptable limit of 0.70 (Satistics Solutions, 2021) and thus, show the reliability or internal consistency of the questionnaire used.

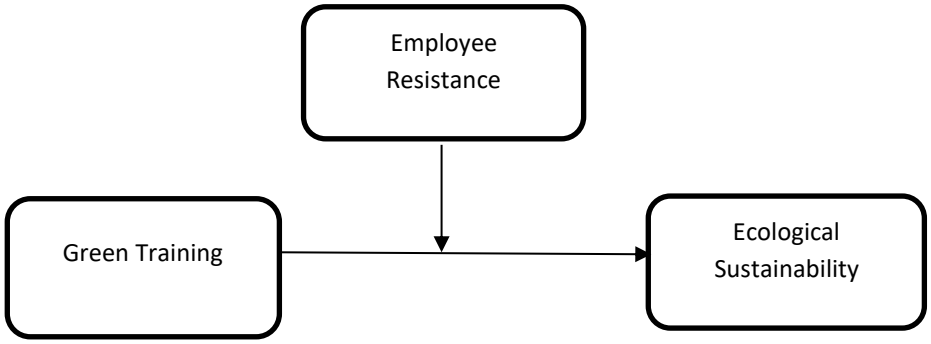

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

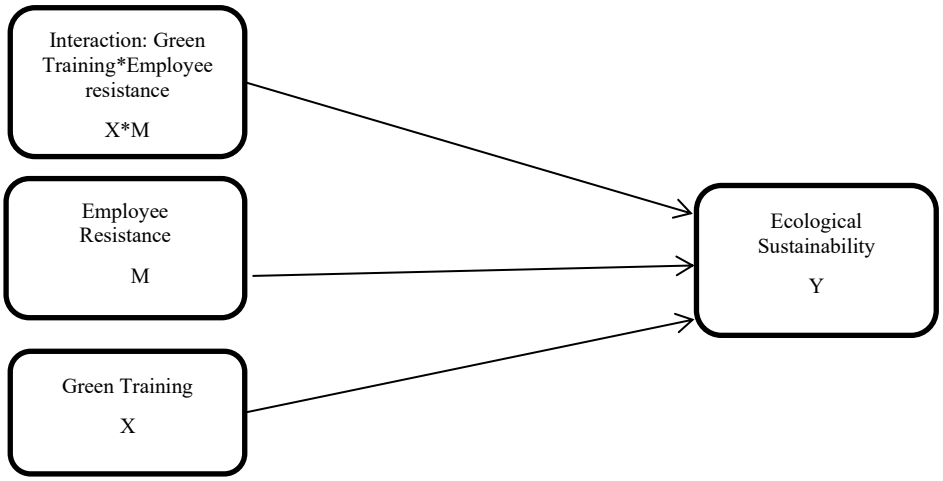

Fig. 2: Statistical Model

Table 1: Demographic Information

	Valid Frequency (N=100)
Gender	
Male	83%
Female	17%
Designation	
Lower Manager	59%
Middle Manager	30%
Top Manager	11%
Employees with Training Course	
Yes	79%
No	21&

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Green Training	.775	13
Environmental Sustainability	.781	12
Employee Resistance	.833	8

Table 3: Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Sig. Value
1	.902	.809	.807	.809	.000

5.2 Regression Analysis

Linear and multiple regression analysis were done to assess the hypotheses of the study. The results are as follows:

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1

H1: Green training has a significant and positive relationship with ecological sustainability.

The model summary in table 3 shows the regression analysis between the independent variable (green training) and dependent variable (ecological sustainability). The significance value shown in the table is 0.000 ($p<0.05$) and thus, shows a significant relationship between the two variables. The R value in table 3 is .902 which depicts a strong relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This strong relationship is credited to the need of green training for instilling environmental sustainability in an organization. In addition to this, the R-Square (R2) value is .809 which portrays that 80.9% variation in ecological sustainability is attributed to green training. This means that an organization needs to ensure the provision of green training for its employees in order to implement its environmental sustainability strategies. Green training will help to impart the relevant skills and knowledge to the employees that are needed for environmental protection initiatives in an organization. Thus, H1 is accepted.

Table 4 mentions the coefficients of regression needed to form a regression equation of the two variables. The linear regression equation portrays the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in a linear first order model (Storm, 2019). The regression line equation in this case is:

$$Y=a + bX \quad (1)$$

In this case, the equation would be:

$$Y=.292 + .927X \quad (2)$$

The equation clearly depicts a strong relationship between the two variables. Hence, green training is inevitable for the textile sector to embrace ecological sustainability.

5.2.2 Hypothesis 2

H2: Employee resistance moderates the relationship of green training with ecological sustainability.

The effect of moderating variable was determined through multiple regression analysis. In table 5, the coefficients of multiple regressions analysis are shown to test hypothesis 2. This table shows two models for the analysis: Model 1 shows the association between green training and ecological sustainability without the employee resistance, whereas, Model 2 depicts that association in the presence of a moderating variable i.e. employee resistance. Model 1 shows the significance value for the green training and ecological sustainability as .000 (less than 0.01) which portrays a significant relationship between the two variables. This means that an organization can effectively embrace environmental sustainability through its green training programs; in the absence of employee resistance. Model 2 illustrates the significance value of .576 for showcasing the association between independent and dependent variables of the study in the presence of a moderator i.e. employee resistance. Thus, there is an insignificant relationship between green training and ecological sustainability when employee resistance comes into play as a moderator. In light of this, the textile organizations need to prepare their employees to work for ecological sustainability by reducing the divergent

force of employee resistance. Hence, the results allow to accept H2.

The regression equation for multiple regression analysis to find the moderating effect is:

$$Y = a + bX_1 + bX_2 + \ldots\ldots \quad (3)$$

In this case, following regression equation is developed:

$$Y = .273 + .888X + (-.122)M \quad (4)$$

The equation shows that the interaction between green training and employee resistance has a significant impact on the ecological sustainability. The relationship of green training with ecological sustainability weakens in the presence of employee resistance in an organization. Thus, embracing sustainability requires prepared employees who are willing to learn and grow to counter sustainability challenges.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to bridge the gap in literature through an empirical evidence from the textile sector of Pakistan. The study provides important insights about the emergent concepts of green training and ecological sustainability in a novel context of a developing country, Pakistan. The results of the data analysis corroborate with the existing literature, thus, depicting a substantial correlation between green training and ecological sustainability initiatives (Jabbour, 2015; Uddin & Islam, 2015). The research findings emphasize the need to enhance the organizational focus on providing the necessary skills and competencies to their employee through green training programs. Consequently, these programs will enable the trained employees to adopt and practice the ecological sustainability measures in an effective manner. Additionally, the results reveal that employee resistance may have an adverse impact on environmental protection initiatives of an organization which is also aligned with the discussion in the literature (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). Therefore, progressive organizations which tend to adopt sustainable business practices may have to prepare their employees for incorporating the resilient business operations.

The results highlight the moderating role of employee resistance in determining the impact of green training programs on ecological sustainability initiatives. This finding is again consistent with the findings of the literature on employee resistance; showing it as an opposing force that may prohibit an organization to embark on the journey towards better and resilient business practices (Paycor, 2019; Drechsler, 2008; Lertdechdecha, 2008). According to the statistics of this study, the relationship between green training and ecological sustainability becomes insignificant in the presence of employee resistance. Thus, there is a dire need to lessen this divergent force if an organization wants to embrace sustainable business

Table 4: Linear Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.292	.186		1.568	.120
	Mean_Training	.927	.045	.902	20.681	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Mean_Sustainability						

Table 5: Coefficients of Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.273	.175		1.576	.146
	Mean_Training	.888	.061	.874	16.901	.000
	Mean_Resistance	.052	.034	.087	1.659	.125
2	(Constant)	.754	.787		.749	.401
	Mean_Training	.770	.217	.749	3.552	.001
	Mean_Resistance	-.122	.310	-.185	-.394	.694
	Moderator	.042	.074	.335	.562	.576

practices for long-term sustainable development.

Furthermore, findings of this study propose significant managerial implications for sustainable organizations; mainly for their human resource managers. The human resource department of sustainable organizations can play a vital role in facilitating the achievement of sustainability goals by focusing on preparing their employees. In this regard, progressive human resource strategies including green training may help to equip the employees with necessary skills to deal with the ecological challenges faced by the organizations. Moreover, a continuous effort by the managers to increase the learning and readiness of the employees can potentially result in reducing the employee resistance, thereby, supporting the organizational goals. Thus, green training is a valid approach to combat the ecological issues faced by the organizations. This will aid not only to lessen the resistance among employees but also to implement the environmental strategies on long-term basis.

Lastly, this research has few limitations including the time constraint and limited sample size. There are very few certified sustainable organizations in the textile manufacturing sector of Pakistan which adds to the limitations of the study. However, the textile sector of Pakistan can be considered as a progressive sector of the country with an increasing awareness on this global issue of environmental protection and sustainability. In future, this research can be performed in multiple industrial sectors of Pakistan and other South Asian countries to generate a comprehensive view of sustainable development efforts in this region of the world.

Declaration: The authors have no conflict of interest with any aspect of this research.

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