Sustainability in the built environment: are we doing enough?

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Abstract

Sustainability is one of the key requirements for any business. The ever-increasing turbulent and complex nature of the corporate environment calls for organizations to develop competitive strategic models to not only reach profits but also to meet societal and stakeholder expectations in a long-term sustainable view [1].

The corporate built environment is a critical contributor to carbon emissions and one of the main reasons for depressing energy resources [2]. Technological advancements have contributed drastically to assisting the management team to adopt sustainable practices. However, there is a knowledge gap among sustainability professionals in understanding the concept of sustainable growth and energy gap, posing as a burden for them to keep up with ongoing technological developments such as the Green Internet of Things (IoT) and the use of sensors technology.

Addressing these challenges the research paper aims to explore the current awareness level of sustainability professionals and stakeholders about corporate responsibility towards sustainability, laying the groundwork for addressing these hurdles and contributing towards the overall sustainable development. Furthermore, the researcher referred to three theories commonly used by sustainability theorists to address the above-mentioned challenges: *Self-determination theory* [3]*, Stakeholder theory* [4], and *Sustainable leadership theory* [5].

Qualitative methods that utilized semi-structured interview questions were used to interview sustainability professionals from the service industry. The interview guide was structured, adopting predetermined scales used by Zou et al.(2019) [6]. The data gathered was analyzed using NVIVO12 software. Iterative method was used to code the transcripts [7]. Under thematic analysis, a combination of both deductive and inductive approaches was employed, this combination allows the researcher to remain coherent and consistent throughout the data's coding and analysis process [8].

The researcher established five themes through thematic analysis of the data: (i) Concept of Sustainability, (ii) Corporate Sustainability Responsibility, (iii) Perception of Corporate Sustainable Responsibility, (iv) Current Tools and Concepts and, (v) Institutional Barriers and pressures in the path to sustainability. The five themes were then used as a base to formulate open-ended interview questionnaires for data collection.

The current research paper by aligning the objectives with pre-existing theories and conducting an in-depth analysis linking the results from the survey with the objectives, themes, and theories, provides a unique insight into the current knowledge level of sustainability professionals in the corporate environment of the service industry. The survey results reflect an increased need for training and knowledge sharing among business leaders when it comes to the environmental impacts of the business, developing nations

need to shift focus from the social aspect of Corporate Social Responsibility to Corporate Sustainable Responsibility.

With the rapid change in climate and rising global warming conditions, more research must be conducted in order to investigate and track the causes of carbon emissions and sources of energy depression. This research contributes to the vast array of existing green knowledge with a special focus on the corporate built environment and green manageability.

Recalling the urgent need for sustainability, this research paper illustrates the current awareness of sustainability professionals concerning corporate sustainable responsibility through three objectives:

To identify the different barriers that influence corporate executives, management teams, and the organization as a whole from attaining sustainability.

To analyze crucial strategic decisions that impact CO_2 emissions and the firms' energy consumption in the built environment.

To formulate a relationship between sustainability and industry 4.0 improving green growth in the built environment.

In the past only Governments were held responsible for ensuring sustainable growth and development, however, with rapid industrial developments came more complex environmental issues which called for the cooperation of not only corporates from different industries but also all stakeholders in the society. The current research addresses issues that arise in the corporate environment allowing the readers to examine and understand the relationship between energy systems used in the built environment and their impacts on society.

It is important for both internal and external stakeholders to understand in simple language the effects of the business operations on the five Ps in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals: People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnering. Given that there exists a knowledge gap amongst stakeholders and shareholders in corporate environment, the findings presented in this research paper will appeal to the scientific audience and also research scholars in educational institutions who are major change catalysts when it comes to sustainability.

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