

Corporate ESG commitment and employee engagement. A case study of a FinTech SME

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In the past decade Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance has gained academic, corporate and political interest (Nekhili et al., 2019; Cornell & Damodaran, 2020). Investors are also increasingly interested in the relationship between ESG and financial suitability and return on investments (Cek, 2020; López-Toro, 2021). There is also growing interest into the relationship between corporate engagement with ESG and employee engagement. (Diaz-Carrion et al. 2020). This empirical study will explore the relationship between corporate activity in the area of ESG and employee engagement within an SME in the FinTech sector. A mixed method approach will be used to collect information on internal stakeholder attitudes to ESG. An employee engagement survey will be analysed (n= 120) to scope employee attitudes towards ESG values. This study will utilise a combination of two focus groups with employees (participants n= 12), semi-structured interviews with board level executives (n= 5). A thematic analysis of employee's perspectives of the company's ESG commitment and implications for employee engagement will be presented. First findings indicate that internal stakeholders express a strong interest in ESG values, and desire to be involved in the companies ESG dialogue. The importance of ESG investing in the financial sector was widely understood. Areas of good ESG practice, particularly in environment and social values were identified. Actions towards gender diversity in STEM were positively greeted. Participants expressed desire to work for organisations with strong ESG commitments. They believe a focus on ESG adds to long-term financial stability, investor attractiveness and aligned to their own values. This study has important practical implications for organisations strategically investing in ESG practices. Insights into internal stakeholder perceptions can be used to constructively formulate an ESG strategy that enhances employee engagement and adds to the sustainable success of an organisation. This case study of an SME in the FinTech sector adds original insight into the implementation of ESG and employer engagement. It proposes practical ways a culture of ESG engagement can be communicated within the organisation and to external stakeholders.