

The Association Between Corporate Environmental Sustainability, Environmental Awareness, And Job Pursuit Intention

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ABSTRACT: Taiwan, renowned as a global leader in technology, boasts a manufacturing sector that accounts for more than 30% of its GDP. With the growing public knowledge of climate change, there has been a notable rise in environmental awareness among contemporary societies, influencing how businesses are perceived based on their environmental practices. This research targets potential job candidates in the tech sector, employing semi-structured interviews with individuals educated in engineering and related disciplines within Taiwan. It delves into three core questions, aiming to uncover: (1) whether individuals with environmental awareness prefer to work for committed companies to environmental sustainability; (2) if environmentally aware employees can facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices within their companies; and (3) whether a company's dedication to environmental sustainability enhances its appeal to prospective employees, thereby aiding in the recruitment and retention of top talent.

Findings indicate that all participants are environmentally aware and eager to support workplace sustainability initiatives. Individuals with employment options often opt for companies with robust environmental reputations. Conversely, those encountering challenges in securing employment tend to prioritize immediate job availability over the environmental standing of the company. The study concludes with several recommendations to foster environmental awareness across various sectors, including government, media, businesses, educational institutions, and individuals.

KEYWORDS: corporate environmental responsibility, job pursuit intention, environmental awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

The escalating climate extremes have heightened international focus on environmental conservation. The first-ever United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, marked the commencement of the sustainable development movement. By 1987, the United Nations' World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) articulated the concept of sustainable development in its seminal report, "Our Common Future." It defined sustainable development as the ability to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, emphasizing the pivotal role of corporate participation due to their substantial resource extraction from the environment, which, while driving global economic growth, simultaneously leads to ecological degradation.

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Following this, the environmental sustainability discourse gained considerable attention worldwide, prompting both corporations and governments to initiate various environmental actions. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) witnessed 155 countries signing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) aimed at reducing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. This initiative was fortified five years later with the legally binding Kyoto Protocol at the UNFCCC's third meeting, though it initially bound only developed nations. Consequently, the 2015 Paris Agreement expanded the obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to developing nations as well. Facing an ongoing climate crisis, a global consensus has now been achieved to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

Taiwan's sustainable development journey began in 1994 with the establishment of the National Council for Sustainable Development, which, in 2022, officially unveiled the "Taiwan 2050 Net-Zero Emissions Pathway and Strategies." The strategies include promoting energy and industrial transformation and imposing carbon fees on corporations, all in a bid to achieve a sustainable society by 2050. Furthermore, starting in 2025, all listed companies in Taiwan are required to disclose sustainability metrics specific to their industries, officially integrating sustainable development into corporate responsibilities and obligations.

The technology sector plays a crucial role in Taiwan's economic progression. According to the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, the manufacturing sector contributed approximately 32% to the national GDP in 2022, but it is also associated with high carbon emissions. As per the Ministry of Economic Affairs Energy Statistics of 2022, the industrial sector accounted for 59.1% of domestic energy consumption and 56.1% of electricity consumption. In response to these figures, the Ministry of Environment proposed a draft Carbon Fee Collection Methodology at the end of last year, targeting power and manufacturing industries with annual greenhouse gas emissions totaling more than 25,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent.

As societal calls for environmental protection intensify, corporate environmental actions are under public scrutiny, with expectations for companies to undertake beneficial environmental practices, thereby fulfilling their Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER). Many millennials expect their employers to engage in energy-efficient practices and participate in recycling and other green initiatives (Puybaraud, Russel, McEwan, Luessink, Beck, 2010). Indeed, studies have shown that environmental sustainability can yield multiple benefits for corporations, including cost savings and reduced liability risks. Thus, academics encourage the establishment of environmental awareness training programs (Perron, Côté, Duffy, 2006). Research by Bunge, Cohen-Rosenthal, and Ruiz-Quintanilla (1996) also indicated that effective environmental management can reduce costs, with employee participation helping to decrease emissions of toxic substances. Numerous studies affirm that a company's environmental culture and the environmental awareness of its personnel are intimately linked to its environmental performance, and effective environmental management is highly beneficial for businesses.

With the widespread dissemination of knowledge about climate change, there has been a gradual increase in environmental awareness among the public, influencing their evaluation of corporate environmental behaviors. A company's environmental performance not only makes it easier to attract employees who share similar values (Turban and Greening, 1997) but also affects the job application intentions of prospective employees. Therefore, environmental sustainability becomes a crucial factor in

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attracting and retaining top talent (Hanson-Rasmussen, Lauver, Lester, 2014). Moreover, companies encouraging employee participation in environmental sustainability are more likely to appeal to environmentally aware individuals, who tend to be more proactive in their sustainability efforts, even participating in such activities beyond their job responsibilities (Shafiuddin, 2022). International studies have verified a virtuous cycle among corporate environmental sustainability, environmental awareness, and job application intentions: environmentally aware individuals are more likely to join companies that practice environmental sustainability; environmentally aware help employees companies implement these practices; and through such practices, companies enhance their appeal to potential employees, thereby attracting and retaining top talent. This Virtuous cycle aids national or corporate efforts towards sustainable development.

The objective of this study is to investigate whether the following situations exist in Taiwan: (1) environmentally aware individuals prefer to join companies that engage in environmental sustainability practices; (2) environmentally aware employees assist in the implementation of these practices within companies; and (3) companies' environmental sustainability practices increase the job application intentions of potential employees, thus attracting and retaining top talent. The respondents (potential job seekers in the technology sector) will answer three sets of questions to address these objectives: (1) their level of environmental awareness; (2) their willingness to assist companies in implementing environmental sustainability; and (3) whether their environmental awareness influences their job application intentions towards companies that engage in environmental sustainability practices.

This study focuses on potential job seekers in the technology sector, conducting semi-structured interviews with four individuals aged 21 to 30 who are either unemployed or about to graduate and have educational backgrounds primarily in engineering and related fields. The interview framework references the Environmental Awareness Scale by Kencanasari, Surahman, and Permana (2019) and the research by Hanson-Rasmussen et al. (2014), incorporating content analysis of both domestic and international literature. Recognizing that each individual's background, values, and decision-making processes are unique, this study employs a case study approach to explore the individual differences among the four cases, providing an in-depth understanding of their thoughts, values, and how their backgrounds influence their decisions. Through detailed case analysis, this study reveals the complex interplay between environmental awareness and job application intentions among potential job seekers in the technology sector. Finally, based on the findings, recommendations are provided to raise awareness about environmental issues, hoping everyone will join in fostering a friendly and sustainable planet.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Corporate Environmental Sustainability

In 1987, the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED), in its report "Our Common Future," defined sustainable development as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The WCED emphasized that achieving sustainable development cannot rely solely on government regulators and policymakers; businesses also play a crucial role. They are not only part of the problem due to their contributions to current unsustainable practices but also possess the necessary resources to solve these issues. Consequently, corporate responsibility became a focal point of global discussion and concern.

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Egri and Ralston (2008) noted that corporate responsibility encompasses social and environmental dimensions. As climate change intensifies, public interest in the environmental aspects of corporate responsibility—referred to as Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER)—has grown significantly. This interest has spurred considerable discourse in both the business and academic communities. Huckle (1995) stated that CER involves the relationship between corporations and the environment, including the obligations and responsibilities of corporate decision-makers to take actions that protect and improve the overall environment, which also align with their interests. Scholars such as Hart (1995), Starik and Rands (1995), and Gunningham (2009) have defined CER as practices beneficial to the environment (or those that mitigate adverse impacts on the environment) that go beyond the obligations set by law.

2.2 Environmental Awareness

Salim (1982) discussed environmental protection from the perspectives of Indonesia and developing countries, introducing the concept that environmental awareness is built on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, which should be actively applied through actions. Salim posited that environmental awareness is an effort to enhance people's understanding of the environment, aiming not just to inform them about waste, pollution, conservation, and the protection of endangered species, but more importantly, to deepen their appreciation for their surroundings and, collaborate towards creating a fair, prosperous, and sustainable nation.

Hassan (2010), Noordin, and Sulaiman emphasized that environmental awareness comprises three components: affective, attitudes, and sustainable practices. They highlighted that psychological factors and emotional forces can motivate a series of environmentally friendly actions. Altin, Tecer, Tecer, Altin, and Kahraman (2014) defined environmental awareness as the recognition of environmental issues coupled with active participation in eco-friendly enterprises. Karatekin (2014) noted, "Environmental awareness is a catalyst for fostering proactive environmental attitudes and a fondness for positive environmental actions." Chen, Huang, and Lin (2019) described environmental awareness as an understanding of and attention to environmental issues.

According to Kencanasari et al. in 2019, environmental awareness should involve a love for the environment expressed through knowledge, attitudes, and concrete actions. These elements—knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors—are interconnected; possessing environmental awareness means understanding the significance of the environment. Without displaying eco-friendly attitudes and behaviors, mere knowledge remains ineffective. The research suggests considering these elements when measuring environmental awareness, as shown in Table 1. The study differentiates between “supporting the environment” and “not supporting the environment,” with knowledge encompassing awareness of waste segregation, environmental pollution, and protected species; attitudes include reminders not to litter and pollute; and behaviors involve adhering to pollution laws, not cutting down trees, and segregating waste.

No	Researched Aspects	Indicator		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Behavior
1	Pro-environment	Know the waste classification	Remind not to litter	Trash disposing by sorting according to its classification

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		Knowing things that can pollute the environment	Remind to always protect the environment from pollution	Implement the rules of the government not to pollute the environment
		Know the types of animals that are protected	Remind not to capture or even kill protected animals	Helping or Supporting animal rehabilitation centers to be released
		Know about the greening function	Remind to always re-plant after cutting down trees	Do not cut trees carelessly
2	Not pro-environment	Know the classification of waste	Not reminding not to litter	Littering
		Knowing things that can pollute the environment	Do not remind to always protect the environment from pollution	Do things that can pollute the environment
		Know the types of animals that are protected	Not reminding not to capture or even kill protected animals	Hunt animals as you wish
		Know about the greening function	Do not remind to always re-plant after cutting down trees	Cutting trees carelessly

Table 1. Tools for measuring environmental awareness

Source: Kencanasari, Surahman, & Permana, (2019).

Synthesizing the discussions from various scholars, environmental awareness manifests through knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward the environment. Knowledge involves understanding environmental issues; attitudes encompass thoughts and habitual environmental considerations; behaviors are the tangible eco-friendly actions arising from knowledge and attitudes. In these three dimensions, individuals develop an environmental awareness, form emotional connections with their surroundings, and share a collective aspiration to create a fair, prosperous, and sustainable living environment.

2.3 Willingness to apply for a job

Williamson, Lepak, and King (2003), along with Wang (2013), describe job pursuit intention as the level of a job seeker's desire for specific job opportunities at a company. The more professionals express a solid intent to apply or share positive word of mouth, the greater the pool of talented candidates a company can select from, enhancing its future recruitment outcomes and competitive advantage. Jaidi, Van Hooft, and Arends (2011) define job pursuit intention as a job seeker's active pursuit of employment and intention to participate in company interviews. Evans and Davis (2011) noted that the company's reputation and image influence initial attraction. Aiman-Smith, Bauer, and Cable (2001) define job pursuit intention as a job seeker's willingness to seek more information about a company, maintain contact, and consider the company a desirable workplace. Beenen and Pichler (2014) describe it as the intent, actions, and decisions of potential employees to become members of a specific company.

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Synthesizing these scholarly discussions, job pursuit intention is the extent, actions, and decisions by job seekers wishing to become members of a specific company. They hold positive views of the company's reputation and image, regularly follow job opportunities and relevant information, actively participate in job interviews, and perceive the company as an ideal workplace, thereby fostering an intent to apply.

2.4 Research on Corporate Environmental Sustainability, Environmental Awareness, and Job Pursuit Intentions

2.4.1 The Relationship Between Environmental Awareness and Corporate Environmental Sustainability

Research conducted by Bunge and colleagues (1996) revealed that in companies striving to enhance environmental performance, a notable reduction—up to threefold—in the emission of hazardous substances was observed when employee involvement was significant. To integrate environmental issues into the core of corporate culture, it is essential for corporate training strategies to incorporate environmental awareness. Perron et al., (2006) advocate that corporations begin to prioritize the environment, as it forms the foundation from which they extract their resources, arguing that the environment should not be as a cost-free externality. Moreover, numerous scholars have discussed how addressing sustainable environmental issues can yield both social and financial benefits. They contend that the success of implementing environmental management hinges on the development of an effective educational program that raises environmental awareness, equipping employees at all levels with the tools necessary to make environmentally responsible decisions within the company.

2.4.2 Job Pursuit Intentions and Corporate Environmental Sustainability

Hanson-Rasmussen et al. (2014) examined the correlation between business students' perspectives on environmental sustainability and their intentions to pursue a job. Their study indicated that individuals who value environmental sustainability practices and hold companies to high environmental accountability are likelier to pursue employment with companies known for their environmental stewardship. This research suggests that companies should pay attention to their environmental records and decision-making processes, as these factors become significant when job seekers have employment options and other similar job conditions. The study also noted that while salary and job satisfaction play a significant role in job pursuit, a company's visible disregard for the environment can diminish a job seeker's interest in employment there. If companies value the environment and aim to recruit employees whose values align with their own, promoting sustainable practices is beneficial and can be highlighted through job fairs, candidate interviews, and social media. This approach encourages a "win-win" scenario, promoting environmental initiatives that benefit the environment and attract and retain top talent.

2.4.3 Environmental Awareness and Job Pursuit Intentions

Shafiuddin's (2022) research in Ireland found that individuals of all ages exhibit environmental awareness and prefer to work with proactive companies about environmental management. The data revealed that Irish job seekers favor companies that mention their environmental policies and strategies in recruitment messages and prefer employers who encourage employee participation in environmental practices. Furthermore, participants in the study were willing to engage in environmental initiatives beyond their regular duties and roles. This finding suggests a positive relationship between green recruitment practices and job pursuit intentions, implying that adopting green recruitment practices offers competitive advantages in hiring and supports sustainability goals by attracting environmentally aware employees.

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III. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

3.1 Study Participants and Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling, selecting four participants aged 21 to 30 years with backgrounds in engineering and related fields, who are either currently unemployed or nearing graduation from advanced degree programs, all expressing a desire to work within the technology sector.

3.2 Analysis of Study Findings

The analysis focused on three aspects concerning potential job candidates in the tech industry: their environmental awareness, their willingness to assist in corporate environmental sustainability efforts, and the influence of their environmental awareness on their intent to apply to companies practicing environmental sustainability.

3.2.1 Environmental Awareness of Potential Job Candidates

From the interview data, three categories were identified concerning the candidates' environmental awareness: their focuses and sources of information, their attitudes towards environmental protection, and their environmentally protective behaviors, detailed as follows:

- **Focuses and Sources of Information:** The initial inquiry into whether participants routinely follow and understand environmental issues revealed varied levels of engagement. One respondent, living near the coast, exhibited significant focus, particularly regarding local beach cleaning initiatives. Another, through news sources and previous employment, engaged with sustainability initiatives such as company-organized beach clean-ups and campaigns against harmful chemicals. Others mentioned significant environmental events like the algae reef referendum, with the remainder sporadically engaging with environmental news.
- **Attitudes Towards Environmental Protection:** According to Kencanasari et al. (2019), attitudes encompass thoughts and habitual reflections about the environment. All users displayed positive attitudes toward environmental protection, with personal commitments to respectful environmental interactions, extending to reminders to others of their environmental responsibilities.
- **Environmental Protective Behaviors:** Also based on metrics by Kencanasari et al. (2019), behaviors arise from knowledge and attitudes, manifesting as direct actions. All participants actively engaged in environmental behaviors such as proper waste disposal, recycling, beach cleaning, using reusable containers, and reducing single-use utensils. One noted the inconvenience of cleaning reusable items outside, which sometimes discouraged their use.

3.2.2 Willingness of Potential Job Candidates to Assist with Corporate Environmental Sustainability This section summarizes their willingness to support and their proactive behaviors within companies regarding environmental sustainability:

- **Willingness to Assist:** All visitors viewed corporate environmental efforts positively, recognizing them as protective of both the environment and personal well-being, thus expressing a readiness to support these initiatives. However, one noted that participation might depend on time availability and alignment with work responsibilities.

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- **Proactive Environmental Behaviors Within Companies:** Respondents indicated that regardless of the company's focus, they would promote environmental sustainability through simple actions like recycling and conserving resources. Collaborative efforts were preferred, and some suggested formal proposals to management advocating for sustainability practices.

3.2.3 Impact of Corporate Environmental Sustainability on Potential Job Candidates' Application Intentions

This section delves into candidates' perceptions of corporate environmental efforts, their priorities during job searches, and the impact of a company's negative environmental reputation:

- **Perceptions of Corporate Environmental Practices:** Opinions varied on whether companies practicing sustainability are also considerate of their employees and the workplace environment. Some associated positive environmental efforts with enhanced employee benefits and a supportive work culture. Others were skeptical, viewing corporate environmental initiatives as primarily self-serving, aimed at compliance or tax benefits rather than genuine concern.
- **Factors Influencing Job Application Decisions:** Salary, benefits, job nature, future prospects, and company size were primary considerations, with environmental practices being secondary. However, equivalently rated job offers from companies with strong sustainability records were seen as more attractive, directly influencing job satisfaction.
- **Impact of Negative Environmental Reputation:** Generally, a negative environmental track record significantly deterred applications, especially among those with prior tech industry experience. While primary job-seeking considerations might focus on compensation, a company's poor environmental practices could lead job seekers to reconsider, balancing the desire for good compensation against ethical employment practices. Those experiencing difficulty finding employment were more likely to prioritize salary over environmental concerns, indicating a readiness to overlook negative environmental practices for better pay.

IV. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

Prospective job seekers between the ages of 21 and 30 with educational backgrounds in engineering and technology demonstrate a conscious awareness of environmental issues, acknowledging the necessity of environmental protection. This is reflected in their positive attitudes towards environmental conservation and proactive behaviors in sustainability. Findings indicate that these individuals are willing to assist corporations in implementing sustainable practices, although participation in sustainability activities may be contingent on job demands and time constraints. While salary, job content, and company size remain primary considerations for employment, candidates tend to favor corporations that actively engage in environmental sustainability, especially when other job factors are comparable. Moreover, corporations with a positive reputation for environmental practices are likely to enhance job satisfaction.

Additionally, the research found that a significant negative environmental reputation could lead most job seekers to exclude such companies from their potential employers' list, regardless of other attractive job features. This highlights that corporate environmental sustainability is a critical factor during the job selection process, corroborating findings by Hanson-Rasmussen et al. (2014). Job search difficulties can decrease the importance placed on a company's environmental practices, suggesting that job

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seekers with more employment options prefer companies with robust environmental commitments . In contrast, those with fewer options are less concerned.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

While businesses play a significant role in advancing sustainable development, and this study confirms a correlation between job seekers' application intentions and their awareness of a company's environmental sustainability, the drive for sustainable development cannot rely solely on corporate efforts but requires the collective action of everyone on the planet. Individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning the environment are crucial. Hence, this study's additional findings offer recommendations for governments, media, schools, businesses, and individuals to shape environmental awareness to foster a sustainable society through government regulations and policies, media information dissemination, educational systems, corporate operational directions, and personal attitudes and behaviors.

1. Government has the authority to regulate and enforce laws, which is crucial in implementing corporate environmental sustainability and shaping societal environmental awareness. However, this study found that respondents sometimes perceive corporate sustainability efforts as merely a means to garner governmental favor rather than a true concern for the environment or employee perspectives. Therefore, it is suggested that governments should proceed cautiously when crafting environmental regulations or subsidy policies applicable to businesses, ensuring the processes are stringent and transparent. Additionally, governments should cultivate and foster citizens' environmental awareness, integrate environmental education into curriculums, and organize community workshops, aiming for a society where citizens and corporations possess a high environmental awareness.
2. Media In today's era of advanced internet technology, the media permeates our lives as a major information source. However, the information we consume is often filtered and shaped by media entities, significantly impacting passive recipients. It is hoped that the media will consider the public interest and demonstrate environmental awareness, increasing coverage of international environmental issues, government policies, corporate sustainability efforts, and educational resources to help foster a culture that values environmental concerns.
3. Schools are major centers of learning for students, alongside families. During interviews, participants in this study, aged 21 to 30 with backgrounds in engineering and related fields, indicated that their education focused more on cost-saving or labor issues rather than clear concepts of sustainable development. Therefore, it is recommended that schools incorporate global issues such as sustainable development into general education courses and enhance faculty training on these topics. Both students and educators need to maintain the ability to learn continuously to keep pace with a rapidly changing world.
4. Corporations are indispensable drivers of sustainable development. Numerous studies have shown that corporate practices of environmental sustainability can reap significant benefits, and this study also found that such practices positively influence job seekers regardless of the company's motives. Conversely, corporations that severely damage the environment can deter job seekers and potentially miss out on excellent talent. Therefore, businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan, which can communicate more flexible and effectively due to their size, are encouraged to set environmentally

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sustainable goals, convey the spirit of sustainability from leadership downwards, establish rewards for eco-friendly employees, and monitor the environmental performance of their supply chains to create a distinctive green corporate culture.

5. Individuals In the globalized era, every individual is a global citizen whose words, attitudes, and actions carry significant weight. Although most respondents in this study lacked specific knowledge of sustainable development, they held positive attitudes toward environmental protection. They engaged in eco-friendly activities within their capabilities, such as beach cleaning, waste sorting, using reusable cups, and reducing disposable utensils. This study aims to convey that even small actions, like picking up discarded trash, contribute to the environment and that no one should feel too insignificant to make a difference.

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