

## **AN IMPACT ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON EMPLOYEE SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOR – A STUDY OF IT SECTOR**

*Uma análise do impacto das variáveis demográficas no comportamento sustentável dos colaboradores – um estudo do setor de TI*

Vaishali Trivedi<sup>1</sup>, Vikas Trivedi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>St. Kabir Institute of Professional Studies SKIPS, Ahmedabad, India, <sup>2</sup>Institute of Law, Nirma University, India

Email: drvaishali@skips.in, trivedivikas99@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

The interconnection between profits, people and environment has been well recognized in organizations (Elkington, 1998). With the sustainability issues coming to the forefront, organizations across the world are encouraged to adopt sustainable ways of working aligned to Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Behavior of employees at the workplace can play a significant role in strengthening the positive influence of firm's environmental performance and can lead to the sustainable transition of organization to bring forth sustainable innovations. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is said to be IT driven and India promises to be a knowledge powerhouse. IT-BPM (Information technology and Business Process Management) sector accounted for 7.4% of the India's GDP in 2022 and expected to contribute around 10% by 2025, making it one of the biggest contributing sectors to economic growth (IBEF, 2022). It is imperative for the IT sector to develop sustainable IT products to reduce carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy which cannot be achieved without the active pro-environment behavior exhibited by employees. Employee Sustainable Behavior at workplace is still relatively recent subject of research, so this domain lacks studies in the said area. The present research examines the role that demographic variables play in determining level of employee sustainable behavior among those working in IT sector. The managerial implication of the study focuses on how IT firms can foster sustainable behavior among their employees at the workplace within the demographic context.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Employee Sustainable Behavior, Sustainable Innovation, Demographic context, IT Sector.

**ACEITO EM: 15/02/2023**

**PUBLICADO: 31/03/2023**



## UMA ANÁLISE DO IMPACTO DAS VARIÁVEIS DEMOGRÁFICAS NO COMPORTAMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL DOS COLABORADORES – UM ESTUDO DO SETOR DE TI

*An impact analysis of demographic variables on employee sustainable behavior – a study of IT sector*

Vaishali Trivedi<sup>1</sup>, Vikas Trivedi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>St. Kabir Institute of Professional Studies SKIPS, Ahmedabad, India, <sup>2</sup>Institute of Law, Nirma University, India  
Email: drvaishali@skips.in, trivedivikas99@gmail.com

### RESUMO

A interligação entre lucros, pessoas e ambiente tem sido bem reconhecida nas organizações (Elkington, 1998). Com as questões de sustentabilidade vindo à tona, organizações em todo o mundo são incentivadas a adotar formas sustentáveis de trabalhar alinhadas aos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. O comportamento sustentável dos funcionários no local de trabalho pode desempenhar um papel significativo no fortalecimento da influência positiva do desempenho ambiental da empresa e pode levar à transição sustentável da organização para gerar inovações sustentáveis. Diz-se que o século 21 é impulsionado pela TI e a Índia promete ser uma potência do conhecimento. O setor de TI-BPM (tecnologia da informação e gerenciamento de processos de negócios) representou 7,4% do PIB da Índia em 2022 e deve contribuir com cerca de 10% até 2025, tornando-se um dos setores que mais contribuem para o crescimento econômico (IBEF, 2022). É imperativo que o setor de TI desenvolva produtos de TI sustentáveis para reduzir as emissões de carbono em todos os setores da economia, o que não pode ser alcançado sem o comportamento pró-ambiente ativo exibido pelos funcionários. O Comportamento Sustentável do Colaborador no local de trabalho é ainda um tema de investigação relativamente recente, pelo que este domínio carece de estudos na referida área. A presente pesquisa examina o papel que as variáveis demográficas desempenham na determinação do nível de comportamento sustentável dos funcionários entre aqueles que trabalham no setor de TI. A implicação gerencial do estudo se concentra em como as empresas de TI podem promover um comportamento sustentável entre seus funcionários no local de trabalho dentro do contexto demográfico.

**Palavras-chave:** Sustentabilidade, Comportamento Sustentável dos Funcionários, Inovação Sustentável, Contexto demográfico, Setor de TI.

## INTRODUCTION

A robust Information Technology infrastructure is indispensable for any organization to thrive and survive. IT based services are essential for increased productivity, optimum utilization of resources and effective growth in the contemporary competitive world. With greater accountability and transparency to offer the IT sector has made delivery of health services, educational services, consumer rights and other more accessible and equitable. It surely promises to improve the socio-economic demography of the country. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is said to be IT driven and India promises to be a knowledge powerhouse. IT-BPM (Information technology and Business Process Management) sector contributed 7.4% to India's GDP, and expected to account for almost 10% by 2025 making it one of the biggest contributing sectors to economic growth.

The level of carbon emissions has reached alarming proportions and decarbonizing the economy is one of the topmost priority for India. As a matter of fact, many companies are striving towards minimizing adverse environmental impact of business operations (Sharma & Sharma, 2011). India aims to bring down its emission intensity by around 45% by 2030 and envisions net zero emissions by 2070 (Srivastava & Pinto, 2022) The IT sector offers to play a pivotal role in achieving the said targets. By delivering on green technologies, IT sector can act as a facilitator for sustainability transition for other sectors across the economy. Even the modern business clients are increasingly inclined towards sustainable products. Thus, there exists a strong business case for adopting sustainability as a way of doing business for the IT firms. While acting at the forefront for deploying green technologies the employee support at the backend is imperative for the IT companies. The push for sustainable innovations necessitates the sustainable behavior of the employees at the workplace itself and thus the sustainable orientation of the employees assumes great significance.

## 1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1.1 Employee Sustainable Behavior

The interconnection between profits, people and environment has been well recognized in organizations (Elkington, 1998). Environmental sustainability has emerged as a vital component of 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate existence (Starik & Marcus, 2000). The organizations having well defined green policies get rewarded with boosted sales and brand-building (Wee & Quazi, 2005; Yang et. al., 2011) and necessary employee contribution as well (Salem et.al, 2012). The focus on green economy has necessitated embedment of environmental sustainability as an essential component in enhanced job performance (Dierdorff et al., 2013). Organizational environmental sustainability can be defined as “Organizations operating to address the present needs of all stakeholders- employees, decision makers, etc. without compromising the needs of future generations” (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Ones and Dilchert (2012) state, “To be ecologically sustainable, we need to promote, influence, and change employee behaviors such that they are congruent with environmental sustainability goals of organizations”.

Ones and Dilchert (2012) define EGB as “Any measureable individual behavior that contributes to or detracts from environmental sustainability goals in the work context” It also advocate EGB as an essential prerequisite for organizational environmental sustainability (Andersson, Jackson, & Russell, 2013). Employee Green Behavior (EGB), defined as “scalable actions and behaviors that employees engage in that are linked with and contribute to or detract from environmental sustainability” (Ones & Dilchert, 2012).

Every company needs to ensure employee green behavior (Opatha, 2015) and the same cannot be ensured without active cooperation of its employees (Opatha et. al., 2019). EGB portrays pro-environment initiatives of employees and it is imperative for the companies to encourage green behavior among its employees (Tian et al., 2019). In the context of green organization, employee green behavior is critical (Vinojini and Arulrajah, 2017).

The leadership behavioral traits greatly influence the behavior of subordinates towards employee green behavior (Bass, 1985). In order to accelerate employee green behavior understanding the factors affecting pro-environment actions and ways to influence employees for green behaviors assumes great significance (Norton et al., 2017).EGB can be made compulsory or optional depending on the nature of task involved in the organization (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015).

## 1.2 Gender and Employee Sustainable Behavior

Females exhibit more pro-environment behavior as compared to males (Scannell & Gifford, 2013). Interestingly, females possess lesser environmental knowledge as compared to their males (Levine & Strube, 2012). There exists a positive correlation relationship between gender and environmental know-how (Tikka et al., 2000). Most surprisingly, females don't hesitate paying more for pro-environment product but display lesser participation in pro-environmental activities (Torgler, 2008). As regards general environmental behavior women better their male counterparts however no significant gender differences have been found in environmental behavior publicly (Hunter et al., 2004). As regards global environmental issues not much gender differences are seen (Xiao & McCraight, 2010). In line with the above empirical evidences, following hypothesis has been formulated:

*H1<sub>1</sub>: The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly across the gender of the employees.*

## 1.3 Age and Employee Sustainable Behavior

Some researches reflect older employees' resistance to behavioral changes as a major barrier to employee's pro-environment behavior (Pillemer et al., 2011). The younger employees are more open to changes and have better adaptability (Yeatts et al., 2000). The older employees feel more comfortable with stability (Henry, 2000) and offer resistance with technological upgradations (Czaja et al., 2006). They accept the changes only in case of direct visible benefits associated (Morris and Venkatesh, 2000). Thus, overall molding a sustainable employee behavior in case of older employees is a big challenge as there is a sharp resistance offered at their end. The seasoned employees are found to possess strong commitment for timely completion of work and act responsibly (Morris and Venkatesh, 2000). Researches have also indicated that amicability improves with age (Roberts et al., 2006). Employee green behavior does not differ significantly on the basis of age and gender (Weerakoon et al., 2021).

Studies also suggest that younger employees are more environmentally responsible than older employees (Wiernik, B. M., Dilchert, S., & Ones, D. S. (2016). Keeping in consideration the above arguments, following hypothesis has been formulated:

*H1<sub>2</sub>: The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly across the age group of employees.*

## 1.4 Educational Qualification and Employee Sustainable Behavior

Some research studies suggest that employee green behavior is greatly affected by environment related drives at workplace -knowledge, awareness and concern (Kotchen and Reiling, 2000). An individual's environmental awareness is positively connected with employee sustainable behavior (Chan et al., 2014). It has also been found that employees with higher environmental awareness (EA) quotient are found to be reflecting pro-environment behavior in terms of purchase of eco- friendly products, consuming organic products etc.

Education is a significant factor for pro-environment employee behavior. There is positive relationship between education and environment friendly behavior (Ortega et al., 2014). Another study has reflected that universal education in developing countries has a great potential not just in furthering economic growth by alleviating poverty but also in climate change initiatives (Muttarak and Lutz, 2014). On the contrary, findings of a study (Klein et al., 2012) revealed education and employee green behavior in negative relationship. In line with the above arguments, following hypothesis has been formulated:

*H1<sub>3</sub>: The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly with the education level of employees.*

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based upon cross sectional survey research design. The data for the study was collected from 176 respondents working in IT sector across various verticals. The respondents were selected using non-probability convenience sampling method. There were 40 percent male and 60 percent female respondents. The questionnaire utilized twenty seven items scale with 5 variables adapted from (McConnaughy, 2014) that measured various aspects of Employee green behavior.

All the questions were answered using five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”) .The questionnaire was distributed online using google forms. The questionnaire had high reliability as was demonstrated by Cronbach’s alpha which came to be .995 which is higher than the cut off value of 0.7. .Employee sustainable behavior was measured using five scale dimensions namely sustainable way of working, avoids environmental harm, environmental conservation, influencing others to act in environmental friendly manner and takes pro-environment initiatives. Reliability for each construct was also assessed using Cronbach’s alpha which was 0.974 for sustainable way of working , 0.959 for avoiding environmental harm , 0.983 for environmental conservation , 0.973 for influencing others to act in environmental friendly manner and 0.973 for taking pro-environment initiatives initiative . High level of internal consistency was found between various scale items of construct as Cronbach’s alpha value is higher than cut off value which is prescribed as 0.7.Data for the study was analyzed using SPSS 21.0 version. Descriptive statistics used for the study was mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics used for data analysis were independent sample t test and ANOVA.

## Results

Table 1 depicts descriptive statistics of employee sustainable behavior .It can be seen that high level of sustainable behavior is exhibited by the respondents as indicated by overall mean score of 4.13762 and SD 0.397461.

**Table 1 - Descriptive statistics Employee Sustainable Behavior**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Sustainable way of working	4.2869	.65470
Avoids environmental harm	4.3216	0.59020
Environmental conservation	4.3341	0.58415
Influencing others to act in environmental friendly manner	3.4273	0.53039
Takes pro-environment initiatives	4.3182	0.61756
<b>Employee Sustainable Behavior</b>	<b>4.13762</b>	<b>0.397461</b>

## 2.1 Employee Sustainable behavior and Gender

Gender-wise statistics of employee sustainable behavior of the respondents is presented in Table 2.The means scores of male respondents are lower than female respondents indicating females indulging into more sustainable behaviors as against their male counterparts.

**Table 2- Descriptive statistics: Employee Sustainable Behavior and Gender**

Employee	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Sustainable Behavior	Male	71	105.2254	11.12937	1.32081
	Female	105	124.3048	14.70814	1.43537

As shown in Table 3, an Independent Sample t Test was conducted to compare the employee sustainable behavior for males and females. There were significant differences ( $t(171.743)$ ,  $df=9.781$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in the scores with the mean score of males ( $M = 105.2254$ ,  $SD = 11.12937$ ) was lower than and females ( $M=124.3048$ ,  $SD= 14.70814$ ). The magnitude of difference in the means (Mean Difference = 19.0794, 95% CI; -22.92964 to -15.22918) was significant. The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly across the gender of the employees. Hence  $H_{11}$  is supported.

**Table 3-Equality of Variances & Independent Samples t-test**

Employee Sustainable Behavior										
Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Independent samples t test							
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig(2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std Error Difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	Upper	Lower
Equal Variances assumed	32.197	<.001	-9.278	174	<.001	19.07941	2.05644	-23.13820	-15.02062	
Equal Variances not assumed			-9.781	171.743	<.001	19.07941	1.95060	-22.92964	-15.22918	

## 2.2 Age and Employee Sustainable Behavior

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics of employee sustainable behavior indicating mean and standard deviation across various employee age groups. It can be seen from the table that with the progression of employee age, their levels of sustainable behavior are improving as indicated by the mean scores. Highest level of employee sustainable behavior is exhibited by the employees belonging to the highest age group of 58 years and above (Mean = 135) while lowest levels of sustainable behavior is displayed by the younger employees belonging to the age group of 25-35 years ( Mean = 98 ). These figures are useful in explaining the findings of the study.

One way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in employee sustainable behavior across employee age groups ( $N=176$ )(see Table 5). Participants were divided into four groups (Group 1: 25-35 years; Group 2: 36-46 years; Group 3 : 47-57 years; Group 4: 58 years and above).The ANOVA results suggest that the Employee Sustainable Behavior scores of the groups differ significantly ( $F= 376.800$ ; $p<.001$ ).The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly across the age group of employees. Hence  $H_{12}$  is supported.

**Table 4 - Descriptive statistics: Age wise Employee Sustainable Behavior**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>25-35 years</b>	36	98.0000	11.07636	1.84606	94.2523	101.7477	88.00	135.00
<b>36-46 years</b>	71	108.2817	5.10793	.60620	107.0727	109.4907	94.00	133.00
<b>47-57 years</b>	36	134.7778	0.95950	.15992	134.4531	135.1024	130.00	135.00
<b>58 years and above</b>	33	135.0000	0.00000	.00000	135.0000	135.0000	135.00	135.00
<b>Total</b>	176	116.6080	16.31615	1.22988	114.1807	119.0353	88.00	135.00

**Table 5-ANOVA: Age wise Employee Sustainable behavior**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	40435.360	3	13478.453	376.800	<.001
<b>Within Groups</b>	6152.588	173	35.771		
	46587.949	176			

### 2.3 Employee Sustainable Behavior and Education level

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics of employee sustainable behavior indicating mean and standard deviation across education levels of employee. It can be seen from the table that with the progression of employee education levels, their level of sustainable behavior is improving as indicated by the mean scores. Highest level of employee sustainable behavior is exhibited by the employees possessing highest education qualification of Post-Graduation (Mean = 130.4783) while lowest levels of sustainable behavior is displayed by employees possessing entry level education qualification i.e. Diploma (Mean = 99.8864).

**Table 6- Descriptive statistics: Education level wise Employee Sustainable Behavior**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>Diploma</b>	44	99.8864	7.27920	1.09738	97.6733	102.0994	88.00	108.00
<b>Graduation</b>	99	120.6162	14.13759	1.42088	117.7965	123.4359	94.00	135.00
<b>Post-graduation</b>	23	130.4783	10.29064	2.14575	126.0283	134.9283	99.00	135.00
<b>Others</b>	10	118.6000	21.17231	6.69527	103.4542	133.7458	94.00	135.00
<b>Total</b>	176	116.6080	16.31615	1.22988	114.1807	119.0353	88.00	135.00

One way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in employee sustainable behavior across employee education levels (N=176) (see table 7). Participants

were divided into four groups (Group 1: Diploma; Group 2: Graduation; Group 3: Post Graduation; Group 4: others).The ANOVA results suggest that the Employee Sustainable Behavior scores of the groups differ significantly ( $F= 37.284$ ;  $p<.001$ ).The level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly with the education level of employees. Hence  $H_{13}$  is supported.

**Table 7-ANOVA: Education Level Wise Employee Sustainable behavior**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	18357.964	3	6119.321	37.284	<.001
<b>Within Groups</b>	28229.985	173	164.128		
<b>Total</b>	46587.949	176			

## 2.4 Discussion

The study aimed at exploring the level of sustainable behavior among the IT sector employees. High level of sustainable behavior has been exhibited by the employee of IT employees as indicated by mean scores in Table 1

This paper also examined the employee sustainable behavior across gender. The results suggest that the level of employee sustainable behavior varies significantly across the gender of the employees. Descriptive statistics mentioned in Table 2 indicates that female employees exhibit more sustainable behavior than males. This finding is in alignment to the findings of the researches carried out earlier (Scannell & Gifford, 2013; Weerarathna et al., 2017).

The study intended to investigate whether there exists any difference in the employee sustainable behavior based on their age groups. The results of ANOVA proved significant differences in employee sustainable behavior across the age groups. The analysis of descriptive statistics further showed suggest that older employees displayed more sustainable behavior. This finding is consistent with the findings of earlier research (Norton et al., 2015) that elderly employees tend to exhibit more green behaviors.

The study also examined whether any significant difference exists in the employee sustainable behavior based on their education levels. ANOVA results proved that employee sustainable behavior varies with the education levels of the employees .Employees who held post graduate degree were found to be displaying more sustainable behavior and those who were diploma holders exhibited lowest levels of sustainable behaviors. The findings of (Hoffmann and Mutarak, 2017) also support the findings of this study.

## 3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

With the increased focus on sustainability, IT companies are increasingly shifting their efforts to bring in sustainable innovations .It is also often argued that IT sector has got the potential to help other sectors to reduce their carbon emissions by delivering the sustainable IT products.

Sustainable Innovation is said to be the key driver of business growth in the contemporary market scenario. Business organizations are now forced to serve their customers in sustainable ways which in turn depends upon the employees. Thus it is important for the companies to be aware of and develop the pro-environment skills and attitude of their employees. It has been brought out by this study that the demographic factors like gender, age and education qualifications play a significant role in the sustainable behavior being exhibited by the employees. HR Practitioners must take initiatives to encourage the sustainable behavior among the employees.

The study clearly establishes the role of gender in determining employee sustainable behavior. Female employees indulge into more sustainable behaviors as compared to male employees is the fact brought out in the study. Thus female employees can be entrusted with the role of “change agents “to spearhead the sustainability awareness and implementation programs in various verticals across the organization.

The study also brings out that higher the employee age, more he/she indulges into sustainable behavior. This also implies that they are the elderly employees handling the managerial positions in the organizations and thus are in position to influence the younger employees towards pro sustainable behaviors by providing green



leadership and mentoring them. It is also suggested that induction training must be designed to sensitize the younger employees towards the importance of sustainability and commitment of organization towards it.

Also educational qualifications of the candidates must be given special attention during talent acquisition. Higher the education qualification of the employee, more the sustainable behavior he/she exhibits has been established by this study. Employees who are Diploma holders and Graduates can be motivated to engage in eco-friendly behavior by providing them the opportunity to take up the online courses on sustainability as the improved knowledge of sustainability leads to increased adoption of sustainable behavior. Also a conscious attempt should be made to make sustainable measures a part of employees' performance plan so as link employee sustainable efforts with the rewards.

## CONCLUSION

As more and more organizations aim to become environmentally sustainable, the subject of employee sustainable behavior is garnering increased attention from researchers and practitioners across the world. The study throws light on the role that demographic variables play in determining level of employee sustainable behavior. The results of analysis clearly established that employee sustainable behavior varies significantly with gender, age and education qualifications. The way to achieve sustainable innovations is through sustainable employee behavior. To conclude, present study highlights the need of suitable HR interventions on the part of the organizations to encourage its employees with diverse demographic profiles to indulge into sustainable behavior.

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