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ENVIRONMENTAL

VALUES, ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE AND BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

VALORES AMBIENTALES, CULTURA AMBIENTAL Y SOSTENIBILIDAD EMPRESARIAL

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ABSTRACT

Corporate environmental values and corporate environmental culture are intrinsically linked, and both are critical to the success of sustainability initiatives in an organization. The objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between corporate environmental values, corporate environmental culture and corporate sustainability and their influence on the conservation and protection of the environment. Methodologically, the research was developed applying a theoretical, documentary-type approach, using the inductive method. For its development, content analysis was used as a technique, which made it possible to find the relationships of the categories studied that allowed the theoretical construction to be carried out. The results show that values drive environmental culture and environmental culture reinforces values by promoting behaviors and decisions consistent with those values. Both categories work together to promote sustainability and environmental responsibility within an organization and when managed effectively and mutually reinforcing can have a significant positive impact on the environment and the long-term success of the company. It concludes by pointing out that to achieve business sustainability, it is important to promote values and develop environmental culture in companies.

Keywords:

Environmental culture, company, environmental values, sustainability.

RESUMEN

Los valores ambientales empresariales y la cultura ambiental empresarial están intrínsecamente relacionados y ambos son fundamentales para el éxito de las iniciativas de sostenibilidad en una organización. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar la relación entre los valores ambientales empresariales, la cultura ambiental empresarial y la sostenibilidad empresarial y su influencia para la conservación y protección del ambiente. Metodológicamente la investigación fue desarrollada aplicando un enfoque teórico, de tipo documental, utilizando el método inductivo. Para su desarrollo de utilizó como técnica el análisis de contenido, lo que permitió encontrar las relaciones de las categorías estudiadas que permitieron realizar la construcción teórica. Los resultados evidencian que los valores impulsan la cultura ambiental y la cultura ambiental refuerza los valores al fomentar comportamientos y decisiones coherentes con esos valores. Ambas categorías trabajan juntas para promover la sostenibilidad y la responsabilidad ambiental dentro de una organización y cuando se gestionan de manera efectiva y se refuerzan mutuamente pueden generar un impacto positivo significativo en el ambiente y en el éxito a largo plazo de la empresa. Se concluye señalando que para alcanzar la sostenibilidad empresarial es importante la promoción de los valores y el desarrollo de la cultura ambiental en las empresas.

Palabras clave:

Cultura ambiental, empresa, valores ambientales, sostenibilidad.

INTRODUCTION

Business values are a set of ethical and moral principles that guide and orient the behavior and decisions of an organization, establishing the standards of conduct and corporate culture, and they influence the way the company interacts with its employees, customers, suppliers, and society in general. Business values reflect the company's identity and mission and are fundamental to its long-term success. Some examples of these corporate values are integrity, responsibility, commitment to quality, respect, innovation, teamwork, among others.

Within the values assumed by companies, it is important to include environmental values, which are constituted by the ethical and moral principles that guide and orient the decisions and actions of a company in relation to the environment and reflect the company's commitment to the protection and preservation of the natural environment in which it carries out its activities. These values are fundamental to understanding how companies can integrate environmental responsibility into their organizational culture and operations to promote sustainability. Environmental values need to be integrated into the company's organizational culture, which implies promoting a pro-environmental culture that encourages sustainable practices at all levels of the organization.

In this sense, corporate environmental culture refers to the set of values, beliefs, norms and practices related to the environment that prevail within an organization, which drive actions towards sustainability and create an organization that values and protects the environment in all its operations. The corporate environmental culture is important for promoting sustainable and responsible practices and for integrating environmental aspects in all areas of the company. It is worth highlighting what is mentioned by Ovalles Pabón et al. (2018), who state that environmental problems cannot be solved solely by means of science or technology if a profound change in values and attitudes is not added to them.

Both environmental values and environmental culture contribute to the establishment of business sustainability, under the approach of balancing the economic, social and environmental aspects of business operations and thus contribute significantly to sustainable development and the welfare of society and the environment. In the environmental context, sustainability implies the conservation of natural resources, the protection of the environment and the mitigation of negative impacts on the ecosystem.

This research was developed with the objective of analyzing the relationship between corporate environmental values, corporate environmental culture and corporate sustainability and their influence on the conservation and protection of the environment, all under a theoretical

approach, through the review of bibliographic material related to these topics.

METHODOLOGY

The research was developed applying a theoretical approach, of documentary type, using the inductive method. For its development, content analysis was used as a technique, which allowed finding the theoretical relationships of the categories studied that allowed carrying out the theoretical construction.

Articles obtained from different databases were consulted, such as: Elsevier, Redalyc, Scielo and DOAJ, using as keywords corporate environmental values, corporate environmental culture and corporate sustainability. A filtering of articles published during the last five years was carried out to search for articles.

DEVELOPMENT

The results obtained from the analysis of the categories under study are presented below:

1.- Environmental Values in the company

Environmental values refer to the set of principles that promote in people the conservation, protection and sustainability of the environment through the recognition and awareness of the interdependence that exists between human beings and the natural environment, and the understanding that the well-being and survival of people are closely related to the environmental balance. These values include environmental responsibility, respect for nature, conservation and protection of the environment, environmental collaboration and cooperation, environmental education and awareness, environmental justice, sustainability and intergenerational solidarity.

The development of these values in human beings occurs from an early age and is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of factors, among which we can mention education at home, formal education, environmental education, culture and traditions, personal experience, the media and exposure to environmental information, the relationship and emotional connection with nature, participation in actions in favor of nature, and modeling by important figures, among others. All these factors interact in a complex way to shape people's attitudes and behaviors towards the environment.

Environmental attitudes refer to the set of thoughts, feelings, affections, and behavioral intentions that a person possesses in relation to the environment and that allow him/her to respond favorably to environmental activities and issues or to actions and behavioral commitments that favor conservation, which means that attitudes influence the way people interact with the environment and the decisions they make in relation to its conservation and

sustainability. These pro-environmental attitudes predispose people to develop pro-environmental behaviors that lead them to take actions that benefit the environment.

Pro-environmental behavior is that conscious conduct of the person who seeks to minimize in his or her actions the negative impact on the environment (Flores-Rueda et al., 2022). These actions can include a wide variety of daily behaviors that have a positive effect on the environment, such as: recycling, energy saving, use of sustainable transportation, reduction of water consumption, responsible purchase of products, nature conservation, education and awareness, thus contributing to the protection of the environment and promoting a sustainable lifestyle. It is relevant to mention that factors such as family, school, peers, environmental knowledge, social norms, values, context or attitudes can be related to pro-environmental behaviors, factors that have been studied through the model of the theory of planned behavior (Plaza et al., 2011; Sánchez, 2014; Torres-Hernández et al., 2015; Páramo, 2017).

In companies, environmental values can be promoted and developed as part of their commitment to society, and the same are understood as the set of principles that guide business behavior and decisions regarding the protection and preservation of the environment. Among the environmental values that companies can adopt are: respect for the environment, green innovation or eco-innovations, sustainability, environmental education and awareness, energy efficiency, proper waste management, transparency and disclosure of environmental information, and commitment to the community for the development of environmental conservation and environmental protection projects. These values reflect the company's commitment to environmental sustainability and responsibility towards the environment in which it operates. In this sense, through corporate social responsibility initiatives and programs, companies can translate their environmental values into concrete actions that contribute to the well-being of society and the environment.

In the case of eco-efficiency, as pointed out by Esquivel & Valencia (2022), it is a business tool that generates changes in environmental behavior and sustainable development, generating competitive corporate advantages and business value in society. By implementing these practices, companies can improve their production processes and organizational performance and can obtain recognition as an eco-friendly company for its contribution to the environment and to the society that is currently adopting more responsible attitudes and actions with its environment (Esquivel & Valencia, 2022). In this context, Bossa-Benavidez et al. (2023), express that there should be management tools in companies that facilitate the internal control of environmental pollution and determine the

role of the company in terms of social and environmental responsibility and economic development.

Companies that implement their activities based on the environmental values outlined above demonstrate their corporate social responsibility and their contribution to environmental protection; compliance with environmental laws, avoiding fines and legal sanctions that could affect their reputation and the company's finances; more efficient management of resources by reducing the consumption of water, energy and materials and achieving a reduction in waste generation, which generates significant savings in operating costs; the company achieves an improved reputation and brand by generating a positive perception on the part of customers, which can be considered a competitive advantage; and finally, it can be mentioned that innovation is stimulated in the company by developing more sustainable products and services to open the way to emerging and environmentally demanding markets, in addition to the development of eco-friendly processes that contribute to the sustainability and protection of the environment.

In this regard, Orozco (2021) states that respect for living beings and the integrity of ecosystems give shape to a culture of business values that give rise to codes of ethics or codes of conduct that are indispensable for operating in today's business world. Orozco (2021) also mentions that if the values and ethics of the business are not clear or are not considered as the guiding axis of operations, social responsibility or sustainability programs may work temporarily, and subsequently lose momentum or be dismantled, since they are not based on the values of the company, nor are they aligned with the business strategy. This means that environmental education, should become a dimension of the formative process in general within corporate social responsibility, which should provide the organizational subject with eco-environmental competencies, with the aim of adopting an ethical environmental performance to achieve sustainable development (Reves-Solorzano, 2018).

The aforementioned highlights the need to promote environmental values in companies in order to foster a responsible and sustainable organizational culture. Some strategies that can be implemented in companies to promote environmental values include: integrating environmental responsibility into the company's mission and vision statement; defining environmental objectives; allocating resources to environmental actions; developing environmental training and awareness programs for all employees, which can include talks, workshops, seminars and educational materials that address issues such as resource conservation, waste management, energy efficiency and climate change; defining, developing and communicating environmental policies and procedures within the company that can address areas such as resource

consumption, waste management, energy efficiency and responsible purchasing.

Other actions may include: encouraging employee participation in environmental initiatives, such as creating environmental committees, conducting environmental idea contests and implementing environmental suggestions for continuous improvement; awarding recognition and rewards to employees who demonstrate exceptional commitment to environmental values and sustainability, this may include awards, incentives, public recognition, or the inclusion of environmental criteria in recognition and performance evaluation programs; the integration of the environmental component in decision making, including the evaluation of the environmental impact of new initiatives, projects and investments and the consideration of environmental criteria in the selection of suppliers and business partners; the promotion of sustainable lifestyles to encourage employees to implement environmental practices such as the use of public transportation, reduction of resource consumption in the workplace, at home and participation in voluntary activities related to the environment; and finally, providing transparent reporting on the company's environmental performance and sustainability initiatives, including the publication of sustainability reports, disclosure of environmental targets and regular monitoring of key environmental performance indicators.

As mentioned above, environmental values are important principles that companies should incorporate into their daily activities as a way of demonstrating their commitment to the environment and as a strategy to promote actions that contribute to its protection and care. These environmental values can be manifested through policies, programs and concrete actions and the creation of an organizational culture that reflects and promotes the company's commitment to environmental responsibility, innovation, commitment to long-term sustainability and the search for a balance between economic success and environmental protection.

2.- Environmental Culture in the company

The promotion of environmental values contributes to the development of an environmental culture in man that leads him to increase his awareness and sensitivity towards environmental problems and a series of actions for the benefit of the environment. In this sense, Miranda (2013), states that there is a positive relationship between the level of environmental culture of a person and the probability of performing environmentally responsible actions. (2021), environmental culture has two main components, consisting of awareness (ideas, perspectives, attitudes, and strategies) and environmental behavior (individual and collective). Environmental culture can be defined as the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors related to the environment that prevail in a society, community, or

specific group and that influence how people interact with their natural environment and how they perceive and respond to environmental challenges. Environmental culture plays a fundamental role in promoting a more sustainable and resilient society by fostering values, attitudes and behaviors that favor the protection and preservation of the environment.

At the same time, environmental culture implies environmental awareness of environmental problems and their impacts on the quality of life and human well-being, promotes respect and appreciation of nature and all its elements, including ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity, fosters a sense of individual and collective responsibility towards the environment, promotes active participation in activities and actions that contribute to the protection and preservation of the environment, provides knowledge, It fosters innovation and the development of sustainable technologies that minimize environmental impact and promote efficiency in the use of natural resources, and promotes collaboration among individuals, communities, organizations and governments to effectively address environmental challenges through the formation of alliances, networks and partnerships to work together to solve environmental problems.

The above paragraphs reveal that environmental values and culture are closely related, have a bidirectional relationship, and complement each other in the promotion of sustainability and care for the environment. On the one hand, environmental values influence the formation of a society's environmental culture that makes it adopt environmental behaviors and practices in its daily life, and on the other hand, environmental culture strengthens and consolidates environmental values in a society by promoting environmental awareness and action, thus internalizing, and reinforcing environmental values and generating a strong sense of belonging and community commitment to environmental protection.

Likewise, environmental values and culture are interdependent elements that are fundamental for generating a healthy and sustainable relationship between human beings and their environment. This relationship can be explained as follows: by fostering greater awareness, education and participation in environmental issues, a positive environmental culture can be cultivated that supports the adoption of more responsible values and behaviors towards the natural environment.

In this context, it is important for companies to increase their environmental culture by fostering greater awareness, commitment, and action in relation to environmental protection and preservation. To this end, it is necessary to implement environmental education and awareness-raising among employees, encourage leadership and a clear commitment on the part of management to the company's

environmental values and objectives, and incorporate environmental responsibility as part of the organizational culture, establish environmental goals and objectives related to the company's environmental performance, encourage the active participation of employees in initiatives and activities related to environmental culture, recognize and reward employees who demonstrate exceptional commitment to environmental culture and sustainability, incorporate environmental considerations into all company processes and operations, and encourage open and transparent communication about the company's environmental efforts and achievements.

Thus, companies have the imperative task of developing a strong environmental culture that inspires all members of the organization to actively contribute to the protection and conservation of the environment, helps promote sustainability, contributes to improved efficiency, strengthens reputation, and increases competitiveness in an increasingly environmentally conscious and demanding world. To this effect, Severino-González et al. (2020), state that the environment is part of human nature itself, which has repercussions on the doctrine of corporate social responsibility, since there can be no company that does not care for the environment, which translates into the structuring element of corporate social responsibility. This is why it is so important to develop an environmentally friendly culture (Morales et al., 2021).

3.- Corporate Sustainability

Corporate sustainability is generated by the promotion of environmental values and the development of environmental culture in the company. It is defined as the ability of a company to maintain its operations and generate long-term value without compromising natural, social and economic resources for future generations. It is an approach adopted by organizations to balance their long-term economic, social and environmental objectives (Valencia & Esquivel, 2022), in order to maximize value for the company and its stakeholders and for society in general, which implies ensuring growth and sustainable development. Corporate sustainability is based on the responsible management of natural resources, social responsibility, the adoption of ethical business practices, innovation and green technology, the promotion of people's well-being and the protection of the environment. Social responsibility is one of the means and sustainability is the end that society wants to achieve (Valencia & Esquivel, 2022).

Sustainability is a key component of corporate social responsibility by considering in its implementation environmental and social aspects in the operations of companies, so that companies can promote economic, social and environmental sustainability both within the organization and in the community at large, becoming a responsible

and sustainable business approach that benefits both the company and society as a whole. Sustainability also allows companies to take advantage of resources to meet present needs without compromising future ones, which means reaching business sustainability through appropriate mechanisms that are conscious of the common good (Ponce & Cevallos, 2024).

To increase sustainability in companies, it is necessary to adopt a series of measures and practices that promote the responsible management of natural resources, the reduction of environmental impact and the contribution to social and economic welfare. Some measures are mentioned below: establish a clear vision and commitment to sustainability; identify and evaluate the environmental impacts of the company's operations; reduce the consumption of natural resources such as water, energy and materials through process optimization, energy efficiency and the adoption of cleaner and more efficient technologies; reduce, reuse and recycle materials and properly dispose of hazardous waste; select suppliers that share sustainability values and prioritize the procurement of sustainable and certified products and services; reduce the use of vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality; develop innovative technologies that improve eco-efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of operations; contribute to the sustainable development of local communities; measure and monitor key environmental, social and economic performance indicators; and promote an organizational culture that values sustainability and commitment to the well-being of people and the planet. From the above, it can be noted that sustainability practices are positively valued by investors and other stakeholders, generating a positive effect on corporate reputation and a lower cost of capital (Martínez, 2014).

Everything mentioned so far shows that environmental values, environmental culture and corporate sustainability are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. In the case of environmental values and organizational culture. the relationship is as follows: values influence the way in which organizational culture develops within the organization, i.e. a strong environmental culture is characterized by the adoption of values and promotion of pro-environmental values at all levels of the company. In turn, the relationship between environmental culture and corporate sustainability can be analyzed as follows: a strong organizational culture is a key component of corporate sustainability, i.e. a company with a strong environmental culture is more likely to adopt practices and policies that promote sustainability in all operations, the promotion of pro-environmental behaviors among employees, the integration of environmental criteria in decision making and the implementation of continuous improvement initiatives in sustainability and increase the motivation and commitment of employees to the company's sustainability objectives.

Finally, the relationship of environmental values and corporate sustainability can be analyzed as follows: a company's environmental values are fundamental to its commitment to corporate sustainability, meaning that when a company adopts pro-environmental values, it is laying the groundwork for integrating environmental considerations into all of its activities.

To conclude, it can be mentioned that environmental values, environmental culture and corporate sustainability are aspects that are closely related and mutually reinforcing, since a company that has as a value the care and protection of the environment can develop and promote a pro-environmental culture, being more likely to achieve its sustainability objectives and generate a positive impact on society and the environment. In this sense, Carro et al. (2017), evidenced the existence of a relationship between organizational culture and the dimensions of sustainable development, demonstrating that companies perform actions focused on corporate sustainability as part of their values and beliefs. In the same way, they demonstrated in their research that the factors of organizational culture do have a significant influence on the sustainable development of companies.

CONCLUSIONS

Environmental values play a decisive role in the promotion of corporate sustainability and in the creation of an organizational culture that fosters responsible and environmentally friendly business practices. That is why environmental values are fundamental to guide the company's actions towards the adoption of sustainable practices and the minimization of the negative environmental impact generated by its activities. The integration of environmental values into business decision-making is an ethical and socially responsible action that can generate tangible benefits in terms of reputation, operational efficiency and long-term competitiveness. It is therefore imperative that companies recognize the importance of environmental values and actively incorporate them into their organizational culture in order to move towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

On the other hand, environmental culture is a vital component of successful business sustainability and environmental stewardship. A strong environmental culture within an organization involves the adoption and promotion of pro-environmental values at all levels, which encourages behaviors and decisions that benefit both the company and the environment in which it operates. By cultivating a positive environmental culture, companies encourage their employees to adopt sustainable practices, use resources efficiently, reduce their environmental footprint, and contribute to the well-being of the community and the planet at large. In addition, a strong environmental culture can enhance a company's reputation, increase employee

and customer loyalty, and generate innovation and efficiency in business operations that help achieve corporate sustainability goals and generate a long-term positive impact on the environment and society.

Corporate sustainability is fundamental to the long-term success of organizations and to the preservation and protection of the environment and the well-being of society. This implies adopting responsible business practices that balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions and generate value for companies as well as for their stakeholders and society in general. In order to achieve this business sustainability, it is important to promote values and develop an environmental culture in companies.

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