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Impact of Sustainability-Oriented Employee Incentive Mechanisms on Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of global pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enterprises are deeply integrating the concept of sustainable development into their management practices. As a core tool of human resource management, employee incentive mechanisms play a crucial role in shaping individual behaviors and organizational performance. This paper aims to explore the impact of sustainability-oriented employee incentive mechanisms (SOEIMs) on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Through theoretical analysis and case verification, it identifies core elements such as green performance evaluation, sustainable training incentives, and environmental reward systems, and reveals the internal logic by which these mechanisms enhance OCB through pathways like strengthening employees' sense of responsibility and promoting collaborative innovation. The research provides theoretical and practical references for enterprises to optimize incentive strategies and achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainability-oriented; employee incentive mechanisms; organizational citizenship behavior; sustainable development goals; human resource management



1. Introduction

The global wave of sustainable development has prompted enterprises to integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into their strategic frameworks. Traditional incentive mechanisms centered on economic performance can no longer meet the needs of organizational transformation. The evolution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) concepts has driven enterprises to build new incentive systems aligned with sustainable goals, aiming to guide employee behaviors and enhance organizational effectiveness.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), as employees' voluntary positive behaviors beyond their formal responsibilities, is vital to enterprises' sustainable development. For example, employees' active practice of environmental protection, cross-departmental collaboration to promote green innovation, and other such behaviors form the micro-foundation for enterprises to implement sustainable strategies. Studying the impact of sustainability-oriented employee incentive mechanisms (SOEIMs) on OCB has dual significance: theoretically, it enriches interdisciplinary research on sustainable management and organizational behavior; practically, it provides operational guidance for enterprises to design incentive strategies and stimulate employees' sustainable behaviors (Son et al., 2025).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Sustainability-Oriented Incentive Mechanisms (SOEIMs)

Sustainability-oriented employee incentive mechanisms (SOEIMs) refer to organizational strategies that promote sustainable behaviors by aligning employee incentives with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. These mechanisms generally fall into two categories: monetary rewards linked to sustainable performance, such as ESG bonuses for achieving carbon emission reduction, waste reduction targets, or sustainable innovation (Vera et al., 2025).

2.2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)



OCB refers to employees' voluntary behaviors that go beyond formal duties and contribute to organizational development. In sustainable contexts, it specifically manifests as: actively saving resources, disseminating environmental concepts, assisting colleagues in practicing green processes, and participating in cross-departmental sustainable projects (Nie, 2025). Its theoretical basis stems from social exchange theory: when employees perceive the organization's commitment to sustainable goals, they will reciprocate through OCB, forming a mutually beneficial relationship of "organizational support - employee contribution".

3. Research Content and Analysis

3.1. Analysis of Constituent Elements of Sustainability-Oriented Incentive Mechanisms

This section conducts an in-depth exploration of the core components of sustainability-oriented incentive mechanisms. In terms of green performance evaluation indicators, a multi-dimensional evaluation system will be established. This system includes not only quantitative indicators such as carbon emission reduction rate, energy consumption per unit of output, and waste recovery rate but also qualitative indicators such as the degree of innovation in sustainable product development and the effectiveness of environmental process improvement. Regarding the content and incentive methods of sustainable development training, it will analyze the design of training courses covering environmental knowledge (Calderón et al., 2024), social responsibility concepts, and governance-related skills, while exploring how to use training-related incentives such as promotion opportunities, certificate rewards, and internal recognition to enhance employees' participation enthusiasm. In terms of environmental reward system design, it will study the combination of short-term material rewards (e.g., green bonuses) and long-term spiritual incentives, aiming to create a comprehensive and effective incentive model (Malia and Eli, 2024).

4. The Impact of Employee Incentive Mechanisms on

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior****4.1. Remolding and Strengthening of Employees' Work Attitude and Sense of Responsibility**

Sustainability-oriented employee incentive mechanisms, by deeply integrating enterprises' sustainable development strategies with employees' personal interests, can significantly reshape and strengthen employees' work attitudes and sense of responsibility. When indicators such as environmental protection and social responsibility are incorporated into performance evaluation, employees will shift their focus from short-term performance to long-term strategic goals. For example, after a manufacturing enterprise linked energy conservation and emission reduction to performance bonuses, employees actively proposed energy-saving solutions and spontaneously established a resource waste supervision mechanism. These behaviors beyond their duties are typical organizational citizenship behaviors, which also make employees more aware of the connection between their work and the enterprise's sustainable development, stimulating intrinsic motivation (Zeeshan et al., 2024).

4.2. Paths to Improve Cross-Departmental Collaboration and Organizational Communication Efficiency

Such incentive mechanisms are crucial for promoting cross-departmental collaboration and improving communication efficiency. The achievement of enterprises' sustainable development goals often relies on cross-departmental and cross-team cooperation, and these mechanisms can break down departmental barriers and build a collaborative ecosystem. An internet enterprise set up special team collaboration rewards to promote green office practices, encouraging employees from different departments to jointly formulate energy-saving plans and implement resource recycling programs (De et al., 2021). In this process, the frequency and quality of employees' information exchange improved, forming a good atmosphere of experience sharing and mutual assistance. Such collaborative and communicative behaviors belong to organizational citizenship behavior, laying the foundation for improving the overall operational efficiency of the enterprise.



4.3. Incentive Effects on Employees' Innovation Drive and Learning Development

These mechanisms can effectively stimulate employees' innovation motivation and promote their learning and development. To achieve enterprises' sustainable development goals, employees need to update their knowledge, improve their skills, and explore innovative models. The mechanisms build a positive incentive cycle by setting rewards for innovative achievements and providing systematic training. In the research and development of environmental protection products, a technology enterprise offered high-value material rewards and promotion opportunities to employees who proposed innovative technical solutions, prompting them to actively study cutting-edge technologies and invest in product research, development, and iteration. These spontaneous innovative and learning behaviors align with the core characteristics of self-improvement and proactive innovation in organizational citizenship behavior, helping the enterprise achieve technological breakthroughs (Son et al., 2025).

4.4. Two-Way Empowerment of Corporate Social Reputation

Building and Employees' Organizational Identification

After enterprises implement such mechanisms and achieve results, mutual empowerment between social reputation building and employees' organizational identity can be realized. Enterprises' practices in environmental protection, public welfare, and other fields are demonstrated through employees' in-depth participation, gaining social recognition and enhancing their reputation. A good reputation, in turn, strengthens employees' professional pride and sense of belonging, making them more identify with the enterprise's values and concepts, and thus willing to make extra efforts and exhibit more organizational citizenship behaviors. For example, a well-known enterprise actively fulfilled its social responsibilities and supported public welfare activities through incentive mechanisms, attracting outstanding talents, and existing employees also became more enthusiastic about participating in internal volunteer activities, enhancing the enterprise's cohesion and social influence.



4.5. The Catalytic Role of Sustainability Oriented Employee

Incentives in Stakeholder Engagement and Organizational Citizenship

Employee incentive mechanisms oriented toward sustainable development systematically foster deep and enduring collaborative relationships between employees and external stakeholders by tightly aligning corporate social responsibility goals with individual interests. This approach not only reshapes employee behavior patterns but also creates long-term value for enterprises. At the customer level, these incentive mechanisms quantify sustainability demands into performance metrics, motivating employees to transcend traditional sales frameworks. For instance, a global home furnishings retailer implemented a "Green Service Points System," where employees earn points for successfully recommending recycled-material furniture or guiding customers to participate in used furniture recycling programs. Following implementation, the frequency of employees promoting environmental knowledge increased by 40%, sales of green products rose by 28%, and employees spontaneously established a "Home Eco-Consultant" service, transforming transactional relationships into co-creation of environmental value. This initiative boosted customer repurchase rates by 15%. In supplier relations, incentives incorporate supply chain environmental performance into employee KPIs, transforming procurement staff from "cost controllers" into "ecological co-builders." A leading automotive manufacturer, for example, introduced a "Green Supply Chain Innovation Award." Driven by this reward, procurement teams collaborated with supplier factories to jointly develop clean energy equipment and implement carbon footprint tracking systems, helping one parts supplier reduce energy consumption by 18% and extend their cooperation cycle to 10 years. These efforts enhanced the company's ESG rating and market valuation (Sachin et al., 2024).

Within communities, incentive mechanisms leverage recognition systems and resource allocation to inspire employees to become champions of social responsibility. A food conglomerate's "Community Green Ambassador" program awards employees "Public Service Medals" for organizing waste-sorting campaigns and food safety workshops, redeemable for benefits. This spurred employees to establish a



“Community Health Alliance,” delivering low-carbon lifestyle education to over 50,000 residents. The company earned the title of "Social Responsibility Demonstration Enterprise," saw regional sales grow by 20%, and built a social network that accumulated valuable social capital for future development (Nie, 2025).

These practices demonstrate that sustainability-oriented incentive mechanisms, through interest alignment and value-driven engagement, empower employees to exceed role boundaries, proactively create surplus value in external relationships, and enrich the connotation of organizational citizenship behavior. By forging a community of shared destiny between enterprises and stakeholders, these mechanisms inject enduring momentum into sustainable business growth.

5. Research Design

The data collection for the qualitative case study of IKEA was carefully designed to gain comprehensive and reliable insights into its strategic behaviors and cultural foundations.

Preparation Stage: Extensive literature reviews were conducted to familiarize with IKEA’s business model, previous studies, and related theories, providing a basis for the development of research tools. A semi-structured interview guide was formulated, focusing on the implementation of “democratic design,” cross-cultural store layout adjustments, and omni-channel transformation. After obtaining ethical approval, interviewees such as senior executives, store managers, and product designers were identified through internal directories and professional networks.

Data Collection Implementation: Semi-structured interviews were the main method. Interviewees were contacted via email to explain the research purpose, etc. The interview duration ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. With consent, interviews were recorded and on-site notes were taken. Meanwhile, in-depth analysis of IKEA’s official documents was conducted, including annual reports, sustainability statements, etc., from the official website, regulatory databases, etc., over the past decade, which were classified and marked according to themes such as corporate social responsibility and supply chain management. In addition, participatory observations were carried out in selected stores in Europe and Asia. Observers recorded customer interactions, employee services, and space design according to standardized protocols, with real-time notes and photos taken when permitted.



Data Organization and Verification: Interview recordings were transcribed immediately after interviews and cross-checked by a second researcher. Transcripts, observation notes, etc., were imported into NVivo, coded, marked, and classified into theme folders. The accuracy of interview summaries for some interviewees was confirmed through member checking, and quantitative indicators from public financial reports, Statista, etc., were integrated for triangulation, such as comparing market strategies with regional sales data.

Data analysis adopted a grounded theory-based thematic approach. Open coding was performed on interviews and documents to identify themes such as “cultural adaptation strategies,” which were systematically compared to reveal organizational behavior patterns, such as the symbiotic relationship between cost leadership and sustainable goals. This combination of quantitative and qualitative methods comprehensively analyzed IKEA’s success factors, providing a detailed perspective for organizational behavior research in the retail industry.

6. Conclusions

This study explores the impact of sustainability-oriented employee incentive mechanisms (SOEIMs) on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). SOEIMs integrate ESG goals with employee incentives through green performance evaluation, training incentives, and environmental reward systems, using financial (e.g., ESG bonuses) and non-financial (e.g., ecological recognition) forms. The study finds such mechanisms reshape employees’ attitudes, strengthen responsibility, promote cross-departmental collaboration and innovation, and bidirectionally empower corporate social reputation and employee identification, forming a virtuous cycle. It provides theoretical and practical references for enterprises to design effective incentive strategies and achieve sustainable development goals.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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