SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE: THE ROLE OF OFFICE DESIGN AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT IN ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

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Annotation. *This thesis examines the relationships among transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, office design and organizational citizenship behavior in a sustainable workplace; how psychological empowerment links transformational leadership to employees’ organizational citizenship behavior and how office design influences this relationship. The study is based on a two-wave multisource survey of 216 employees and 49 supervisors from 10 organizations in Uzbekistan. Transformational leadership is positively related to psychological empowerment while psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. Relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior is stronger in open plan offices. These results indicate that sustainable workplaces should be considered not only in terms of employees’ psychological resources but also in terms of physical work environment that can facilitate interaction, cooperation and positive employee behavior.*

Key words: *Sustainable workplace, transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, organizational citizenship behavior, office design, open-plan office, organizational sustainability.*

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur tezis tashkilotlarda barqaror ish joyini shakllantirishda transformatsion rahbarlik, psychological empowerment va ofis dizayni o‘rtasidagi o‘zaro bog‘liqlikni tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqotda psychological empowerment xodimlarning tashkiliy fuqarolik xulq-atvoriga qanday ta’sir qilishi hamda ushbu bog‘liqlik ofis dizayniga qarab qanday o‘zgarishi o‘rganilgan. Tadqiqot O‘zbekistondagi 10 ta tashkilotning 216 nafar xodimi va 49 nafar rahbari ishtirokida ikki bosqichda o‘tkazilgan. Natijalar transformatsion rahbarlik va psychological empowerment*

o‘rtasida ijobiy bog‘liqlik mavjudligini, psychological empowerment esa transformatsion rahbarlik va tashkiliy fuqarolik xulq-atvori o‘rtasidagi munosabatda vositachi rolini bajarishini ko‘rsatgan. Shuningdek, ochiq rejali ofislarda psychological empowerment va tashkiliy fuqarolik xulq-atvori o‘rtasidagi bog‘liqlik kuchliroq ekanligi aniqlangan. Ushbu natijalar barqaror ish joyini yaratishda xodimlarning psixologik jihatdan imkoniyatlarini ro‘yobga chiqarish bilan bir qatorda, ijtimoiy munosabatlar va hamkorlikni qo‘llab-quvvatlaydigan qulay jismoniy ish muhitini shakllantirish ham muhimligini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: *Barqaror ish joyi, transformatsion rahbarlik, psychological empowerment, tashkiliy fuqarolik xulq-atvori, ofis dizayni, ochiq rejali ofis, tashkilot barqarorligi.*

Аннотация. *В тезисе рассматривается взаимосвязь трансформационного лидерства, психологического empowerment и дизайна офиса в формировании устойчивого рабочего места. Основное внимание уделено тому, как психологический empowerment связан с организационным гражданским поведением сотрудников и как эта взаимосвязь изменяется в зависимости от дизайна офиса. Исследование проводилось в два этапа и включало 216 сотрудников и 49 руководителей из 10 организаций Узбекистана. Результаты показали наличие положительной связи между трансформационным лидерством и психологическим empowerment, а также его посредническую роль во взаимосвязи между трансформационным лидерством и организационным гражданским поведением. Кроме того, было установлено, что данная взаимосвязь является более сильной в офисах с открытой планировкой. Полученные результаты показывают, что формирование устойчивого рабочего места требует внимания не только к психологическим ресурсам сотрудников, но и к физической рабочей среде, которая способствует взаимодействию и сотрудничеству.*

Ключевые слова: *Устойчивое рабочее место, трансформационное лидерство, психологический empowerment, организационное гражданское поведение, дизайн офиса, офис с открытой планировкой, устойчивая организация.*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in organizations is increasingly being viewed as multidimensional, including financial performance, environmental protection, and other dimensions. The human dimension of sustainability is particularly relevant because organizational

sustainability depends partly on employees’ well-being, motivation, relationships, and willingness to contribute to the functioning of the organization [1, 2]. From this perspective, a sustainable workplace should provide conditions for employees not only to fulfil their formal duties but also to develop positive relationships, experience autonomy and competence, and voluntarily contribute to organizational goals.

An employee-related factor in this process is psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment refers to intrinsic motivation toward work and consists of four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact [3]. Employees who feel psychologically empowered tend to perceive their work as valuable, believe that they are capable of performing their tasks, and feel that their actions can influence organizational outcomes [3]. Such perceptions may motivate employees to go beyond formally prescribed job requirements [6, 7]. This discretionary behavior is commonly referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Organ [4] defined OCB as voluntary employee behavior that is not directly required by the formal reward system but supports the effective functioning of an organization. Examples include helping colleagues, supporting organizational activities, and engaging in constructive behavior beyond formal job requirements. Therefore, OCB is particularly relevant for sustainable workplaces because organizations depend not only on formal structures but also on employees’ voluntary contributions.

Leadership is another important element in this process. Transformational leaders motivate employees by communicating a meaningful vision, encouraging new ways of thinking, and providing individual support [5]. Through these behaviors, leaders may strengthen employees’ sense of competence, autonomy, meaning, and influence. Previous research has therefore considered psychological empowerment as one mechanism through which leadership influences employees’ attitudes and behaviors [6, 7].

The physical work environment may also determine whether employees translate their psychological resources into positive workplace behavior. Office design influences how easily employees can communicate, interact, exchange information, and cooperate [8]. In particular, open-plan offices reduce physical barriers between employees and may provide more opportunities for interpersonal interaction, although their effects can also depend on how the space is designed and used [8]. Thus, the physical environment should not be viewed as separate from employee psychology and leadership.

Hence, this study set out to examine whether office design changes the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory,

employee behavior can be partly understood as being influenced by the quality of social relationships and resources exchanged in the workplace [9]. The study proposed that transformational leadership could promote psychological empowerment, which in turn could increase employees’ willingness to engage in OCB, while office design could strengthen this relationship by creating conditions for employee interaction and cooperation [10].

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Uzbekistan and involved employees from 10 organizations. The final sample comprised 216 employees and 49 supervisors. A two-wave, multisource survey design was used to minimize common method bias and to obtain employee and supervisor perspectives on the variables of interest [10, 13].

Transformational leadership and psychological empowerment were assessed through employees’ responses, whereas organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was assessed by supervisors. Transformational leadership was measured using Carless et al.’s [11] seven-item scale ($\alpha = 0.89$), with employees evaluating their supervisors’ leadership behaviors. Psychological empowerment was measured using Spreitzer’s [3] 12-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$), which assessed employees’ perceptions of their empowerment at work. OCB was evaluated by supervisors using Buil et al.’s [12] three-item measure of employees’ helping behavior ($\alpha = 0.79$).

In the research model, psychological empowerment was examined as a mediating variable linking transformational leadership to OCB, while office setting was examined as a moderating variable and classified as either cellular or open-plan. The study proposed three main relationships. First, transformational leadership was expected to be positively related to psychological empowerment. Second, psychological empowerment was expected to be positively related to OCB and to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB. Third, office setting was expected to moderate the relationship between psychological empowerment and OCB, such that this relationship would be stronger in open-plan offices than in cellular offices [10].

This research design allowed the study to examine the psychological mechanism through which leadership may influence employee behavior while also considering the physical workplace as an important contextual factor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results support the relationships between leadership, psychological empowerment, and employee behavior proposed above. First, transformational

leadership was significantly related to psychological empowerment: employees who perceive their leaders as transformational are more likely to experience a stronger sense of competence, meaning, autonomy, and influence at work [10]. This finding is consistent with broader leadership literature, which argues that transformational leaders motivate employees by communicating an inspiring vision, encouraging independent thinking, and supporting employees’ development [5]. From a social exchange perspective, supportive leadership also provides employees with valuable psychological and relational resources, which may encourage positive responses toward the organization [9].

Second, psychological empowerment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and OCB. This is important because it suggests that leadership does not influence discretionary employee behavior only through managerial control, but also through how employees experience their own role [10]. In practice, this means that an employee who feels trusted, capable, autonomous, and able to make a contribution may be more likely to help colleagues, participate in organizational activities, and take on responsibilities beyond formal job requirements. Psychological empowerment therefore provides a useful explanation of how transformational leadership can lead to employee citizenship behavior [6, 7].

The third finding concerns the physical workplace. Psychological empowerment was more strongly related to OCB in open-plan offices than in cellular offices [10]. This suggests that psychological empowerment does not operate independently of the work environment: employees may have the motivation and willingness to contribute, but the physical structure of the workplace can shape opportunities for interaction and cooperation.

This finding is particularly important because previous research has produced mixed views of open-plan offices. Some studies have linked open spaces with problems such as noise, distraction, stress, and reduced privacy, while the assumed benefits of greater interaction and communication may depend on how the office environment is designed and experienced [8]. Therefore, the finding of the present study should not be interpreted as evidence that open-plan offices are generally superior. Rather, it suggests that office design can act as a contextual condition that changes how psychological resources are expressed through employee behavior.

Psychological and physical factors therefore need to be considered together. A workplace may have supportive leaders, but interaction may still be limited by inappropriate physical arrangements. Similarly, an open office alone cannot guarantee positive employee behavior if employees lack autonomy, competence, or meaningful

relationships with their leaders. Sustainable workplace design should therefore take leadership, employee psychology, and physical space into account together.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results have several practical implications for managers and organizational decision-makers. First, organizations should strengthen employees’ psychological empowerment. Managers can do this by giving employees greater autonomy, including them in decisions that affect their work, communicating the importance of their contribution to the organization, and providing opportunities to develop competence [3, 6, 7]. Such practices may encourage employees to take greater responsibility for organizational outcomes.

Second, leadership development should be part of sustainable workplace strategies. Transformational leadership is not only about communicating organizational goals but also about developing employees’ sense of capability and involvement [5, 6, 7]. Managers therefore need to be trained to provide meaningful feedback, promote initiative, recognize employee contributions, and support independent problem solving [5, 6].

Third, office design needs to be considered as part of organizational management rather than merely as an architectural or administrative issue. The findings show that the physical environment can influence how psychological resources are translated into discretionary behavior [10]. When open-plan offices are introduced in organizations, managers should take into account opportunities for collaboration, noise management, privacy, accessibility, and the nature of employees’ tasks [8].

Finally, the most important implication is that sustainable workplace policies should integrate human and physical dimensions. Employee well-being and positive behavior cannot be developed solely through workplace design, nor can they be achieved entirely through leadership practices. Sustainable workplaces are built on supportive leadership, psychologically empowered employees, and a physical environment that allows for constructive interaction.

CONCLUSION

A sustainable workplace should be understood as an environment in which organizational performance is supported while employees’ psychological and social well-being is also promoted [1, 2]. The results of the study show that transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and office design can work together in shaping employees’ organizational citizenship behavior: transformational leadership is positively related to psychological empowerment; psychological empowerment is an important mechanism connecting leadership with OCB; and the relationship between

psychological empowerment and OCB is stronger in open-plan offices [10].

These findings illustrate an important management principle: not a single organizational factor, but the interaction between leadership, psychological experiences, and the work environment shapes employee behavior. Organizations seeking to create sustainable workplaces therefore need to move beyond focusing only on physical infrastructure or financial performance and consider the conditions that encourage employees to participate, cooperate, and contribute beyond their formal duties.

In this sense, sustainable workplace development is not simply about creating a particular office layout but is a broader management task. Organizations need to empower employees, develop supportive leadership, and design physical environments that facilitate meaningful interaction. Such an integrated approach can help organizations create workplaces where employees are more willing and able to contribute to long-term organizational effectiveness.

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