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Unlocking the synergies between Corporate Sustainability and Employee Engagement

A case study on how to incorporate sustainability into engagement strategies

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Abstract

Two of the 21st centuries emerging business trends are the concepts of “employee engagement” and corporate sustainability. Previous research has discovered how corporate sustainability positively influences employee’s emotions and behaviours, but few have established how firms should operate to attain these benefits. Therefore, the study’s purpose is to understand how corporate sustainability could be incorporated into engagement strategies.

However, the concept of employee engagement is highly disputed within academia. The authors address this deficiency by developing a general engagement model by establishing the two ascendants of engagement (appraisal and involvement) followed by two moderating factors prominent in a multinational company (MNC) (organisational structure and institutional differences). By synthesising the fundamental model with corporate sustainability, created six hypotheses.

Through a quantitative case study, an online survey was sent to Scandinavian and Central West African employees within the same MNC. By applying a stepwise OLS regression, the analysis shows (1) employee’s appraisal of the firm’s corporate sustainability and involvement in sustainability initiatives predicts engagement; (2) the relationship is not affected by the individuals institutional belonging; (3) the position held within the MNC will affect the employee’s appraisals in relation to their engagement.

The study contributes to theory by establishing how sustainability can be utilised as a catalyst to engagement, unbounded of institutional settings. It indicates how an MNC can apply a centralised engagement strategy when incorporating sustainability. For managers, findings emphasise the need for creating a two-way communication channel to aid employees’ appraisal and involvement.

Keywords: Employee engagement, corporate sustainability, HRM, strategy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Following chapter introduces the concept of employee engagement and corporate sustainability and how they are related. It is identified how both academia and practices are lacking understanding of this relationship, which leads to the studies purpose, objectives and research question.

1.1 Background

Firms have had a long-spanning interest in utilising uplifting human resource management (HRM) to increase organisational performance, and under the last 20 years, the concept of “employee engagement” has spread like wildfire within organisations. A glance at reality exhibits how the consultant firm Effectory (2020) offer organisations to test their employee’s engagement and compare it towards their database of 18.000 respondents. Another consultant firm called Gallup (2020) provides the same service and has been used by Fortune 500 companies and small businesses alike. Comparable to financial performance, employee engagement is today measured, benchmarked and internally compared as a key-performance among corporate leaders.

Having engaged employees are argued to have a two-folded outcome for organisations; improved task- and conceptual performance among its personnel, which in the extent aids the organisation’s overall performance (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter 2001; Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). Creating engagement is founded on the idea of giving employees a higher purpose (Kahn 1990), and therefore, the central discussion is what fosters engagement among the broad mass of employees. The challenge is notably heightened in a multinational company (MNC), deemed to engage a substantial number of employees with different cultures and interests, and it is impossible to cater to all individuals’ preferences. Ideally, firms would like to have employees engaged in their core business, united around the firm’s purpose and shared mission (Bedwell 2018). The question is, therefore, what drivers could be emphasised and applicable in an engagement strategy when working in different countries, departments and various operations.

Another strongly emerging trend under the 21st century is corporate sustainability. Today, firms are facing both social pressures from stakeholder (see, e.g. Rudyanto and Siregar 2018; Wolf 2014), but also principles such as the United Nations execution of the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development (UN 2015). It is undeniable that the world is facing socio-ecological issues on both local and global scales, and businesses have their part to play. Conversely to this new obligation, it has created opportunities for firms to find solutions, create new business models and reach new customer segments by building new value propositions (Geissdoerfer, Vladimirova and Evans 2018; Morioka, Bolis and Carvalho 2018; Rosati and Faria 2019). It has led to considerable investigations of how to progressively and proactively deal with sustainability, to contribute to a better world and reap the benefits of sustainable operations. However, most companies predominantly address sustainability through a siloed approach (Dahlmann and Bullock 2020) and following Stafford-Smith et al. (2017) and Williams et al. (2017), achieving a sustainable business requires an interactive procedure for the firm to wholeheartedly transform. But how to integrate sustainability throughout the organisation has remained a challenge (Merriman et al. 2016).

Interestingly, extensive research has shown how corporate sustainability has a positive influence on employee's emotion and behaviours. As well as businesses increased attention towards sustainability issues, their employees have gained more information about exploited supply chains, irresponsible use of resources and social injustices. Today, employees are critically overweighing their employers' actions, and it has been concluded that employees prefer to work in companies caring for more than profit (Glavas 2012). If the employee perceives their firm to act responsibly, it is shown to increase their meaningfulness at work (Aguinis and Glavas 2019), and the individual deepens their identification with their firm resulting in increased loyalty and overall work performance (Carmeli, Gilat and Waldman 2007; Jones 2010; Onkila 2015). It is further demonstrated how employees invited to participate in their firm's sustainability operations develops their creativity (Glavas and Piderit 2009) which in the extent creates organisational capabilities to find sustainability-oriented solutions (Bezerra, Gohr and Morioka 2019). As socio-ecological issues are continually emerging, it is essential to develop such dynamic skills to overcome present and future challenges also from a business perspective (Amui et al. 2017; Ramachandran 2011). Seemingly, as the majority of firms are already working on their transformation to become sustainable, and it is an essential activity for employees, it demonstrates a great possibility. Sustainability could be the corporate action uniting the organisation around the same mission.

1.2 Problem discussion

As corporate sustainability is something the broader mass of employees could find a higher purpose in, it frames a compelling case from an engagement perspective. Previous research has shown positive outcomes, but how can an organisation foster Bezerra, Gohr and Morioka's (2019) creative involvement? What is deemed of the firm to facilitate the deepened connection to the organisation described by Onkila (2015)? What should an MNC do to increase employee's meaningfulness stated by Aguinis and Glavas (2017)? The guidance on how to align the general employees' interest in these questions from an organisational perspective is relatively absent. Larger organisations are further confronted with the challenge of coordinating this process all over their organisation. Expanding the understanding of how sustainability affects employees, on all levels of the organisation, could create a fundamental knowledge of how an organisation successfully could incorporate sustainability into their engagement strategies.

There is yet a problem within the research field of sustainability and employee engagement: diversity. Following Barakat et al. (2016), the majority of today's case studies examines employee engagement in developed markets, such as Europe or the United States. Today's theoretical evidence is one-sided and inconclusive, especially from the perspective of an MNC operating in multiple regions. Luo, Wang and Zhang (2017) addressed this issue by showing how responses to sustainable initiatives are affected by the individual's socio-cultural context, demonstrating detectable differences geographically. It is previously well-established within the HRM field how institutional differences require employers to acclimate to the specific country's legislation, religions and culture (Harzing and Ruysseveldt 2004). Therefore, it makes perfect sense that our surrounding affects what we consider engaging since our institutions shape how we see the world. Consequently, how employees respond to sustainability initiatives would logically also be dissimilar. Therefore, touching upon the ever-ongoing discussion of balancing global efficiency and local adaptiveness, we target an issue especially prominent in an MNC by approaching the globally spanning perspective of employee engagement that is yet to be discovered. As concluded by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1988, p. 73), "*standardisation, rationalisation, and centralisation*" are often simplified quick-fix formulas, as the MNC must understand each part of the organisation's heritage. It deems flexible management in both central and local divisions of the firm, because how could a firm apply a strategically well-suited engagement strategy if they do not know if their regions would respond alike or differ.

Based on the above, the study's purpose is to understand how corporate sustainability can be incorporated into an MNC's engagement strategy. Therefore, the first objective is first to explore how employees understand, feel and partakes their firm's sustainability operations, and how this predicts their engagement. The second objective is to detect if the relationship is affected by the organisation's hierarchy or the individual's institutional belonging.

The investigated question is, therefore:

How does corporate sustainability affect employee engagement, and how is this relationship affected by organisational structures and institutional differences?

1.3 Delimitations

The definition of sustainability is often referring to the triple bottom line established by Elkington (1998), including social, environmental and economic aspects. Due to time limitations and the focal point of the thesis, the financial perspective has been excluded.

Although firms who diligently work with their corporate sustainability hold evidence of becoming more attractive for new employees (see e.g. Greening and Turban 2000; Hinson, Agbleze and Kuada 2018; Lis 2018; Story, Castanheira and Hartig 2016; Rupp et al. 2013), the presented thesis will be conducted through a case study within one MNC, solely focusing on the mechanisms of creating engagement among already employed staff.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

Following chapter outlines the turbulent and disputed evolution of employee engagement as an academic field. By critically assessing the development, the authors declare their process of how to approach the study by joining the rooted engagement literature with Organisational Citizen Behaviour theory.

2.1 Approaching the double-edged sword of engagement

The everyday connotation of engagement refers to “*involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy*” (Schaufeli 2013, p. 1), demonstrating the broad range of the concept. The founding father of the contemporary engagement literature is William Kahn, whose work was published in the *Academy of Management Journal* at the beginning of the 90s. Although Kahn (1990; 1992) is well cited

and referred to, his doctrine has over the years taken two different paths. At its original conceptualisation, the focus of employee engagement was the individual's interests brought to work, to harness the energy in their work role (Kahn 1990). But over its thirty-year course, it has led away from the individual's point of view, turning toward having the organisation as its central theme. Now, the employee engagement is rather to go "above and beyond" for the organisational success by the employee "*bring their multiple skills and selves to the organisation*" (Welbourne 2011, p. 6). This shift could be argued quite natural: the world is continuously changing. Since Kahn's launch, firms have been under tremendous macroeconomic pressures: financial crisis, political disruption and environmental catastrophes. To cope with this, as stated by Welbourne:

" Therefore, improving productivity of the same or less people was a critical goal for many leaders. They were less interested in helping employees become more fulfilled at work and more focused on survival. The nuance is important because employers were not asking employees to bring more of themselves and their interests to work; they were motivating employees to put more of themselves into the company."

(Welbourne 2011, p. 13)

The quote demonstrates two essential points. First, the firm needs for increased effort from all its employees while employing less staff. Second, it reflects the modern organisation's goal of having its employees investing themselves not only physically, but also psychologically (Schaufeli 2013). Thus, it can be identified as the "psychologisation" of the workplace, increasingly targeting the individual's mental capabilities.

Today, the term employee engagement is frequently used among companies and press, to examine the relationship between employee characteristics and company performance. As most topics within the HRM oriented field, its development has an interconnected cycle of expansion between scholars and businesses (Bratton and Gold 2007). However, in the beginning, it was a stealthy interest among academia to research employee engagement, resulting in the literature being dominated by consultant firms. It resulted in the majority of the engagement research has been published in the so-called "grey literature", papers that are not peer-reviewed (Attridge 2009). Welbourne (2011) stated it to have become an "engagement industry" due to the vast amount of large consultant firms appropriating the lucrative market, and Macey and Schneider (2008) saucily called it a "folk theory".

The course of action led to contradictions among academia and practice. First, it resulted in the theoretical evidence of this concept lagging, leaving a gap of knowledge in need of further anchoring in academic research (Harter, Schmith and Hayes 2002; Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). But also, it resulted in academia leaning on data collected by these firms, firms who sometimes even lack a definition of what “engagement” they assessed. Following Schaufeli (2013), consultant agencies have generally combined established theories such as satisfaction, motivation, commitment and job-burnout and conceptualised it themselves, without clear boundaries. In this regard, their imagined engagement could be considered something re-branded to gain more attention, or as put by Jeung (2011), it is nothing more than old wine in new bottles. From a research perspective, without grounded theory with clear distinctions of what is being tested, it weakens the link of proving how higher engagement would result in improved company performance. Further, with no clear definition of what “employee engagement” is, it is hard to aggregate the results (Welbourne 2011). The problem surrounding the concept is, consequently, the definition of what engagement refers to, and how it is used. Following Purcell (2014), we can divide engagement into two aspects: work engagement and behavioural aspects leading to improved performance.

2.2 Corporations hunt for the superhuman and work engagement

Work engagement is the widely used and researched term of the engagement literature (Balain and Sparrow 2009) which has dominated the practitioner journals since it was considered being rooted in the practical field (Saks 2006). As defined by Saks (2006), work engagement is referring to a person’s psychological state of mind when at work. It taps into how the employee allows themselves to be absorbed in the job, driven by the individual’s attention towards their tasks. High work engagement is described as “*positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption*” (Schaufeli et al. 2002, p. 74). This engagement focuses on the feeling of being engaged or the characteristics of being engaged (Macey and Schneider 2008).

Bakker (2009) did a psychological disposition assessing the “engaged” employee, which showed a positive spirit, high social skills, dedication, reliability, habitually carefulness, self-efficacy as good self-esteem. He sums the engaged employee to “*perform better than non-engaged workers. Engaged workers (a) often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; (b) experience better health; (c) create their own job and personal resources; and (d) transfer their engagement to others*” (Bakker 2009, p. 19).

Further, Saks (2006, p. 602) claims that this employee would be “...*totally dedicated to their work since ‘participation in outside activities [is] a negative predictor (of work engagement)’*”. By assessing these claims of the “engaged” personnel, it is relatively easy to conclude that those people are a rare breed. The amount of attention directed to measure engagement in this light can therefore be questioned, as the results easily classify individuals as disengaged (Purcell 2014). Thus, testing work engagement could be something only serving poor results to the organisation, for not being able to obtain an almost impossible standard. Further, work engagement is reported to fluctuate in days or weeks, indicating that studies within the area would have both reliability and stability issues (Fletcher and Robinson 2014). However, Purcell (2014) concludes this sort of engagement to be beneficial to investigate when assessing the characteristics and consequence of a positive work moral. In the end, it comes down to how employees feel for their job and workplace; the problematic aspect with work engagement is how its benchmarked.

2.3 Synthesising Employee Engagement with OCB-theory

As work engagement strives for employees “going above and beyond” (Welbourne 2011, p. 6), these assessments, by some means, stop their evaluations after stating the employees’ psychological disposition. Schaufeli (2013) hit the nail on the head by stating that an employee might feel psychologically engaged, still, without an actual behaviour, this individual will not contribute to the organisation’s success since the engagement is not properly focused. But other scholars have translated a positive state of mind, into behaviours. In coherence with engagement resulting in an improved task-and conceptual performance, they refer to it as improved in-role and extra-role behaviours (see Organ 1988; Schnake 1991; Smith, Organ and Near 1983).

Therefore, when evaluating what work engagement aims to achieve, it shows a striking similarity to Organisational Citizen Behaviour (OCB). OCB is a well-grounded theory which correlates to social exchange theory, a concept widely spread within psychology, sociology and management literature as a way to understand human behaviour. Social exchange theory is founded in the idea that the employee will respond positively by reciprocity, creating an organisational citizenship behaviour resulting in higher employee support towards their organisation (Rousseau 1995). Although the reasoning behind the theory can be traced back to Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” (Nord 1973), it has developed over the years. As it first focused on social power and independence, Organ (1988) emphasises relationships and its

central role in achieving organisational success. Following Kessler (2013), OCB focuses on relationships in different formations, attributions and context. It is instituted on the idea that an employee would go the extra mile if they believe their employer would return the favour, but also the opposite: a harmful action would be repaid with harm.

OCB is to its core expressed by discretionary behaviours benefitting the organisation (Heery and Noon 2017). The tricky part of relying on discretionary actions is the absence of such actions is not possible to cover in any HRM policies. But also, it is not automatically subject for rewards either (Organ 1988). Thus, as organisations are aspiring for improved in-role and extra-role behaviours, such as suggestions on how to improve operations and a helping one another with job-related tasks, it is in the shape of altruism (Gyekye and Haybatollahi 2015). It indicates that the challenges of facilitating these behaviours lie in the organisation having to actively work with fostering their culture and rewarding employee's non-obligatory contributions. Therefore, as noted by OCB theorists, dynamic behaviours are correlated with the psychological appraisal, where a supportive assessment is critical for fostering a concrete behaviour (Eisenberger et al. 2001; Gyekye and Salminen 2007). Following Gupta, Agarwal and Khatri (2016) and Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) there is a connection between work engagement and OCB, which is dependent on the employee's perception. Thus, if the employee psychologically perceives their firm positively, it will lead to beneficial reciprocal behaviours.

2.4 Allaying the issues of approaching engagement studies

To summarise, the concept of engagement is disputed and equivocal, and there is no established model of how it can be achieved (Schaufeli 2013). Although work engagements massive support by international empirical evidence, it is limited to focus on psychological engagement, a term narrowly defined which only assess employees' experiences through a snapshot. But on the one hand, if only assessing engagement through behaviours, the conceptualisation becomes ambiguous and fussy. Therefore, following Schaufeli (2013), the reasonable thing when approaching employee engagement is a conjunction between the psychological state of mind and the behavioural expression among employees. Our point of departure is therefore based on the idea of marrying the two concepts since they can enable each other, although being separate mechanisms.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In the absence of a previously established engagement model, the following chapter is dedicated to (1) define employee engagement; (2) stating the psychological and practical measures of how engagement could be achieved; (3) addressing the challenges for an MNC in this process. It establishes the studies theoretical framework. By the end of the chapter, the theoretical evidence is summarised, providing an overview of the theoretical constructs.

3.1 Defining Employee Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

An instituting foundation in achieving engagement is to have the employee satisfied with their working conditions (Spector 1997). The term “job satisfaction” can be described as a term covering the individual’s overall evaluation of their situation as either positive or negative (Weiss 2002). It can be an intrinsic job satisfaction where the employee assesses job-related tasks, or an extrinsic job satisfaction, their opinion of co-workers, pay grade and supervisors (Buitendach and De Witte 2005). Following Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002), there is a direct connection between a fundamental satisfaction and employee engagement, since an employee would first need to be satisfied with their situation, to build a higher engagement.

Employee engagement is fundamentally a psychological state of mind reflecting the connection between the individual and the organisation (Christian, Garza and Slaughter 2011; Saks 2006). The psychological engagement is formed in the interplay between the individual’s characteristic and the organisational environment, which later translates into the employee’s actual behaviours (Christian, Garza and Slaughter 2011; Kahn 1992). However, the employee’s state of mind will be affected by a constant circle of events (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010) and therefore, engagement is highly personal and fluctuating over time (Kahn 1990; Sonnentag 2003).

Kahn (1990) propose engagement to hold three dimensions: physical-, cognitive- and emotional-energy invested into a particular task. An employee will either invest, or withdraw, themselves in a work role energetically, expressively or behaviourally (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). Kahn (1990) describes the physically invested employee to be able to increase their work effort over extended periods. It enables the individual to work hard, with emphasised willingness to achieve goals and to perform well in the organisation (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). When investing cognitive energy, the employee will be more vigilant,

attentive and focused on their assigned task (Kahn 1990), reducing the risk of errors and operational failures (Weick and Roberts 1993). Further, if the employee feels sympathetically connected to the organisation and co-workers, they will be investing their emotional energy. This individual will feel proud, positive and excited about the job while simultaneously meeting the emotional demands for their work role (Kahn 1990). The engaged employee is, therefore, physiological present, involved and integrated into their work role and organisation (Kahn 1992). Thus, engagement needs to be addressed from a holistic standpoint, reflecting the interplay between all three dimensions of mind, body and soul. Kahn (1990) refers to this as the person's self, and if the organisation can absorb the individual's energies, it would benefit the organisation as well as the employee. Concluding, the summated definition of employee engagement will follow Kahn's as:

“[Engagement is] The harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.”

(Kahn 1990, p. 649)

Concluding, having engaged personnel is seemingly desirable. Thus, the central question is how companies can foster such mindset and energies. Following the literature, there are two main ascendants, which could serve as facilitators: How the employees psychologically feel for their firm's operations, and if they expressively are a part of the organisation.

3.1.1 Engagements first ascendant: A genuine appraisal of the firm's operations

To create engagement, the employee needs to support their firm's operations, and this psychological process achieved in three critical steps: creating awareness, forming their perception, which leads to appraising the firm's initiatives. The final assessment is what establishes if the employee is supportive of their firm's actions, or not.

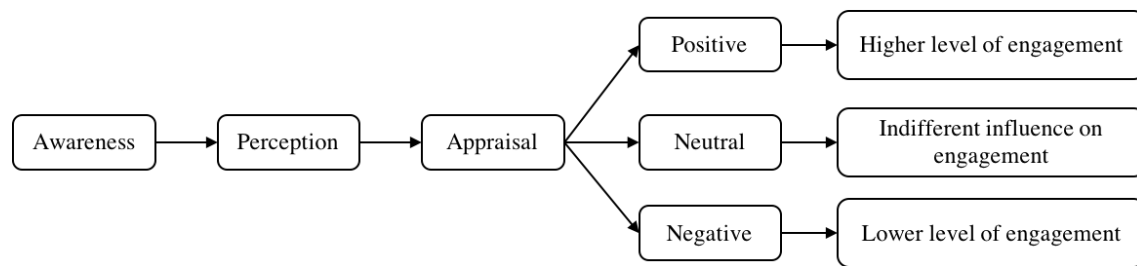
From a cognitive perspective, “awareness” is defined as “*knowledge that something exists or understanding of a situation or subject at present based on information or experience*” (Cambridge dictionary 2020). As described by Petroc et al. (2006), it is a person's reaction to stimuli, if that stimulus meets the threshold of attention. If being objectively un-informed about their firm's initiatives, the employee cannot assimilate, respond or react (Glavas and

Godwin 2013). Further, awareness is a crucial precursor perception. “Perception” is the psychological term of how a person will interpret and organise the information, which is a bottom-up process of assessing the sensory inputs combined with a top-down assessment of its meaning (Jones 2019). The concept of an individual’s perception can be traced back to Plato’s allegory “*the reality is but a mere shadow reflected on the wall of a cave*” (Plato and Jowett 1941, cited from Glavas and Godwin 2013, p. 2). The perception depicts how an individual understands a situation, and therefore, it can explain how individuals respond since it represents their reality (Snyder and Swann 1978).

When a person has developed their perception, it can be incorporated into a higher-order cognition described as “sense-making” or appraisal (Jones 2019). When employees appraise their company, the person attributes the firm’s motives and assess them to be genuine or disingenuous (Jones 2019). “Why” the company does things, becomes a central question. Therefore, authenticity is a vital concept of the appraisal, since it is fundamental to “*the notion of being true to oneself*” (Liedtka 2008, p. 238). As humans strive for genuineness, this is a critical assessment (Grayson and Martinec 2004). The appraisal is how the individual understands the purpose of the company’s action, to ascertain how genuine, truthful and reliable the firm’s intentions are. The employee will try to assess the organisation’s true self.

When foster engagement, the aim is to create value congruence between the individual and the organisation (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). Since a person’s values are hierarchical, they serve as boundaries to which the firm will be compared (Schwartz 2006). If a congruence is accomplished, the individual will support the organisation’s actions, as well as experiencing organisation support for their personal values in line with their preferable self-image (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). It enables the person to fully bring their whole self to work, resulting in higher engagement (May, Gilson and Harter 2004). In the same manner, employees who find the organisation forcing them to act contradictory to their values would appraise the initiative as doubtful, resulting in lower levels of energies, and lower levels of engagement (Kahn 1990). Nevertheless, if the firm’s initiatives are appraised as insignificant to the employee, their engagement would not be affected.

Figure 1. Chain of reaction creating the employee's appraisal and engagement



Source: Created by authors, inspired by Glavas and Godwin (2013), Jones (2019) and Kahn (1990)

3.1.2 Engagements second ascendant: Involvement in the firm's operations

Employee involvement defines activities imposed to enhance employee participation, either practically or cognitively (Heery and Noon 2017). The level of involvement primarily lies in the characteristics of the job role and the assigned task. Positions holding higher autonomy, complexity in a work task, problem-solving and variety tend to be characteristics enhancing the employees feeling of involvement, as it requires increased effort from the employee compared to standardised and monotonous jobs (Humphrey, Nahrgang and Morgeson 2007). However, the feeling of participation is more important than the employee's actual position or title (Gollan 2005). Therefore, both Kahn (1990) and Macey and Schneider (2008) argues a motivating working environment to have a direct effect on how much energy the employee will be willing to invest. It demonstrates how to involve employees, are an organisational capability of acknowledging staff at all levels of the firm. When appropriately including the individual, it is an increased chance of generating higher engagement.

A fundamental way to create involvement is to give the employee the means to be heard, to provide them with a voice in the company (Walton 1985). Employee voice is created through a structural or practical mechanism, inviting the employee into the decision-making process by being able to express opinions or ideas (Lavelle et al. 2010). By being invited, the organisation encourages the individual's development and learning (Argyris 1964; McGregor 1960). This heightens the person's feeling of being appreciated as it communicates how the employee is seen as an asset for the organisation (Gollan 2005; Heery and Noon 2017; Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). Furthermore, training schemes can be a way to increase positive in-role and extra-role behaviours, by showing how management are directing their effort

towards the employee's personal development (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002; Tansky and Cohen 2001). Letting employees be a part of growth opportunities or awarding them for good behaviours sends a strong signal of the importance of the employees' contribution (Allen, Shore and Griffeth 2003). It builds organisational support, and following Eisenberger et al. (1986), the perceived organisational support makes the employee feel the urge to repay the organisations care and appreciation, resulting in the reciprocal process and favourable in-role and extra-role behaviours.

Academia discusses "high involvement management" to establish a greater relationship between management and employees (Lawler 1992; Wood and Albanese 1995). A high involvement strategy promotes mutual influence, mutual respect and joint responsibility when creating viable strategies (Wood 1996). From an organisational perspective, such high involvement initiatives often result in greater organisational effectiveness and productivity as the goal is well-aligned throughout the firm (Heery and Noon 2017). Thus, letting employees participate is both engaging for the individual and beneficial for the organisation.

Still, it is essential to denote how behaviours are hierarchical, meaning that they are prioritised after urgency and importance (Welbourne 2011). Employees have limited time at work and will allocate their effort towards what is, by the employer, communicated to be the most critical task. Adding something to an employee's scope will result in other tasks being down prioritised (Welbourne 2011). Therefore, what the employer decides to add to their employee's assignments should be a strategically well-suited decision. Because as well as leaving room for employees to develop new capabilities and to explore new business segments, it will take time from other tasks and employees are unable to participate in everything.

3.2 Moderating factors prominent in a Multinational company

To this point, we have argued employee appraisal and employee involvement as critical drivers of engagement and have thereby outlined two required organisational actions in conceiving engagement. However, operating within an MNC heightens the difficulties of raising awareness and cultivating involvement. First, a larger organisation often have a more hierarchical structure. Secondly, as the MNC operates on multiple markets and thereby, their organisation's members are subject to several institutional pressures. Therefore, the position

within the organisation and differencing institutional settings could affect the above-presented relationships.

3.2.1 The individual's position within the firm

Operating MNC often holds a challenge of efficient communication. Naturally, as the MNC work in multiple locations with several departments caring for different activities, it increases the complexity of sharing information (Haugh and Talwar 2010). Creating awareness, perception and appraisal is, therefore, a complicated HRM issue in sizeable organisations employing a substantial amount of staff. Following Wright and Nishii (2006) a firm's project schemes often follow the step of: (1) management deciding what they intend to do; (2) what they do actually do; (3) how employees perceived the operation; (4) how the employees react; which finally affects (5) organisational performance. It is common that the firm's intentions are far from the actual outcome, affecting the chain of reaction among their workforce (Boxall, Ang and Bartram 2011). As stated by Forsgren, Holm and Johansson (2005), it often results in the management having more information about the firm's plans and strategies. It can result in lower rank employees lack information, affecting their level of engagement.

Further, literature state that management usually does not involve employees in their initiatives until later stages, employees are often first involved when management has decided how to implement a project (Millward, Bryson and Forth 2000; Terry 1999). In this matter, Gollan (2005) suggest consulting lower-rank employees earlier, to increase the employee's positive emotions towards projects. Thus, the level of involvement comes down to management's attitudes: how welcome are employees in the initiatives, outside the implementation phase. Several studies (see Millward, Bryson and Forth 2000; Wood and Albanese 1995; Wood and De Menezes 1998) came to conclude how the degree of involvement derives from management's assessment of how dependable the employees are to make corporate decisions. Following the logic of Benn, Teo and Martin (2015), employees must first be trusted to take part of projects to develop their skills, and secondly, when they have anchored knowledge, they can make sensible decisions on their own. West and Patterson (1998) stated in the same manner that inclusion would increase the employee's ability to recognise problems and generate solutions. This refers to an integrated approach to involving employees in both stages of planning and implementation. But how to get here, will depend

on how welcoming managers are to include others and how to deal with the large mass with individuals with different competencies and interests.

3.2.2 The individual's institutional belonging

With the MNCs worldwide operations, the organisation is inevitably confronted with employees from different institutions, resulting in a heterogeneous group of employees. The institution serves as a filter through which the individual sees and understands the company's incentives (Pache and Santos 2013). Resultantly, the institution can affect both the employee's appraisal and level of involvement.

Conceptualising institution, it conveys the outer frame of a person's social setting, creating a system of order and serve as a vital prediction of how people interact (Hodgson 2006). A society resides in the interplay between formal and informal institutions which further shapes social, political and economic relations (Leftwich and Sen 2010; North 1990). Formal institutions refer to laws, regulations, legal agreements and contracts, which underpins the basal formalities of a society. Informal institutions imply culture, norms, procedures, conventions and traditions (Leftwich and Sen 2010; North 1990). An individual does not fully separate formal and informal institutional forces, there are overlaps, combinations, and sometimes even contradictions (Jütting et al. 2007; Leftwich and Sen 2010). Commonly, we refer to our institutional setting as the "rule of the game" where the rules are the institutional logics (Caplin and Nalebuff 1992).

Institutions should not be confused with the organisation, as they undertake different roles to the individual. In contrast to societies where everyone plays a part in the greater community, organisations are a unit with clear boundaries of members and non-members (Hodgson 2006). The organisation can have sovereignty where conflicting rules and beliefs will impact individuals operating within the group. These rules and ideas are what builds the organisational culture (Ravasi and Schultz 2006). But as humans create the organisation, they will have a significant impact on how the firm operates. Pache and Santos (2013) accredit the organisation's individuals the organisational outcome since individuals transfer their own values and practices into their work role. Therefore, if the institution is "rule of the game", the organisation is how individuals set themselves to play (DFID 2003).

Institutional logics are visible on an individual level by a person's rationalities, tools and technology. It will affect practices and might even span to influence their identity (Lok 2010). How individuals apply their logical reasoning around a subject, will result in a social legitimacy which is essential for an individual (Ingram and Clay 2000), since humans strive to conform with external social pressures (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Academia states different forces embodying a person, such as previous experience, education and professional norms (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Due to this, the individual is constantly drawn between forceful competing institutional logics: the organisation's culture or their institutional setting (Bourdieu 1980).

The individual reaction to increased pressure will vary between advocating an ignoring response (Pache and Santos 2013), whereas DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue the individual's attitude to be affected by the level of embeddedness, steering which of the logics will be the predominant influence. It will depend on how familiar the logic seems; how much information is available and the individuals actual understanding of the topic. Thus, personal values and beliefs attributed from the community, play an essential role for the individual when unconsciously deciding the dominating logic (Milchram et al. 2019; Pache and Santos 2013). This understanding is especially crucial for an MNC, as it is employees are subject for several pressures and competing logics to interpret, make sense of and respond to (Greenwood et al. 2011). It explains why employees in various parts of the organisation react differently to the same corporate incentive.

3.2.3 Summary of theoretical constructs

The theoretical framework can be summarised into the five constructs of employee engagement, appraisal, involvement, position and institution. The essence of each construct is further specified by its main items, presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Theoretical items building the constructs*

Construct	Item
<i>Employee engagement</i>	Satisfaction (Buitendach and De Witte 2005) Physical-, cognitive- and emotional-energy (Kahn 1990; 1992)
<i>Appraisal</i>	Awareness of events (Petroc et al. 2006) Interpretation and evaluation (Jones 2019) Authenticity and genuineness (Liedtka 2008) Value congruence between individual and organisation (Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010)
<i>Involvement</i>	Practical or cognitive participation (Heery and Noon 2017) Feeling of participation important than employee's actual position or title (Gollan 2005) Motivating working environment (Khan 1990; Macey and Schneider 2008) Employee voice (Walton 1985) Development and learning (Argyris 1964; McGregor 1960) High involvement management (Lawler 1992; Wood and Albanese 1995) Perceived organisational support leads to reciprocal process and OCB-behaviours (Allen, Shore and Griffeth 2003)
<i>Position (moderating)</i>	The complexity of information sharing (Haugh and Talwar 2010) Chain of reaction among their workforce (Boxall, Ang and Bartram 2011) Employees primarily implement strategies (Terry 1999)
<i>Institution (moderating)</i>	Formal and informal institutions (Leftwich and Sen 2010; North 1990) Organisations having other culture and rules (Hodgson 2006) Employees are drawn between forceful competing institutional logics (Bourdieu 1980)

Chapter 4: Corporate sustainability and Employee Engagements hypothesised relationship

This chapter first addresses the evolution, concept and complexity of corporate sustainability. Followingly, the previously stated theoretical framework is utilised by adding how corporate sustainability affects employee engagement by highlighting both opportunities and strains. Concludingly, six hypotheses are created with their relationships visualised.

4.1 Defining Corporate Sustainability

A company's role and responsibility has been debated over several decades, sprung from the discussion among Friedman (1970) and Freeman (1984), outlining the accountability towards stakeholders such as shareholders, suppliers, customers and societies. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 43) further broadened the concept when defining: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", and thereby including both environment and future

population as stakeholders. Since then, sustainability has progressively established itself on the corporate agenda and are in many cases a well-prioritised matter (Kiron et al. 2012) and it is successively altering what it ought to be handled by the market or internally (Waddock 2004). A contemporary approach to corporate sustainability (CS) was by Dyllick et al. defined as:

“corporate sustainability (CS) can accordingly be defined as meeting the needs of a firm’s direct and indirect stakeholders [...], without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well”.

(Dyllick et al. 2002, p. 131)

CS can be viewed as praxis as it comes down to active decision-making and prioritising, based in the fact that firms have limited resources (Hart and Sharma 2004; Escobar and Vredenburg 2011), and the challenge lies in creating sustainable systems. But to proactively work with sustainability, is a way to reconcile the company’s orientation with stakeholders’ needs (Kassinis and Vafeas 2006). But as firms face a broad range of stakeholder, stating a consensus of what would the most pressing issue is complicated and close to an impossible task (Kelly 2009; Zaman and Goschin 2010; Darnall, Henriques and Sadorsky 2010). This reasons with sustainability being categorised as one of our times most “wicked problems” (Lehtonen et al. 2018). A wicked problem is an issue that holds high uncertainty and ambiguity, and resultantly it is highly conflicting among stakeholders (Batie 2008; Rittel and Webber 1973). Therefore, the central question is what a firm can expect when their employees are approached with CS activities.

4.2 Employee appraisal of a firm’s Corporate Sustainability

Since creating awareness requires active attention from the individual (Petroc et al. 2006), sustainability-related information has to be noticed alongside all other internal information. As humans have a limited capacity of processing information, it is reasonable that the absorptive capacity will be directed towards communication that is most critical for the employee (Minbaeva et al. 2014). Adding how humans have attention biases (Baron 2001), the person’s curiosity in the subject will most likely steer which information is absorbed. Thus, the employee will primarily focus on information related to their assigned work task and what they find interesting (Minbaeva et al. 2014).

When the employee is confronted with the firm's CS, they will try to understand the underlying reason to why their organisation work with sustainability. The initiatives can be appraised as substantive and authentic, or symbolic and inauthentic. The first one refers to CS pointed toward an actual need, whereas the latter is a strategic aspiration (Barnett 2007; McShane and Cunningham 2012). It might be that the company are pursuing CS initiatives due to both motives (Donia and Sirsly 2019), but employees will mainly view their employer to attempt one of the two (Hamilton 1980). Employees who hold an authentic perception towards their firms CS has shown to result in positive feelings, behaviours and an intensified organisational identification (Arminen et al. 2018; Beckman, Clowell and Cunningham 2009; Ghosh 2018; Klimkiewicz and Oltra 2017; Lee and Chen 2018). But on the one hand, if the CS is appraised as inauthentic it can rapidly backfire. This is often colloquially called the "dark side" of CS (Glavas and Willness 2020), greenwashing (Lyon and Montgomery 2015) or decoupling (Crilly, Hansen and Zollo 2016) and results in employees becoming disengaged. Adding further complexity, a firm's employees are individuals with a different understanding and evaluations of CS (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen 2015). It implies the non-universal relationship between all employee's assessment of the firm's CS: what some find authentic, while others find it inauthentic.

Fundamentally, it comes to achieving a value congruence between the employee and the organisation's values and sustainability aspirations. If the employee supports their employers CS operations, it will result in them feeling a value congruence, leading to higher engagement. This leads to our first hypothesis:

H₁: The more genuine appraisal of the firm's corporate sustainability, the higher employee engagement.

However, past practices reveal how companies tend to pay greater attention to communication CS incentives towards external stakeholders rather than internally, illustrating a potential lack of employee-directed information (Scheidler, Schons and Spanjol 2016). Even if the external communication would be seen or read by the employee, both Maignan and Ferrell (2001) and Duthler and Dhanesh (2018) argue employee-specific information to be necessary to build further ground of CS awareness. Further following Wright and Nishii (2006) and Boxall, Ang and Bartram (2011), a common HRM issue is how the firm's management has more

understanding and knowledge of current operations, which does not fully reach the broad mass of employees. Therefore, we posit our second hypothesis:

H_{1a}: The individual's position within the organisation will moderate the relationship between appraising the firm's corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

Further, an individual is continuously affected by the interplay between themselves and their surrounding environment, a result of their institutional belonging. For example, the media will steer a community's attention, and as a culture always develops, we alter our opinions and understanding (Pache and Santos 2013). Essentially, what is considered "sustainable" differs over locations: what one would estimate as a reliable solution, another would oppose (Evans 2012). Extant literature (see Fombrun and van Riel 2004; Grayson and Martinec 2004), state how the evaluation process of authenticity and genuineness, is an assessment of the initiative joint with the social construct of the phenomenon. Thus, an employee's appraisal will be shaped by the current standard to their knowledge.

Noteworthy is that trust towards institutions is not a straightforward process. It is referred to as "social cynicism", questioning the intentions of those in power, especially when it comes to sustainability. It is further known how institutions holding low social cynicism will find the CS initiatives more genuine (West, Hillenbrand and Money 2015). It demonstrates how society and available information has an effect on how aware an individual is of an issue, which outlines how a person perceives their firm's CS initiatives. As social groups have different value hierarchies and cultures (Schwartz 2006), it illustrates a potentially different understanding of sustainability when comparing institutions. This leads to our third hypothesis:

H_{1b}: The individual's institutional belonging will moderate the relationship between appraising the firm's corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

4.3 Employee involvement in Corporate Sustainability

Several studies demonstrate how employee participation in CS results in higher employee engagement, and how the willingness to participate is fundamentally driven by the

individual's interests (Benn, Teo and Martin 2015; Remmen and Lorentzen 2000; Renwick, Redman and Maguire 2013; Venturelli, Cosma and Leopizzi 2018). The individual's interest serves as a moderator to what they would like to partake when several options are available, and activities perceived as important for the individual will appear as attractive options (White and Ruh 1973). Therefore, involving employees who are interested in CS is a way to align the person's interests and develop their expertise (Gollan 2005). But organisations must understand the mechanism of how their employees prioritise what is measured and rewarded, which commonly is not CS operations (Glavas and Mish 2015). Therefore, being involved in CS activities might only be favourable for the employee if the organisation acknowledges it.

However, Paille et al. 's (2014) showed how participating in sustainability initiative increased OCB among employees, both in their in-role and extra-role behaviours. If involved, following Eisenberger et al. (1986), the employee feels acknowledged and awarded for bringing their ideas, as well as they perceive organisational support. It makes the employee inclined to repay the organisations appreciation, stimulating the reciprocal process. Thus, with the same logic, it is assumable that the people with a personal sustainability interest will, if allowed and recognised, hold a higher desire to be involved in the firm's sustainability operations, increasing OCB outcomes, and thereby, their engagement. This posits our fourth hypothesis:

H₂: The higher involvement in the firm's corporate sustainability, the higher employee engagement.

Although a minority of employees are a part of the strategic considerations, majority of them are implementing the strategy in their everyday operation, thus, what the outcome will consist of (Venturelli, Cosma and Leopizzi 2018). But as stated by Dahmann and Bullock (2020), sustainability operations are today a predominantly managed through a siloed approach, indicating how the general mass of employees are far apart from the sustainability operations. As the firm shifts towards sustainability-oriented activities, it holds a risk of being misunderstandings when changing processes and organisational culture. Some employees might see the new initiatives primarily as additional workload (Gollan 2005). Bartunek, Rousseau and Rudolph (2006) have, in this matter, demonstrated a positive link between how an employee understands changes and the benefits behind the change if they can participate in the activity. For example, Zutshi and Sohal (2004) showed that participating in policymaking around sustainability policies are closely connected to morale-building within the company,

steering its culture. Coherently, Remmen and Lorentzen (2000) came to prove that employee's involvement in sustainability incentives had a robust positive effect on changing work routines due to increased understanding. Therefore, it comes down to how the initiative is communicated, planned and implemented.

Following Maclagan (1999), it is therefore essential for sustainability projects to be a participative process, involving employees on multiple levels in the organisation. The method implies that development of CS-strategies should be seen as an ongoing emergent activity, influenced and "corrected" by the employees. Moreover, Maclagan (1999) states that if the company are purporting to be ethical and responsible, but continuously discard employee's opinions and ideas, the employee will find the company inconsistent. It could lead to mistrust and disrespect against the CS incentive and management. This leads to our fifth hypothesis:

H_{2a}: The individual's position within the organisation will moderate the relationship between the level of involvement in corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

Lastly, the level of involvement is grounded in the democracy of participation, control and influence. It is a sociological and psychological aspect visible in both industries and countries (Poole 1986). Further, Hofstede (1984) theorise differencing cultures, whereas one element is the relation to power and authority. If operating in a high-power distance culture, the individual would avoid opposing their leader, and therefore have less input towards management. The individual is fully incorporated in the hierarchal pattern and understand their place in the organisation. Following Mullerjentsch (1989), it shows how the institution is underlyingly affecting the employee, and how the social situation and the organisation interdependently influence their involvement.

It is essential to admit the potential issue with power distances in an MNC since an increased understanding can mitigate the potential hinders of sharing information. Following Minbaeva et al. (2014), if the employee is invited in CS initiatives, it enables a reverse flow of knowledge deepening the organisations understanding of both issues and opportunities in all areas in the organisation. But different institution might deem differencing approaches to actively give all employees the ability to express themselves. Giving employees a voice, and encouraging them to speak their mind, would capture values and motives of the whole

organisation. Bezerra, Gohr and Morioka (2019) suggest this process to enhance trust towards management as well as it enables a sustainability strategy mirroring the perspective of the whole organisation. Based on the above, our final hypothesis is:

H_{2b}: The individual's institutional belonging will moderate the relationship between the level of involvement in corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

4.4 Summary of hypothesis and the relationships visualised

To summarise, the following hypotheses are created, and the proposed relationships visualised in Figure 2.

H₁: The more genuine appraisal of the firm's corporate sustainability, the higher employee engagement.

H_{1a}: The individual's position within the organisation will moderate the relationship between appraising the firm's corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

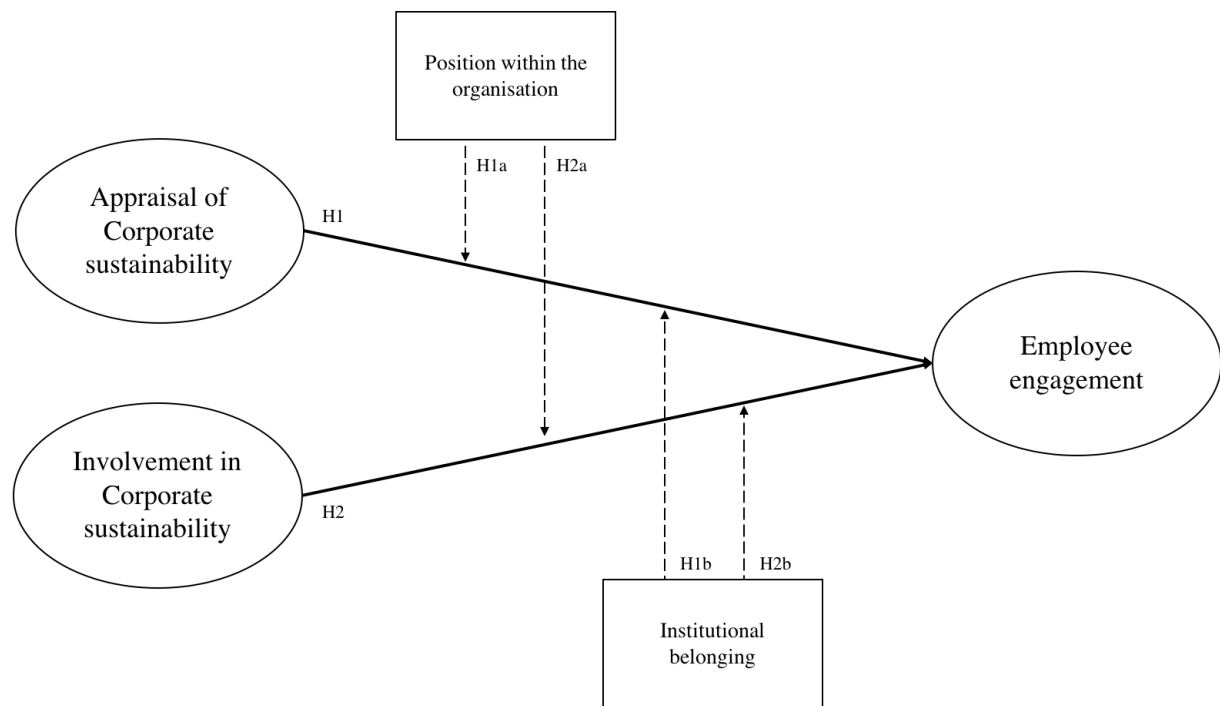
H_{1b}: The individual's institutional belonging will moderate the relationship between appraising the firm's corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

H₂: The higher involvement in the firm's corporate sustainability, the higher employee engagement.

H_{2a}: The individual's position within the organisation will moderate the relationship between the level of involvement in corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

H_{2b}: The individual's institutional belonging will moderate the relationship between the level of involvement in corporate sustainability and the employee's engagement.

Figure 2. *The hypothesised relationship between CS and employee engagement*



Source: Created by authors

Chapter 5: Methodology

Following chapter first establishes the authors view towards their research and studies in international business. Secondly, the sampled company is presented, followed by a description of how the study came to life. Thirdly is the process of the quantitative operationalisation and creation of an online survey. Lastly, it is demonstrated how the data has been collected and pre-processed to enable upcoming analysis.

5.1 The authors' philosophical approach to research

As our study approaches the social world, we are undeniably tackling social constructs. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) introduced the term, and thereby joined sociology and philosophy. As the verb “construct” implies, it is something built or being built. Therefore, we can approach invisible things, like emotions, to appear having both definition and substance. These constructs are created by our society, actively maintained, and continuously developed over time to be kept relevant, a process affected by communication, actions and external influence (Carey 1989). The central assumption is, therefore, that humans create models to

understand the social world, and is what maintains our reality (Leeds-Hurwitz 2009). Following the arguments of the social construction theory, analysing the micro-level responses would indirectly assess the macro process of a person, such as their institution (Leeds-Hurwitz 2009).

We further agree to the proposition that the world is independent of our minds, establishing our view as pragmatists. Accordingly, as expressed by Bhaskar (1975, p. 250) “*Science, then, is the systematic attempt to express in thought the structures and ways of acting of things that exist and act independently of thought*”. Our aim is not to find a “reality” or the “truth”. We attempt to find a correlation between theory and reality. We find this to be accomplished by approaching our research with a sense of scientific realism and argue a positive epistemic attitude to be best suited to explain reality (see Devitt 2008; Kitcher 2002).

5.1.1 The low paradigm research field of international business

Approaching studies in international business hold several challenges and opportunities. Firstly, a cross-country comparative study will as per Thomas, Cuervo-Cazurra and Brannen (2011) complicate the development of theory since each situation is unique, but conversely, create a chance to contribute with new findings. Sutton and Staw (1995) stated international business studies to be a low paradigm field since dominant logic is not pre-established, denoting the plasticity of an ever-changing world. It would be comfortable to assume previous findings to stay constant when testing a relation. But as we live in an interconnected social system, things change, and prior findings might not be a reflection of reality anymore. It is highly reflective in the aspect of generalisability, external validity, of the research findings (Polit and Beck 2010). The diverse field of international business holds a conflicting conceptual abstraction, implying how the conceptual differences are often simplified when aiming to find structure (Julian, Brannen and Tung 2011). By simplifying, the trustworthiness of the finding might be reduced and in line with Cronbach (1975, p. 125) “*When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion*”. Therefore, based on our research field, we are cautious of the studies generalisability.

5.2 Company presentation and sampling process

The sampled company in this study is an MNC originating from Scandinavia, who currently holds subsidiaries in 130 countries while employing 80.000 people. The company has been a magnate within its business segment since 1996, and its operations have worldwide coverage. The MNC is actively targeting corporate sustainability, shown through them being a long-spanning signatory to the UN Global Compact and operates in congruence with the UNGC principles on responsible business conduct. Their Sustainability report published 2019 demonstrate the adoption of majority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The company was selected through a non-probability sample procedural, with a sample frame resting on two main criteria: (1) being an MNC; (2) being engaged in activities under the term corporate sustainability. We followed the European Union's definition of an MNC, as a company having subsidiaries in at least one additional country apart from their home country (EU 2020). Preferably, we were looking for an MNC originated in Scandinavia or Europe. When assessing corporate sustainability, we evaluated sustainability reports and the scope of adopted SDGs as an indicator of many stakeholders the firm saw themselves responsible towards. Our two criteria did not result in a clear population, and we started searching for an MNC, to assess their level of corporate sustainability later.

Our sampling process led to us contacting the company which suited our sample frame, in which one of the authors previously been employed. It is a chance that the previous relationship to the organisation facilitated the process of establishing legitimacy for our research. However, there was no personal relationship before reaching out to the MNCs sustainability representative.

In the following phase, we aimed to join theory and reality to attain findings valuable for both fields. We, therefore, shaped our case together with our company's sustainability representative. Though initial Skype-calls, we found that it lied within both the companies and our interest to perform a cross-national, reflective assessment of how sustainability affects employee engagement. This refers to our qualitative approach to find a contemporary area of investigation. This call, together with an initial literature review, circled the studies propositions. Joining established academic knowledge with a practical issue will, according to Thomas, Cuervo-Cazurra and Brannen (2011), increase our study's validity.

When deciding on respondents, we decided to test all employees in two geographical areas following the company's internal structure. To capture potential institutional differences, we followed Hofstede's (1984) framework when choosing which regions. First, we settled on the Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway and Denmark) due to the MNCs HQ being located there, making it a natural starting point. Later, we decided Central West Africa (Nigeria, Benin, Niger, Togo and Ghana), since it holds an acknowledged differentiating institutional setting. In conversation with the company, blue-collar employees were excluded, as they lacked access to equipment to partake the study on-site. This employee group was excluded from both regions to keep the sample homogenous.

5.3 The development of the theoretical framework and hypothesis

Our research undertakes a deductive approach, taking a point of departure in established literature to test relations, which potentially could contribute with increased understandings (Locke 2007). Therefore, our research aims to contribute with new information, rather than solely testing previously established theory (Thomas, Cuervo-Cazurra and Brannen 2011). The literature review is sourced from accredited journals and peer-reviewed publications within our field, such as Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Human Resource Management (US), Human Resource Management Journal (UK) to cover the academical scope. From our literature review, we first defined a general theoretical framework of employee engagement. When establishing the hypothesis, we added previous findings of sustainability's positive effect on employees and the strains of working with corporate sustainability into our model. When completed this process, we had established six hypotheses to further tests in our study.

During this process, we faced two main challenges. Firstly, our definition of corporate sustainability is what some authors state as "CSR", although we are referring to the same corporate actions. Secondly, previous studies focused their investigations towards their domestic context, commonly, taking place in Europe or the US (Barakat et al. 2016). Therefore, substantial effort has been dedicated to understanding the exaggeratedness of previous findings to fit our study's definitions and cross-comparison. Following Weick (1995, p. 390); "*ungrounded theory is no more helpful than are atheoretical data*". Therefore, we dedicated time and thought to specify how and why the relationship looked as they did in our model, to increase validity.

5.3.1 The theoretical operationalisation

To test our formed hypothesis, we proceeded to operationalise the constructs identified through the literature review. Operationalisation is simply the transformation of theoretical reasoning to indicators, referring to questions applicable for data collection (Van Thiel 2014). This is a critical task, as the operationalisation forms the foundation for our measurement instrument (Fowler 2002). One way to increase internal validity in theoretical findings is to reuse already established questions (Hyman, Lamb and Bulmer 2006). Therefore, we followed Wanous, Reichers and Hudy (1997) and applied one question on satisfaction, and Rich, Lepine and Crawford's (2010) questions on engagement, which is operationalised from Kahn's (1990; 1992) definition. For the other constructs, we could not find any suiting questions, leading us to create our own indicators. Due to the complexity of the constructs, we needed to state a pool of indicators to capture the full essence. By doing so, the constructs were kept latent which further enhanced the constructs validity (Fowler 2002; Hair et al. 2014). This led us establishing a total of 51 indicators. Table 2 provides an overview of the operationalisation process, translating constructs into items and later indicators.

5.4 Quantitative research method

5.4.1 Creating the measurement instrument

The following step was to develop an instrument for data collection. Our quantitative approach led to creating a survey. In this process, we practiced the insights of Fowler (2002), to articulate questions which would be answered in the same matter regardless of the respondent. Not only is this a general guideline to reduce reliability issues, but it is increasingly important to consider when approaching a sample group with diverse backgrounds, as in our case. The surveys design should enable each person's cognitive psychological process to easily answer the questions (Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski 2000). If the respondents would not understand the question, their responses should not be assessed as reliable. In terms of actual formulating the questions, our main focus was to keep it simple. Inspired by Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski (2000) and Fowler (2002), we used easy wording, applied terms consistently and did not state any double-barrelled or leading questions. To ensure the questions to be satisfactory, the survey underwent a test-round and were sent to 34 respondents for feedback before sent to our sampled group. Further, the survey's language was chosen to be English, as it serves as the firm's operationally spoken language in daily

Table 2. Constructs, items and indicators

Construct	Employee Engagement	Appraisal of CS	Involvement in CS
Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Satisfaction (Bartuschek and De Witte 2005) -Physical-, cognitive- and emotional-energy (Kahn 1990; 1992) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of events (Petree et al. 2006) - Interpretation and evaluation (Jones 2019) -Authenticity and genuineness (Liedtka 2008) -Value congruence between individual and organisation (Rich, LePine and Crawford 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Practical or cognitive participation (Heery and Noon 2017) -Feeling of participation important than employee's actual position or title (Gollan 2005) -Motivating working environment (Khan 1990; Macey and Schneider 2008) -Employee voice (Walton 1985) -Development and learning (Argyris 1964; McGregor 1960) -High involvement management (Lawler 1992; Wood and Albanese 1995) -Perceived organisational support leads to reciprocal process and OCB-behaviours (Allen, Shore and Griffeth 2003)
Operationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Replicated Rich, LePine and Crawford's (2010) operationalisation of Kahn (1990; 1992) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communicating CS is essential to create awareness (Ghavas and Gadow 2013) -Underlying reason for CS (substantive or symbolic) -Impact the employees responds (Ghavas and Willness 2020) -A symbolically driven CS can backfire, due to greenwashing (Lyon and Montgomery 2015) or decoupling (Grilly, Hansen and Zollo 2016) -A genuine appraisal of CS has a positive relationship with engagement (Ghavas and Priderit 2009), as the employee feels meaningfulness (Kahn 1990) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Employees primarily implement the CS strategy (Venturelli, Cosma and Lopezzi 2018) -Employees involvement is crucial to succeed with CS (Kenwick et al. 2013) -Employees are the ones who understand present sustainability issues the most and should "correct" the strategy (MacLagan 1999) -How CS is communicated, planned and implemented affect the outcome (Bartunek et al. 2006) -Participating in CS increased OCB-behaviours (Paillé et al. 2014)
Indicator	<p><i>At work, I...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... strive as hard as I can to complete my job ... try my hardest to perform well on my job ... devote a lot of energy to my job ... work with intensity on my job <p><i>At work, I...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... proud of my job ... enthusiastic in my job ... excited about my job ... interested in my job ... overall satisfied with my job <p><i>At work...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... my mind is focused on my job ... I am absorbed by my job ... I pay a lot of attention to my job ... concentrate on my job 	<p><i>Generally, I feel informed about my employer's...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ecological/environmental initiatives ... social initiatives <p><i>I find my employer to act responsibly towards...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... me as an individual ... their business partners ... the societies they operate in ... my personal health ... their environmental footprint ... their air emissions <p><i>I believe my employer work with sustainability because...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... they want to do the right thing for societies ... they want to do the right thing for investors ... they want to do the right thing for the environment ... they want to do the right thing for those affected by the company ... it is a strategic decision to benefit the business ... everybody else in the industry is doing it 	<p><i>At work, I...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... can offer the organisation ideas on how to improve its environmental performance ... can offer the organisation ideas on how to improve its social influence ... have a role in finding solutions on sustainability issues ... am a part of the decision-making process of sustainability projects ... am a part of implementing the sustainability strategy ... have a responsibility to ensure that our operations are sustainable <p><i>At work, my...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... manager would value my opinion in regard to sustainability ... suggestions are something the organisation might act on ... ideas in regard to sustainability would be listened to ... participation in sustainability initiatives are important ... ideas in regard to sustainability would be listened to ... suggestions are something the organisation might act on ... participation in sustainability initiatives are important

Table 2. Continued

Construct	Personal Interest in sustainability	Position within the organisation	Institutional belonging
Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Values (Schwartz 2006) -Hierarchies of values (Schwartz2006) -Attention bias (Baron 2008; Bar-Haim et al. 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The complexity of information sharing (Haugh and Talarwa 2010) -Chain of reaction among their workforce (Boxall, Ang and Barrtram 2011) -Employees primarily implement strategies (Terry 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formal and informal institutions (Lefwich and Sen 2010; North 1990) -Organisations having other culture and rules (Hodgson 2006) -Employees are drawn between forceful competing institutional logics (Bourdieu 1980)
Operationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interest causes "attention bias" (Baron 2008; Bar-Haim et al. 2007) -Personal interest will shape a person's decision-making (White and Ruhn 1973) -Employees are a heterogeneous group, with different assessment (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of employee specific CS information (Schoedter, Schons and Spangol 2016) -Employee-specific information is necessary to build CS awareness (Duttiler and Dhanesh 2018; Maignan and Ferrel 2001) -CS operations are a predominantly managed through a siloed approach (Dahmann and Bullock 2020) -Participation leads to better understanding behind changes which builds support (Rousseau and Rudolph 2006; Zushi and Sahal 2004) -CS as a participative process, involving multiple layers of personnel (Machagan 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Media steer a person's attention (Pache and Santos 2013) -The perception of sustainable operations differs over locations (Evans 2012) -Evaluation process of authenticity and genuineness are an assessment of the initiative joint with the social construct of the phenomenon (Grayson and Martinec 2004) -Value hierarchies differs among social groups (Schwartz 2006) -Social cynism affects the appraisal of the CS initiative (West, Hiltbrand and Money 2015) -Differenting cultures have different relation to power and authority (Hofstede 1984) -Giving all employees a voice will help the organisations creation of a CS strategy strategy mirroring the whole organisation (Berzera, Gahr and Morrioka 2019) -The level of involvement is grounded in the democracy of participation, control and influence (Poole 1986)
Indicator	<p>Personality, I...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... discuss sustainability with family and friends ... hear about sustainability on the news ... read about sustainability issues/solutions ... consider it important to make sustainable decisions ... have friends and family concerned about sustainability ... value acting responsible towards the environment <p>Personality, I make...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... value acting responsible towards the society ... sustainably conscious choices of what I eat ... sustainably conscious choices of what clothes I buy ... sustainably conscious choices of how I travel <p>Personality, I think...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... it is mainly the government's responsibility to solve sustainability issues ... it is mainly company's responsibility to solve sustainability issues ... it is mainly the individual's responsibility to solve sustainability issues ... the discussion about sustainability is over-exaggerated 	<p>Type of position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Contributor Manager 	<p>Location of employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden, Norway and Denmark Nigeria, Benin, Niger, Togo and Ghana

operations. Thus, all respondents received the same survey, and there was no translation to native languages.

All data collection instruments are confronted with the challenge of common method variance, referring to variance assigned to the measurement method itself, rather than measured constructs (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The problem is especially existing in the research of behavioural conditions, as the chosen method might affect the respondent's behaviour and understanding, which can result in systematic errors in their responses (Persson 2016; Podsakoff et al. 2003). We identified the risk of having the respondents suffering from social desirability, the willingness to give socially acceptable answers, when facing questions of their private interest in sustainability (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Therefore, we decide to use the word "sustainability" without further definition than divided into "environmental" and "social". If we, for example, described social sustainability with expressions as "reduce poverty", "eliminate child labour", we believe the general answer would be that those issues are important. Hence, it would be creating a distinct bias in the answer. When only approached with the word "social sustainability", we believe the respondent will create their own perception of what the term refers to and evaluate the answer in line with their personal definition. The interpretation is consequently closer to the true feeling of the respondent, enhancing the reliability of our findings.

5.4.1.1 Pros and cons of applying a 7-pointed Likert scale

To measure our indicators, we used a seven-pointed Likert scale ranging from "(1) Strongly disagree" to "(7) Strongly agree", in line with Fowler's (2002) suggestions. Persson (2016) argues for this to be most suiting when testing feelings and attitudes towards a concept, as it facilitates the process for the participant to leave an advocate reply. As we expected answers to differ among or respondent, the scale enabled us to capture the fluctuations of the respondent's perception and feelings. Moreover, the complexity of our constructs required this type of range, as our aim was not to measure concepts answered on a "yes" or "no" basis. By this, we enhanced the reliability of our findings (Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski 2000).

However, there are risks associated with using a Likert scale. Firstly, the format requires increased effort from the respondent, as they first need to take a stand in the question and afterwards evaluate the scale in relation to their attitude (Persson 2016). It could cause demotivation to complete the survey properly and truthfully. Secondly, the format tends to

cause the respondents to suffer from acquiescence bias, which refers to the tendency to rather agree, than disagree (Persson 2016). It might steer the responses to be slightly more positive than negative (Revilla et al. 2014).

To address and minimise the risk, we decided on two remedies. First, we applied reversed questions, which lowers the risk of acquiescence bias, following Persson (2016). Secondly, the length of the scale was chosen to be longer (7-pointed) than the shorter (5-pointed). Following the reasoning of Harrison, McLaughlin and Coalter (1996), practicing the longer scale reduces the risk of having the previously question influencing the next answer. The logic lies in the short-time memory of the respondent, and time required when proceeding to the next question.

5.5 Data collection process

When deciding on how to distribute the survey, we considered two aspects following Fowler (2002): the population approached and sensitivity of the questions. Due to logistical reasons and the size of the sample, we needed an efficient solution. Moreover, the participants were annually approached with another survey targeting their engagement. Therefore, we assumed the sensitivity of the questions to be relatively low. Thus, an in-personal relationship between us as researchers and the respondent was not necessary to establish. When considering the cost of visiting all regions, we settled on an online survey as a suitable method to distribute the questionnaire.

However, the relationship between the researcher and respondents should not be underestimated. Not creating any connection at all could potentially reduce the willingness to answering our survey (Fowler 2002). To reduce the risk of having non-replies and to establish a relationship with the participants, we focused on creating awareness of the survey by utilising internal communication channels. We aimed to emphasise how valuable responses were for both the company and us.

When launching the survey, we used a relaxed approach to take the edge of the situation. We were inspired by Dillman's (2000) method for online surveys and titled our email "*Be a hero! Contribute to research on [Company name] corporate sustainability and employee engagement*", to get their attention and allude on the respondent being champions for helping us. We purposely left the word "survey" out of the email's title, since it can evoke negative

feelings as surveys often are associated with extra time and effort (Carlbring 2015). In the reminder sent two weeks later, we inserted a picture of the authors holding a scoreboard of how many replies each region had, to boost incentives for participating, starting a conversation, and continue to build on the personal relation.

All respondents received the survey through their company-email. It hopefully facilitated the individual's state of mind, as we mainly asked them to answer from their perspective of being employees, except for their personal interest in sustainability. In the survey, we were clear to specify which questions there supposed to be answered from a "personal standpoint" or "the perspective of being an employee". Although the ideal technique would be to separate these sections, to have the part covering personal interest answered at home or in a private setting, we assessed our time-limit and the risk of not collecting enough replies too high. We, therefore, chose to neglect this suggestion, heavily advocated by Persson (2016). It was a difficult decision which is vital to address, particularly as the respondent's environment might affect their answers.

5.5.1 Ethical considerations

Throughout the process, we considered our ethical obligations as researchers. First, permission was granted by MNCs sustainability representative located at its HQ, and secondly each regions HR-department. The scope and objectives of the study were shared with both area's management teams and approved before proceeding to launch the survey. Further, participation was voluntary, and respondents could at any time withdraw from the process without negative percussions. We assured respondent how there were no right or wrong answers when answering the questions, both communicated in the mail and the introductory page of the survey. All replies were handled with strict confidentiality and anonymity. Both in the final report, and the information shared with the organisation.

5.5.2 Descriptive statistics of the sample

The survey was sent to 277 employees in Scandinavia (SCA) and 378 employees in Central West Africa (CWA). The total response rate where 28 percent, with 185 responses in total (SCA; $N=92$, CWA; $N=93$). The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents

	Total sample			Scandinavia			Central West Africa		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Gender									
Male	104	56%	56%	45	49%	49%	59	63%	63%
Female	77	42%	98%	43	47%	96%	34	37%	100%
Prefer not to answer	4	2%	100%	4	4%	100%	0	0%	100%
Age									
18-29	29	15,5%	15,50%	18	19,5%	19,50%	11	12%	12%
30-39	101	54,5%	70%	42	45,5%	65%	59	63,5%	75,50%
40-49	42	23%	93%	23	25%	60%	19	20,5%	96%
50 <	13	7%	100%	9	10%	100%	4	4%	100%
Length of employment									
< 1 year	18	10%	10%	15	16%	16%	3	3%	3%
≥ 1; < 3	50	27%	37%	27	29%	45%	23	25%	28%
≥ 3; < 5	20	11%	48%	10	11%	56%	10	11%	39%
≥ 5; < 7	17	9%	57%	8	9%	65%	9	10%	49%
≥ 7; < 10	19	10%	67%	6	7%	72%	13	14%	68%
> 10	61	33%	100%	26	28%	100%	35	37%	100%
Type of position									
Individual contributor	134	72%	72%	70	76%	76%	64	69%	69%
Managerial position	51	28%	100%	22	24%	100%	29	31%	100%
Total sample size	185			92			93		

5.5.3 Non-response analysis

As we did not succeed to collect answers from the full group, it is critical to assess how well our findings reflect the whole sample. Fowler (2002) argues a person's interest in the survey's subject as a strong driver for participation; hence, we assume a higher response rate among individuals holding an interest in sustainability and/or employee engagement. Notably, the rise and complications of Covid-19 might affect the participation rate and how prioritised the survey was within the organisation. The effect of this can only be speculated, and following Persson (2016), there is always a risk of external events affecting the participation which we will never fully know.

5.6 Translating collected data into statistical constructs

Since our research consisted of several constructs, it deemed a multivariate analysis process where we first needed to structure and reduce the set of indicators. As a starting point, we tested the suitability to reduce our dataset through assessing the level of redundancy among indicators through Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (sig .000, Chi-Square 3411.119). It determined the dataset to be sufficiently capable of capturing the essence of our constructs with fewer

factors since the test was significant. Further, we tested the common variance among indicators by examining the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value (.874). Since the value was greater than .8, we concluded, in line with Cerny and Kaiser (1977), the proportion of variance to be large enough. Therefore, we concluded the gathered data to be suited for reduction.

5.6.1 Factorial validity

To determine the underlying dimension of the survey's 51 indicators, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted through the Principal Component Analysis method (PCA). The PCA is a commonly used dimensionality-reductions method, in which a set of indicators are extracted into fewer composed factors while maintaining the ability to explain the majority of information in the original dataset. The method takes the total variance in consideration, by illustrating the factors holding small proportions of unique variance and, in some occurrences, error variance (Hair et al. 2014). Reducing data is an ongoing balance of trading accuracy against simplicity, but the PCA is useful guidance in this refinement process. We applied a Varimax rotation to prevent intercorrelation among the dimensions, a superior orthogonal method preferably used for data reduction as it simplifies the factor structure (Hair et al. 2014). Our factor determination rested on the latent root criteria, which is a statistical approach separated from theoretical reasoning. In this process, we assessed the Eigenvalues of the factors, whereas a value > 1 would be labelled significant and kept. As a starting point, the PCA gave us eleven factors.

Founded on $N=185$, factor loading had to be greater than .4 to ensure the variables to be significant. The factor loading represents the correlation of each variable and its appurtenant factor (Hair et al. 2014). We followingly decided to remove data disrupting the model and started with variables showing split loadings. Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) those variables might have little underlying meaning for the additional factor, although they are correlated. Resultantly, we removed 16 indicators from the analysis. We further decided to remove factors with the lowest loading, which led us to deleted five indicators. We lastly removed indicators assessed to be badly grouped from a theoretical standpoint. Although data reduction is a statistical approach, as researchers, we have a responsibility to maintain the essence of the theoretical constructs in the factorial outcome (Hair et al. 2014). There is a constant evaluation of excluding indicators with low statistical meaning simultaneously as the factors need to be reflective of reality and what is studied. An example of this is how the PCA

created a separate construct of indicator P 11, P 12 and P 13, questions regarding who the person held accountable for sustainable actions. After theoretically reasoning around these questions, we concluded how these questions emphasised a matter of responsibility and not the essence of personal interest. With this reasoning, eight indicators in total were removed from the dataset. For a detailed overview of the PCA process and indicators removed, see Appendix 1.

The communality table was utilised to understand if any variables were not adequately accounted for in the factor solution. We applied a threshold of .5, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014), assessing if the indicator was sufficiently explaining the variable. When evaluating the final output, all indicators held a higher value, and none was removed (see Table 4). The final model gave us four distinct constructs of Employee engagement, Appraisal of CS, Involvement in CS and Personal interest in sustainability. The total variance explained by the extracted factors was 73.4 percent, and the unique contribution per factor can be seen in Table 4.

To test the degree of internal consistency within the constructs, we assessed the reliability coefficient through Cronbach's alpha. Based on Hair et al. (2014), all values ranging from .855-.951 were accepted (threshold < .6) (see Table 4). We further controlled the item-to-total- (threshold < .5) and inter-item correlation (threshold < .3) (see Appendix 2). All constructs passed the test, and we concluded our data to be acceptable going forward.

5.6.2 Transforming indicators to testable variables

To ensure the variables to represent the core of each construct, we translated the indicators into a composite measure by applying a Summated scale. As the name implies, the variables were founded on the average score of the indicators represented in the factor solution (see Table 4), and each indicator was treated to hold equal importance in the averaging process. The summated scale method reduces some measurement errors, as the reliance of replies on a single question is minimised (Hair et al. 2014). The variables will, in this matter, include multiple aspects of the underlying constructs predicting the real value of the variable. It enables an increasingly accurate prediction in the upcoming analysis.

Table 4. Factor solution

Factor	Indicator	Factor loading	Communalities	Percent of variance*	Cronbach's alpha			
Employee engagement	EE 2.1: I am proud of my job	0.850	0.794	39.640	.951			
	EE 2.2: I am enthusiastic in my job	0.875	0.884					
	EE 2.3: I am excited about my job	0.898	0.890					
	EE 2.4: I am interested in my job	0.887	0.858					
	SS 1: Overall, I am satisfied with my job	0.829	0.760					
Total items: 5								
Appraisal of CS	AP 5: I find my employee to act responsibly towards the society they operate in	0.823	0.779	11.972	.942			
	AP 6: I find my employee to act responsibly towards my personal health	0.792	0.663					
	AP 7: I find my employee to act responsibly towards their environmental footprint	0.837	0.768					
	AP 8: I find my employee to act responsibly towards their air emissions	0.823	0.726					
	AP 9: I believe my employer works with sustainability because they want to do the right thing for societies	0.821	0.777					
	AP 10: I believe my employer works with sustainability because they want to do the right thing for the environment	0.842	0.816					
	AP 12: I believe my employer works with sustainability because they want to do the right thing for those affected by the company	0.806	0.729					
	Total items: 7							
	Involvement in CS	IN 1: I can offer the organisation ideas on how to improve its environmental performance	0.622			0.554	11.469	.860
		IN 3: I have a role in finding solutions on sustainability issues	0.793			0.693		
		IN 4: I am a part of the decision-making process of sustainability projects	0.879			0.790		
		IN 5: I am a part of implementing the sustainability strategy	0.853			0.741		
IN 6: I have a responsibility to ensure that our operations are sustainable		0.677	0.643					
Total items: 5								
Personal interest in sustainability	PI 1: I discuss sustainability with family and friends	0.854	0.742	10.315	.855			
	PI 3: I read about sustainability issues/solutions	0.757	0.630					
	PI 4: I consider it important to make sustainable decisions	0.797	0.683					
	PI 5: I have friends and family concerned about sustainability	0.798	0.654					
Total items: 5		0.677	0.578					
				Σ 73.424				

* Extraction Sum of squared loading

Chapter 6: Results

In the following chapter, the dependent, independent and control- variables are presented through descriptive statistic and Pearson's correlation. The hypothesis are tested in an ordinary least square multiple regression model. Of the six hypotheses, three found support. Before asserting our findings, the regression multicollinearity and accuracy are thoroughly scrutinised.

6.1 Dependent and independents variables

Following our theoretical reasoning, our dependent variable was employee engagement. When collecting our data, our first criteria was the employee's satisfaction which was tested by one question following Wanous, Reichers and Hudy (1997). Further, we had twelve indicators testing their physical, cognitive and emotional engagement, replicated from Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010). From the PCA, the question regarding satisfaction and four other indicators were extracted to build the variable of employee engagement since it demonstrated the highest factor loadings (see Table 4). This engagement referred to emotional energy, embracing the employee's feeling of being proud, interested and feeling enthusiastic towards their work task.

The first independent variable was the employee's appraisal of the firm's CS, which measured the genuineness behind the firm's CS operations. This measure relied on the individual's assessment if they perceived their organisation to act responsibly, and the organisation's underlying motive when working with such activities. The second independent variable was the employee's involvement in CS, measuring to what extent the employee felt involved in the firm's corporate sustainability operations. It relied on what degree the employee felt a part of implementing the sustainability strategy, their ability to express ideas, if they were invited into the decision-making process and their overall assessment if they were personally responsible for ensuring sustainable business conduct.

6.1.1 Applied control variables

When testing our hypothesis, we applied seven control variables. The usage of control variables are critical when building a statistical model with high reliability, as it allows for a more truthful illustration of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. If

not included, the model might fail to eliminate contamination between variables (Aguinis, Cascio and Ramani 2017).

First, age was measured on an ordinal scale ranging from less than 18 years old to above 60 years of age. Second, gender was grouped into “female”, “male” and “prefer not to answer”. Third, length of employment was measured on an ordinal scale stretching from being employed less than a year, to more than ten years. Fourth, the type of department within the organisation was divided into three types: customer orientated, internal operations and support function depending on their job descriptions.

Following control variables were included as dummies. A dummy variable enables metric and non-metric data to be visualised as a dichotomous variable in the regression model. It is a variable coded with 0 or 1, having one group omitted from the regression as a reference group (Hair et al. 2014). Personal interest in sustainability was divided into interested and uninterested employees. Scoring on average above four, on the 1-7 answering scale, was classified as having a personal interest. Respondents scoring four or below were concluded not having a personal interest. Further, the respondent’s institutional belonging was separated by SCA and CWA. Type of position was separated into Managers and Individual Contributors. Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlations among all variables are presented in Table 5.

6.2 The regression model

To test our hypothesised relations, we used ordinary least square (OLS) multiple regression, a widely used technique when assessing a dependence relationship. It is suited to test our hypothesis since we aimed to predict how our independent variables would affect our dependent variable (Hair et al. 2014). Notably, we cannot ensure the relation to be causal as the regression model is limited to establishing covariation (DeCarlo 2018). Causality would require a cause-and-effect relationship, in which the dependent variable does not influence the independent (Urlacher, Druckman and Donohue 2020). However, through our study, the formulated hypothesis is grounded in theoretical reasoning and the proposed direction of the relationship is plausible, but we cannot ensure the sequence of events. Moreover, as our dataset represents human reflection and therefore, our findings will be approximations and not a perfect prediction.

Table 5. *Descriptive statistic and Pearson's correlation*

	Pearson's correlation													
	Min	Max	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	2	10	5.01	1.562	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Gender	1	3	1.61	.533	-.010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Length of employment	1	6	3.82	1.864	.504 **	-.038	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Type of department	1	3	1.57	.785	-.025	-.132	-.038	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Personal interest in sustainability (Dummy)	0	1	.097	.297	-.118	.072	-.145 *	-.031	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Institutional belonging (Dummy)	0	1	.500	.501	-.031	.055	.201 **	-.059	-.038	-	-	-	-	-
7. Position within the organisation (Dummy)	0	1	.280	.448	.114	-.065	.157 *	.043	-.080	.081	-	-	-	-
8. Appraisal of CS	2.9	7	5.484	1.095	.170 *	-.016	.173 *	-.160 *	-.210 **	.365 **	-.041	-	-	-
9. Involvement in CS	1	7	3.570	1.448	.094	-.018	.162 *	.075	-.266 **	.302 **	.195 **	.380 **	-	-
10. Employee engagement	1.2	7	6.001	1.090	.276 **	-.087	-.017	.094	-.289 **	.112	.124	.484 **	.364 **	-

** Correlation significant at the .01 level

* Correlation significant at the .05 level

What is examined is a statistical relationship, and we assume that unknown components will be present causing a potentially spurious relationship (DeCarlo 2018; Hair et al. 2014). However, by applying this multivariate technique, we aim to conduct unbiased and robust prediction of employee engagement and validate the interpretations of appraisal and involvement in CS.

When assessing the statistical relationships, we used p -value and unstandardised Beta-value (B -value). Firstly, to establish statistically significant findings, we followed the standards of the international business field with p -value $< .05$ (Meyer, Witteloostuijn and Beugelsdijk 2017). Statistical significance refers to the confidence in our findings, to what extent the results could be generalised to the whole population (Hair et al. 2014). However, applying p -value of $< .05$ increase the risk of undertaking Type-1 errors, where relationships are stated as significant without having actual bearing in reality. On the other hand, adopting a stricter p -value of $< .01$ could result in Type-2 errors, where informative conclusion will be statistically rejected (Hair et al. 2014; Meyer, Witteloostuijn and Beugelsdijk 2017). Secondly, when statistical support was found, we proceeded to assess the B -value. This value illustrates the change in the dependent variable occurring when the independent variables increase with one-unit (Hair et al. 2014). The stepwise regression model is visible in Table 6.

6.2.1 Results from the regression model

6.2.1.1 The control variables effect on employee engagement

From assessing out control variables, it is demonstrated how age significantly influence employee engagement ($p = .003$, $B = .152$, $t = 3.045$) (see Table 6). As the B -value is positive and the variable contains categories, we can on a general level state how engagement tends to increase as the employee gets older. Further, length of employment has significant influence ($p = .031$, $B = -.091$, $t = -2.169$) (see Table 6). As the B -value is negative, we interpret a negative relationship between employee engagement and the employee's length of employment in the firm.

As the following control variables were added as dummy variables, the B -value should be interpreted to illustrate the specific difference in engagement between the groups in the variable (Hair et al. 2014).

Table 6. Regression model

	Model 1						Model 2						Model 3					
	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF
Control Variables																		
Age	.218 **	.056	3.908	.000	.723	1.384	.165 **	.051	3.234	.001	.704	1.421	.166 **	.050	3.291	.001	.704	1.421
Gender	-.158	.142	-1.118	.265	.970	1.031	-.115	.128	-.900	.369	.967	1.034	-.122	.126	-.967	.335	.967	1.034
Length of employment	-.085	.048	-1.755	.081	.685	1.460	-.083	.043	-1.921	.056	.685	1.460	-.087 *	.043	-2.022	.045	.684	1.461
Type of department	-.039	.096	-.407	.684	.976	1.025	.050	.087	.573	.567	.952	1.051	.020	.087	.231	.818	.933	1.072
Personal interest in sustainability (Dummy)	.942 **	.254	3.709	.000	.968	1.033	.633 **	.234	2.708	.007	.928	1.078	.521 *	.235	2.218	.028	.893	1.120
Institutional belonging (Dummy)	.300	.154	1.947	.053	.925	1.081	-.062	.150	-.412	.680	.797	1.255	-.126	.150	-.841	.401	.773	1.294
Position within the organisation (Dummy)	.183	.169	1.083	.280	.962	1.040	.295	.153	1.926	.056	.950	1.053	.223	.154	1.448	.149	.915	1.093
Independent variables																		
Appraisal of CS							.451 **	.070	6.483	.000	.771	1.296	.399 **	.072	5.553	.000	.704	1.421
Involvement in CS							.131 *	.053	2.466	.015			.131 *	.053	2.466	.015	.740	1.352
Interactions																		
Interaction between position and appraisal																		
Interaction between position and involvement																		
Interaction between institution and appraisal																		
Interaction between institution and involvement																		
Diagnostics																		
R2	.179						.337						.360					
Adjusted R2	.147						.307						.327					
F-statistics	5.516						11.199						10.918					

** Significant at the .01 level
 * Significant at the .05 level

Table 6. Continued

	Model 4						Model 5						Model 6						Model 7					
	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF	B	SE	t	p-Value	Tolerance	VIF
	.149 **	.050	2.998	.003	.694	1.441	.152 **	.050	3.045	.003	.692	1.444	.151 **	.050	3.035	.003	.692	1.444	.151 **	.050	3.017	.003	.691	1.448
	-.116	.124	-.940	.349	.967	1.035	-.131	.124	-1.053	.294	.954	1.048	-.128	.125	-1.030	.305	.952	1.050	-.129	.125	-1.029	.305	.952	1.051
	-.089 *	.042	-2.124	.035	.684	1.462	-.091 *	.042	-2.169	.031	.683	1.465	-.089 *	.042	-2.092	.038	.671	1.490	-.089 *	.043	-2.088	.038	.671	1.491
	.030	.085	.353	.725	.931	1.074	.027	.085	.313	.755	.930	1.075	.027	.086	.316	.752	.930	1.075	.028	.086	.325	.745	.920	1.087
	.511 *	.230	2.220	.028	.893	1.120	.485 *	.232	2.094	.038	.883	1.133	.483 *	.232	2.080	.039	.882	1.134	.483 *	.233	2.072	.040	.882	1.134
	-.180	.148	-1.214	.226	.760	1.316	-.169	.148	-1.137	.257	.756	1.323	-.488	.782	-.624	.534	.027	36.564	-.467	.806	-.580	.563	.026	38.587
	2.416 **	.794	3.041	.003	.033	30.273	2.596 **	.812	3.196	.002	.032	31.659	2.688 **	.844	3.186	.002	.029	33.995	2.677 **	.852	3.143	.002	.029	34.439
	.516 **	.082	6.305	.000	.522	1.915	.492 **	.085	5.817	.000	.487	2.053	.470 **	.100	4.688	.000	.349	2.868	.468 **	.103	4.534	.000	.332	3.016
	.120 *	.052	2.305	.022	.736	1.359	.158 *	.063	2.498	.013	.498	2.010	.160 *	.064	2.517	.013	.494	2.022	.165 *	.077	2.146	.033	.341	2.932
	.399 *	.142	2.812	.005	.034	29.719	.353 *	.149	2.370	.019	.031	32.614	.367 *	.153	2.398	.018	.029	34.288	.366 *	.154	2.381	.018	.029	34.391
							.114	.108	1.057	.292	.094	10.680	.116	.108	1.069	.287	.094	10.695	.114	.110	1.039	.300	.092	10.922
													.057	.137	.416	.678	.025	40.657	.061	.141	.429	.668	.023	43.269
																			-.011	.103	-.111	.911	.082	12.129
	.387						.391						.392						.392					
	.352						.353						.350						.346					
	11.004						10.112						9.240						8.481					

** Significant at the .01 level

* Significant at the .05 level

The position within the organisation had significant influence ($p=.002$, $B= 2.596$, $t= 3.196$) (see Table 6). As the B -value is positive a Manager will, on average, have a higher engagement compared to Individual Contributors. Further, personal interest in sustainability had significant influence ($p= .038$, $B= .485$, $t= 2.094$) (see Table 6). As the B -value is positive it indicates how an employee holding a private interest in sustainability will, on average, have a higher level of engagement compared to non-interested colleagues.

6.2.1.2 Hypothesis testing

H_1 posits how a more genuine appraisal of CS would increase the level of employee engagement. Shown in Table 6, we found significant support ($p= .000$, $B= .492$, $t= 5.817$). As the B -value is positive, we interpret a genuine appraisal of the firm's corporate sustainability to have a positive effect on the employee's engagement. Thus, we find support for H_1 .

H_2 posit how involvement in CS would increase the level of employee engagement. Shown in Table 6, we found this significant supported ($p= .013$, $B= .158$, $t= 2.498$). As the B -value is positive, we predict a positive relationship between the level of involvement in the firm's corporate sustainability and employee engagement. Thus, we find support for H_2 .

6.2.1.3 Testing for moderating effects relevant for an MNC

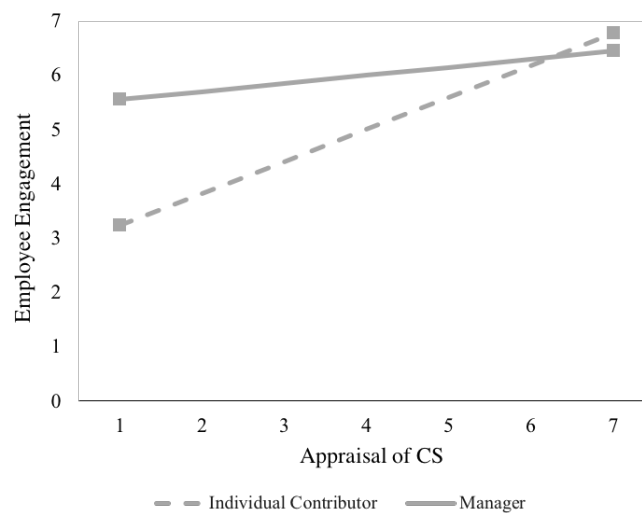
Hypothesis H_{1a} , H_{1b} , H_{2a} and H_{2b} were tested through using a moderating, interactive, variable. By assessing the moderating effect, we investigate how the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable tends to change when the moderating variable takes a different value (Hair et al. 2014).

H_{1a} posit how the employee's position within the organisation would influence the relationship between appraising the firm's CS, leading to employee engagement. Shown in Table 6, we found significant support ($p= .019$, $B= .353$, $t= 2.370$). The positive B -value indicates that if an Individual Contributor undertakes a more genuine appraisal, it would have a greater effect on their engagement, compared to individuals holding a managerial position.

To further visualise the relationship, we conducted a simple slope analysis recommended by Dawson (2014). The slope in Figure 3 demonstrates the relationship at different levels of appraising the firm's CS compared to their engagement, grouped into Managers and Individual Contributors. Using the logic from the Likert scale, we can further split the graph

into two sections. The once scoring below four demonstrates a disingenuous appraisal, while above four shows a genuine assessment. This graph visualises the substantive difference between the two groups at lower levels of perceived genuineness. Individual Contributors with a negative assessment of their firms CS will have substantially lower engagement. But conversely, the effect on engagement caused by a genuine appraisal is more meaningful among Individual Contributors compared to Managers. A manager’s engagement is almost held constant along the scale, demonstrating how their assessment of the firm’s CS has a little influence on their level of engagement.

Figure 3. *Two-way interaction simple slope analysis*



H_{2a} posits how the position would influence the relationship between the effect of involvement and employee engagement. Shown in Table 6, this hypothesis is not supported ($p= .292$, $B= .114$, $t= 1.057$). There are no detected differences between how the involvement in CS affects employee engagement, depending on the individual’s position within the organisation. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected.

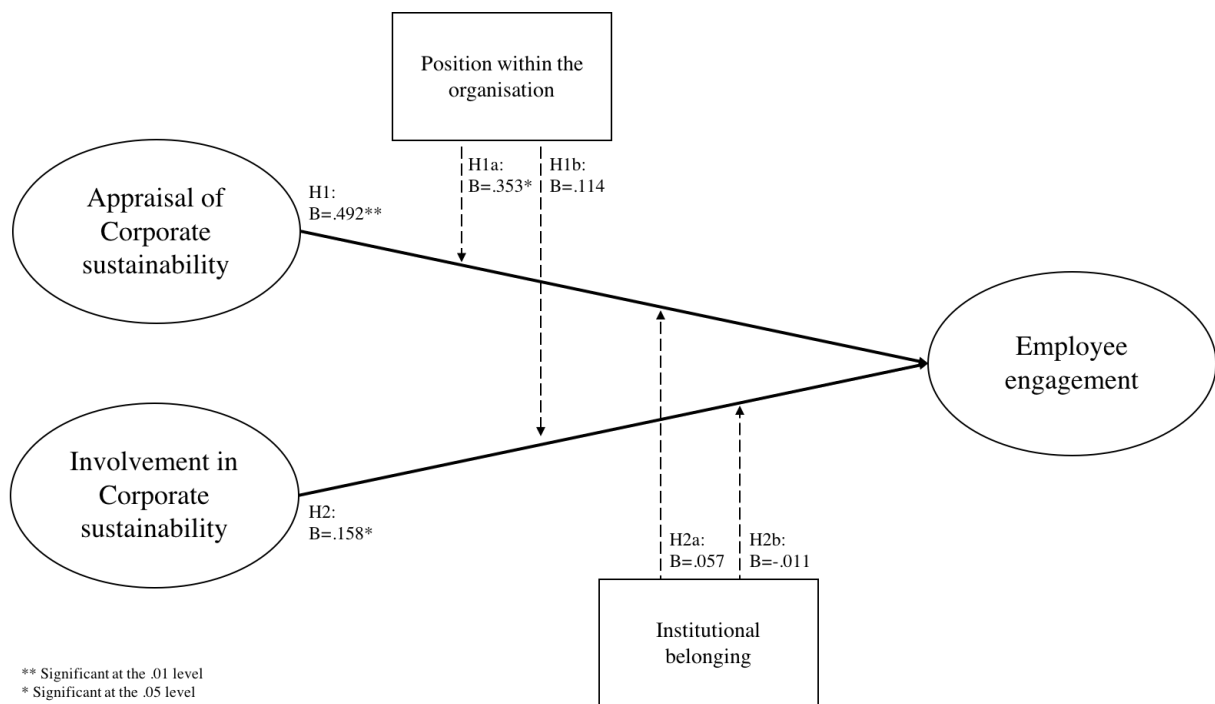
H_{1b} posits how the employee’s institutional belonging would influence the relationship between the appraisal of CS and the employee’s engagement. Shown in Table 6, this hypothesis is not supported ($p= .678$, $B= .057$, $t= .416$). There is no difference when comparing SCA and CWA. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected.

H_{2b} posit how the employee’s institutional belonging would influence the relationship between the involvement in CS and employee engagement. Shown in Table 6, this hypothesis is not supported ($p= .911, B= -.011, t= -.111$). There is no difference when comparing SCA and CWA. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected.

6.2.2 Summary of results from the regression model

To summarise the results from the regression model we can conclude three, out of the six formulated hypothesis, to be statistically supported: H₁, H₂, H_{1a}. The statistical relationships are further visualised in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Statistical relationships between CS and employee engagement



Source: Created by authors

6.2.3 Assessing multicollinearity and the accuracy in the stepwise regression

It is critical to assess the multicollinearity in stepwise regression, as it is a common issue of the independent variables to correlate. The goal is to have a high pairwise correlation between the independent and dependent variable, but not between the independent variables (Hair et al. 2014).

First, by assessing the Pearson's correlation (see Table 5) we found the highest correlation between independent variables to be .380. Since this measure deems a value below .9, the correlation is acceptable in line with Hair et al. (2014). Followingly, we controlled the tolerance of the two independent variables. The tolerance is a direct measure of multicollinearity, illustrating the amount of variability of the selected variable. This value shows what is not explained by the other independent variable when added to the regression (Hair et al. 2014). Appraisal of CS had a tolerance value of .487, and Involvement in CS held a value of .498 (see Table 6). Both values indicate how they are not sharing any substantial amount of variance, as the suggested cut-off is below .1 (Hair et al. 2014). Finally, we assessed the variance inflation factor (VIF), indicating the standard error of the *B*-value, whereas accepted values are below 10 (Hair et al. 2014). As Appraisal of CS had a VIF-value of 2.053 and Involvement in CS 2.010 (see Table 6), this is acceptable.

However, detectable in Table 6, when adding the interaction-variables to test the effects of institutional belonging and position within the firm, the VIF-values for the control variables of Institutional belonging and Position within the organisation increased substantially. The issue is often referred to as the "dummy-trap", luring for potential multicollinearity problems (Allison 2012). This result is not surprising, as the interaction variable was created by multiplying the independent variable with the control variable. By this, the variables will be highly correlated as they contain the same set of data (Das and Chatterjee 2011). But since the independent variables of Appraisal of CS and Involvement in CS held acceptable VIF-values, we can assume the model to still be free from multicollinearity issues and therefore the *B*-value to be advocate, as argued by Allison (2012). Thus, our model does not suffer from any significant multicollinearity.

Assessing the models overall fit, we considered the adjusted R^2 . This value illustrates the amount of total variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables (Hair et al. 2014). When the adjusted R^2 declines, we have reached the regression with the highest explanatory power. Therefore, model 5 in Table 6 shows the most proper fit for our study, in line with why we rejected three of our hypotheses. We can conclude that the initial idea of having a genuine appraisal and being involved in CS can predict engagement. However, there is no significant difference among institutions; it is instead a question of what position hold in the firm when the individuals appraise the firm's CS.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Implications

Following chapter joins our findings with the theoretical framework. We returned to the studies purpose, objectives and researched question, to establish how corporate sustainability could be included in an MNCs engagement strategy. Further, are suggestions towards existing firms of how to engage employees around its corporate sustainability and lastly are the studies limitations and recommendations of further research.

7.1 Discussion and theoretical contribution

As previous research had fallen short of establishing a model of how to facilitate employee engagement (Schaufeli 2013), we developed an engagement model by synthesising the rooted engagement literature of Kahn (1990; 1992) with behavioural aspects of OCB-theory. This, on its own, is a contribution to academia to test other relationships, apart from the hypothesised relation between CS and employee engagement.

The study's first objective was to explore how employees understood, felt and participated in their firm's sustainability operations, and how this predicted their engagement. As previous research has implied (e.g. Glavas and Godwin 2013; Jones 2019; Kahn 1990), our results confirmed how the psychological aspects of the employee's perception of their firm's CS are predicting engagement. As stated by Grayson and Martinec (2004), employees' evaluation of the genuineness behind the initiatives is purporting the foundation of the appraisal, whereas an authentic assessment of the firm's CS incentives facilitates higher engagement (McShane and Cunningham 2012). This relation was reflected in our results, as a genuine appraisal of the firm's CS initiatives, lead to higher employee engagement.

Furthermore, excising the idea of employee involvement in CS leading to higher engagement (Benn, Teo and Martin 2015; Remmen and Lorentzen 2000; Renwick, Redman and Maguire 2013; Venturelli, Cosma and Leopizzi 2018), found support in our results. Employees participative in CS operations held a higher engagement. Although involvement did not have the same statistical effect as the psychological condition, the behavioural feature could theoretically be argued to hold equal importance. Following the findings of Paille et al. (2014), employees invited to participate in CS activities increased their OCB- behaviours. This discovery, in conjunction with Eisenberger et al. (2001) claim of how behaviours are correlated with the psychological state of mind, indicates a crucial takeaway. An increased

participation in CS initiatives could simultaneously increase the employee's appraisal, flourishing both drivers of engagement. It is a high potential that shifting conditions in one variable could strongly influence the other, despite how we statistically separated these mechanisms.

The study's second objective was to detect if the relationship was affected by the organisation's hierarchy or the individual's institutional belonging. First, we assessed the moderating factor of the employee's position within the organisation, and how it affected the individual's appraisal. As MNCs often are large and hierarchical organisations, it holds the challenge efficient communication (Haugh and Talwar 2010) resulting in management commonly having more knowledge (Forsgren, Holm and Johansson 2005) and thereby develop higher engagement. This hypothesis was supported: there is a difference between Manager and Individual Contributors. However, when visualising the difference, we found it contradicting to our theoretical reasoning, as we expected a proportional effect between the employee groups, thus, a low appraisal would still result in low engagement. Indeed, our results showed that an Individual Contributor scoring low in their appraisal was strongly mirrored in their engagement. But in contrast, Managers could appraise the CS as disingenuous and still be highly engaged. This unforeseen insight could be explained by the general premise of holding a managerial position. A manager is likely to hold a complex and autonomous role (Humphrey, Nahrgang and Morgeson 2007) and to generally have information (Wright and Nishii 2006), creating an over spanning engagement. It indicates how the firm's CS operations have a limited influence on managers engagement. Presumably, their source of energy is founded in something else. But on the other hand, as the non-executive employees' assessment of their firms CS strongly affects their engagement, it demonstrates the vitality for the organisation to approach this employee group strategically.

Followingly, we assessed the moderating factor of the employees' position within the organisation in regard to their level of involvement. Based on the structural challenges of an MNCs, we followed Venturelli, Cosma and Leopizzi (2018) and hypothesised the non-executive employees to be far apart from the firm's CS operations, whereas an individual a part of the management would have increased participation and understanding of the firm's CS aspirations (Bartunek, Rousseau and Rudolph 2006; Gollan 2005;). Thus, it would result in higher engagement among managers. Our findings suggested the hypothesis to be rejected: there is no significant difference between management and non-executive employee's

involvement in relation to their engagement level. It indicates how it is of equal importance to participate in the firm's CS operations regardless of position. However, the result suggests a relatively low involvement throughout the respondent group, signifying how the majority of both Managers and Individual Contributors perceives themselves as non-involved. Following Dahlmann and Bullock (2020) and Merriman et al. (2016), this could indicate how the organisation is operating its sustainability operations through a siloed approach.

Furthermore, we assessed the moderating factor of institutional belonging, to address the deficit of theoretical understanding of employee engagement on developing markets (Barakat et al. 2016) and how individuals are influenced by their socio-cultural context when responding to sustainability initiatives (Luo, Wang and Zhang 2017). Interestingly, both hypotheses were rejected, as we did not detect any significant alterations when comparing our two areas. From an institutional theory perspective, this could imply two things. First, following Ingram and Clay (2000), both institutions could hold the same reasoning around the subject. It would indicate how Scandinavia and Central West Africa are experiencing the same pressure of becoming sustainable, which reasons with sustainability being an interconnected global phenomenon. Secondly, it could imply how these employees, instead of being affiliated in their geographical institution, are predominantly influenced by their organisation, discussed by Bourdieu (1980). As the sampled organisation is leading its business segments transformation of becoming more sustainable, and the unseen difference could be the result of a robust and persuasive organisational culture. Of all the competing logics, their corporate culture could be the strongest among pressures.

In answering our research question, we divide it into two parts. In the fundamental aspect, *how corporate sustainability affects employee engagement*, we have established how an individual's appraisal and involvement in CS can predict their level of engagement. Employees both care for their firm's CS operations, and they would like to be a part of such initiatives. The second part of the questions aimed to detect *how this relationship was affected by organisational structure and institutional differences*. It is found how non-executive employee's engagement is profoundly affected by their appraisal of the firm's CS, compared to managers who are seemingly unaffected of this assessment. However, there was no difference when comparing geographical areas. Therefore, when returning to the studies purpose, *to understand how corporate sustainability could be incorporated into engagement strategies*, we suggest organisations utilise their CS operations when targeting their

employee's genuine appraisal. Our findings illustrate the importance of directing efforts towards non-executive employees since this is where an organisation practically could increase engagement levels. Further, we suggest organisations to invite both employee groups into the MNCs process of becoming more sustainable. But as the institutional belonging did not affect any of the presented relationships, findings imply that an MNC can apply a centralised, over-spanning engagement strategy when incorporating sustainability aspects.

In addition to answering the researched question, there is yet one more academical finding that is particularly interesting. From an engagement literature perspective, engagement is fundamentally an alignment with the individual's interests (Kahn 1990; 1992). To administer this effect, as we applied personal interest as a control variable in the regression, and the variable kept significant in its relation to employee engagement throughout. First, this demonstrates how the individual's private beliefs have a spillover effect in their work role, as these employees generally scored higher in engagement compared to non-interested colleagues. The increased engagement could theoretically be argued as an alignment between the individual and the organisation's values (Kahn 1990; Rich, Lepine and Crawford 2010). However, by being applied as a control variable, it removes the private interest's "contamination" in the regression model, and noteworthy, it still resulted in a statistically significant engagement model. It is an essential finding: even employees without private interest in sustainability care about their firm's CS operations, denoting the whole group to be relatively sustainability conscious. It symbolises CS to have a more substantive influence than the theoretical engagement literature founded personal interest and values. This could be interpreted as CS are moving towards being a segment of the extrinsic job satisfaction, mentioned by Buitendach and De Witte (2005). As discussed by Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002), there is a direct connection between a fundamental satisfaction and employee engagement, since an employee would first need to be satisfied to build a higher engagement. It puts a firm's CS operation in another light, as a cornerstone in creating an employee's engagement. Sustainability might not be an organisational "nice to have" it could be a "must-have" to get the better out of employed staff.

7.2 Managerial implications

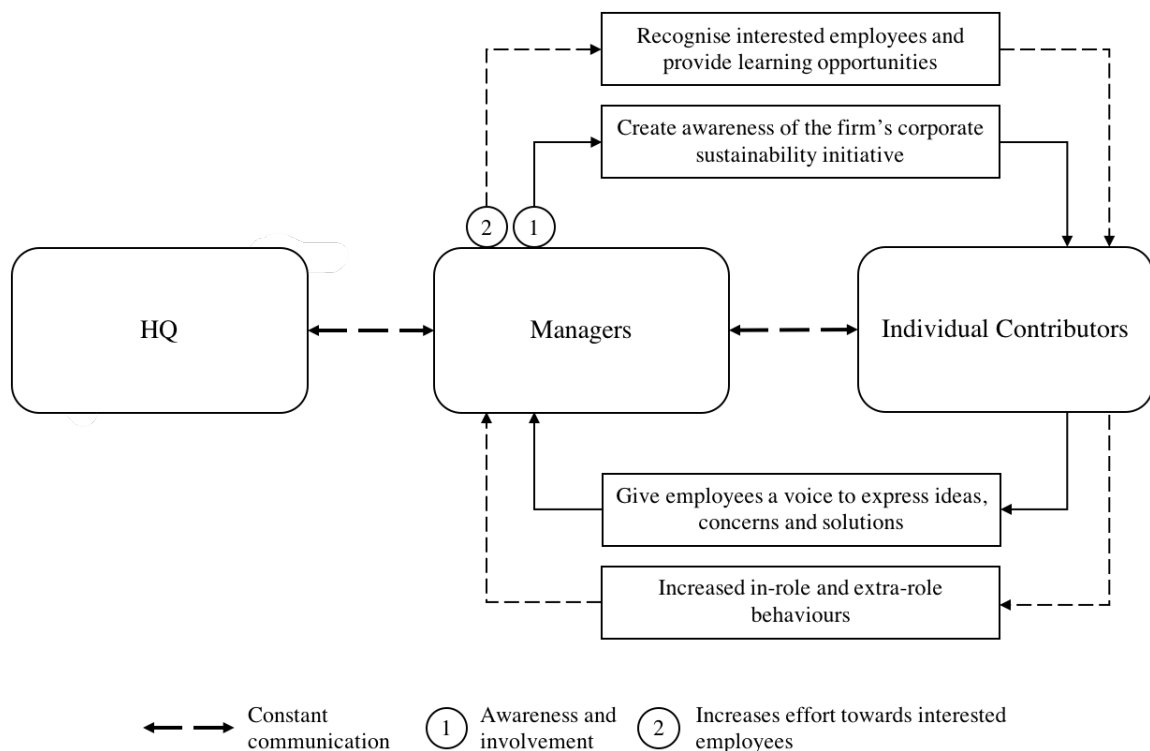
Apart from the theoretical contributions of this study, our findings point towards opportunities within the realms of existing firms. As institutional belong showed an insignificant effect, we find that business managers can develop their organisational capabilities to foster their employees' engagement.

As shown, steering the attention towards the firm's CS is an effective way to increase employee's emotional engagement. However, as stated by Minbaeva (2014), employees will be mostly absorptive towards information valuable in their work role, increasing the difficulty of fostering awareness of the firm's CS. It is, therefore, essential for firms to facilitate employees understanding of what the organisation is currently working with, and why they are pursuing these operations. It would mitigate the risk of the MNCs employees asserting the efforts as greenwashing, as stated by Lyon and Montgomery (2015). It could increase the potential of the employees appraising the firm's CS as a genuine and authentic attempt to resolve a real problem and not solely a strategic flirt with external stakeholders. Nonetheless, as involvement in sustainability operations had a significant effect on employees' engagement, it is critical to invite employees to participate in CS initiatives. Sprung from Heery and Noon (2017), it can either be practical or cognitive involvement, realised by giving employees a voice to be heard (Walton 1985) created by a structural or practical mechanism (Lavelle et al. 2010). Thus, to aid both ascendants in the engagement model, it comes down to facilitating efficient interaction. Information should be communicated from its HQ down to the non-executive employees to increase awareness, but also creating a reversed flow of ideas from lower rank employees, back to its HQ to increase involvement. The process is visualised in Figure 6 as Loop one, applicable to all employees.

However, the fundamental idea of harnessing the energy among the workforce is to target what the individual finds important (Kahn 1990; 1992). Following Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2015), employees are a heterogeneous group of individuals, with different interests and knowledge. Thereof, it is not a universal relationship of how employees' desires to partake CS initiatives and being forced to participate would be disengaging. Founded in the work of McGregor (1960) and Argyris (1964), the organisation could expedite this engagement process, by identify sustainability interested employees and invite those to learning opportunities, since participation encourages the individual's development. Training schemes would be a way to increase positive emotions by showing how management are directing their

effort towards the employee’s personal development (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002; Tansky and Cohen 2001). It would build the employee’s organisational support, and following Eisenberger et al. (1986), result in the reciprocal process and beneficial behaviours both in-role and extra-role. This process is visualised in Figure 6 as Loop two, something appointed to employees interested in sustainability.

Figure 5. *How to increase awareness, involvement and extra-role behaviour*



Source: Created by authors

Loop 2 is inspired by the “high involvement management” discussed by Lawler (1992) and Wood and Albanese (1995). Shown by Heery and Noon (2017), such structures often result in greater organisational effectiveness and productivity. Yet, it is essential to officially incorporate these obligations in the employee’s tasks, as employees will prioritise what is measured and awarded (Allen, Shore and Griffeth 2003; Glavas and Mish 2015). Thus, it is of great importance for the organisation to strategically decide if CS operations should be integrated into the employee’s scope. Because, although being a driver of engagement, as stated by Welbourne (2011), employees cannot be involved in everything. Consequently, the engagement strategy has to be well-aligned within the MNC to avoid overwhelming the employee in additional tasks.

Based on the above, inviting employees into CS operations could be a strategic win-win. Sustainability interested employees would increase their engagement by being able to bring their whole self to work, and the MNC could gain meaningful suggestions on how their business could become more sustainable. Fundamentally, our findings demonstrate how organisations must understand how engagement is a reciprocal process. By bolstering the social exchange between the individual and its management, the organisation can harvest their employees' increased energy. Through this, the amplified engagement can be transferred into a tangible outcome, denoting the central understanding of OCB-mechanisms when achieving and maintaining higher engagement levels. But this process requires substantive managerial efforts to recon employee's interests, capabilities and knowledge to be utilised in their work. To conclude, if the MNC can unlock this organisational capability, it would result in a synergy beneficial for all parties.

7.3 Limitations and further research

The present study has a number of limitations, offering interesting future research. First, from a methodological perspective, it would be valuable to test this in a larger sample. Examining and drawing conclusions of 185 respondents are acceptable, but we suspect these individuals held an interest in corporate sustainability on beforehand and prioritised our survey, steering the result. A larger sample would enable a more accurate understanding of the relation (Hair et al. 2014). Further, this is a case study conducted within the international business research field, implying the relationships potential uniqueness. The study would deem replication in several companies to validate its evidence.

Secondly, it would be interesting to investigate which sort of sustainability that would have the greatest effect on employee engagement. Due to time constraints and social desirability issues, we only tested the respondents view towards "environmental" and "social" sustainability. We find it possible to approach this with increased fitness and delicacy, enabling further insight into the phenomenon.

Thirdly, as our study focused on the mechanisms of creating engagement, it would be of great interesting to understand the results of this increased engagement. As the previous research has established consequences such as improved performance, increase retention (Jones 2010), grown meaningfulness (Aguinis and Glavas 2017), a deepened identification with the organisation (Onkila 2015), it would be we enjoyable to see the presented model's outcomes.

This knowledge could aid organisations in their creation of viable engagement strategies to understand how the results would benefit the organisation.

Fourth, from a theoretical perspective, it would be compelling to in-depth understand the influence of corporate sustainability's relation to employees. Our findings demonstrate how sustainability was important to even non-sustainability interested employees: a result opposing the bottom-line of the engagement literature. In reason with Waddock (2004), a firm's responsibility towards stakeholder is continuously altered, and our evidence points towards increased internal pressure. Corporate sustainability might not only be an engagement factor, it might be spanning towards influencing employee's extrinsic job satisfaction, discussed by Buitendach and De Witte (2005). However, this is in need of further investigation.

Fifth, the managerial suggestion is to facilitate a two-way communication channel, is essentially a dissertation on its own. It demonstrates an organisational challenge on how to simplify communication between HQ and the broad mass of employees, something not dealt with in this thesis. The suggested remedy requires further research.

Lastly, as our measure of institutional difference did not detect any alteration, it would be interesting to further investigate more numerous markets with higher contrasting institutional settings. As the theoretical evidence points towards powerful pressures (e.g. Greenwood et al. 2011; Pache and Santos 2013), it could be different outcomes comparing other areas. This understanding is critical for the MNC, especially emphasised by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1988), although our evidence attests to a centralised strategy.

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Appendix 1. Purification process

Indicator	Reason for purification
EE 1.1: I strive as hard as I can to complete my job	1
EE 1.2: I try my hardest to perform well on my job	1
EE 1.3: I devote a lot of energy to my job	2
EE 1.4: I work with intensity on my job	2
EE 3.1: My mind is focused on my job	2
EE 3.2: I am absorbed by my job	2
EE 3.3: I pay a lot of attention to my job	2
EE 3.4: I am concentrating on my job	2
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AP 1: I feel informed about my employer's ecological/environmental initiatives	2
AP 2: I feel informed about my employer's social initiatives	2
AP 3: I find my employer to act responsibly towards me as an individual	1
AP 4: I find my employer to act responsibly towards their business partners	3
AP 11: I believe my employer work with sustainability because they want to do the right thing for investors	3
AP 13: I believe my employer work with sustainability because it is a strategic decision to benefit the business	3
AP 14: I believe my employer work with sustainability because everybody in the industry is doing it	3
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IN 2: I have ideas on how to improve its social performance	2
IN 7: My manager would value my opinion in regard to sustainability	2
IN 8: My ideas in regard to sustainability would be listened to	2
IN 9: My suggestions are something the organization might act on	2
IN 10: My participation in sustainability initiatives is important	3
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PI 2: I hear about sustainability on the news	2
PI 6: I value acting responsibly towards the environment	2
PI 8: I make sustainably conscious choice to what I eat	1
PI 9: I make sustainably conscious choices of what clothes I buy	1
PI 10: I make sustainably conscious choices of how I travel	2
PI 11: I think it is mainly the government's responsibility to solve sustainability issues	3
PI 12: I think it is mainly companies responsibility to solve sustainability	3
PI 13: I think it is mainly the individual's responsibility to solve sustainability	3
PI 14: I think the discussion on sustainability overexaggerate	2
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Note: Reason for purification	
1. Item removed due to low factor loading	
2. Item removed due to split factor loading	
3. Item removed based on theoretical reasoning	

Appendix 2. Inter-Item and Item-Total Correlation

Employee engagement						
	Inter-Item Correlation					Item-Total Correlation
	EE 2.1	EE 2.2	EE 2.3	EE 2.4	SS 1	
EE 2.1	-					.828
EE 2.2	.776	-				.905
EE 2.3	.762	.932	-			.912
EE 2.4	.819	.828	.834	-		.878
SS 1	.719	.757	.787	.746	-	.808

Appraisal of CS								
	Inter-Item Correlation							Item-Total Correlation
	AP 5	AP 6	AP 7	AP 8	AP 9	AP 10	AP 12	
AP 5	-							.834
AP 6	.776	-						.745
AP 7	.742	.691	-					.819
AP 8	.690	.634	.811	-				.776
AP 9	.722	.615	.631	.647	-			.836
AP 10	.728	.603	.721	.667	.913	-		.863
AP 12	.664	.593	.642	.604	.808	.827	-	.792

Involvement in CS						
	Inter-Item Correlation					Item-Total Correlation
	IN 1	IN 3	IN 4	IN 5	IN 6	
IN 1	-					.601
IN 3	.618	-				.727
IN 4	.441	.621	-			.717
IN 5	.440	.529	.779	-		.719
IN 6	.505	.596	.467	.563	-	.646

Personal interest in sustainability						
	Inter-Item Correlation					Item-Total Correlation
	PI 1	PI 3	PI 4	PI 5	PI 7	
PI 1	-					.754
PI 3	.608	-				.641
PI 4	.600	.561	-			.709
PI 5	.683	.489	.543	-		.681
PI 7	.483	.442	.604	.483	-	.600