



Ethical Leadership Impact on Employee's Engagement in Voluntary Pro-Environmental Behavior: The Mediation Model of Green Human Resource Management

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of ethical leadership (EL) on Employee's engagement in Voluntary Pro-Environmental Behavior (VPEB) through mediation of green HRM practices. With the help of convenience sampling, data collected from a sample of 260 respondents from health sector of Pakistan. Questionnaire was distributed to conduct survey. This data was then analyzed through SPSS. This study revealed positive effect of ethical leader on employee's voluntary pro environmental Behavior. Mediation of GHRM practices is found to be significant. In the presence of ethical leadership and by implementing GHRM practices organization can have ecofriendly workforce that help organization to build an image of environmental friendly organization to their stakeholders.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership (EL), Voluntary Pro-Environmental Behavior (VPEB), Green Human Resource Management (GHRM)

1. Introduction

Environmental sustainability become an emerging area of scholar's interest and is a big challenge for practicing managers and policy-makers (Costello et al., 2009; de Lange, Busch, & Delgado-Ceballos, 2012). Increasing environmental awareness pressurizes the organizations to implement environmental management system (Kassinis & Vafeas, 2006). But, merely adopting an eco-friendly system is not enough until it is successfully implemented which largely depends upon employees' behaviors (Daily, Bishop, Govindarajulu, & Society, 2009). Enhancing and engaging employees into pro-environmental behavior is now become crucial for organization. In this regard, managers are realizing the need to encourage their employees in pro-environmental behaviors and respond proactively to enhance environmental responsibility (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007). Due to its non-obligatory and discretionary nature, pro environmental behavior of employees helps organizations in improving its green image (De Groot & Steg, 2009). These factors stress the need to study pro environmental behavior that require employee's behavioral modification and open new avenue for researcher to investigate how such behaviors can be developed.

Consistent with this, there is an emergent need to have new leadership style that emphasize social and environmental responsibility, without profit sacrificing (Fry & Slocum Jr, 2008). By arousing emotion in employees, top leadership plays vital role in motivating and encouraging employees to become conscious about environmental protection (Afsar, Badir, & Kiani, 2016). But existing research is scarce in explaining how leaders boost employee's green behaviors (Robertson & Barling, 2013).

While many researchers have identified leadership influence on employees with respect to pro-environmental behavior (Robertson & Barling, 2013), remarkably missing the effect of ethical leadership in enhancing employee's pro-environmental behavior. This study conducted in response to increasing calls to examine ethical leadership role to influence employees workplace behavior (Ko et al., 2018). We observed that the current researches on pro environmental behavior of employees lacks multilevel aspects. For instance, as per our knowledge, research on ethical leadership-voluntary pro environmental behavior is not found at group level. The present research targets to fill this research gap by investigating how ethical leadership engaged employees into voluntary pro environmental behavior and exploring underlying mechanism.

At the same time, new stream of researches has focused on the role of human resource management (HRM) practices as 'the management of work and people toward desired ends' (Boxall, Purcell, & Wright, 2007, p. 1), and green HRM practices are adopted with aim of enhancing environmental performance (D. W. Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013). Still, there is a lack of knowledge about role of HRM practices in influencing pro environmental behavior, despite the researchers highlighted the key role of HRM in developing specific strategies (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Muller-Camen, 2011; Ones & Dilchert, 2012). This study aims to observe ethical leadership role to develop VPEB through the mediation mechanism of green HRM practices. This study mainly based on Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura & Walters, 1977) which suggest that ethical leaders can positively shape employees voluntary pro environmental behavior.

Indeed, this study contributes to VPEB and SLT by exploring a new mechanism that helps ethical leadership in enhancing VPEB with the mediation of GHRM. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing knowledge on the consequences of ethical leadership and also contribute to OB literature in developing countries where research on this topic is needed more.

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This paper is organized in following manner. Section 2 provides theoretical framework and hypotheses development. Next section of methodology presents key features of the study. After result presentation, we discuss the result and, finally provide conclusions and limitations, as well as provide future direction.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This paper recommends a research model (see Fig.1) in which ethical leadership and green HRM are proposed as important antecedent of pro environmental behavior. Individuals engaged themselves in various PEBs to at their work place to help organizations in achieving environmental sustainability (Mesmer-Magnus, Viswesvaran, & Wiernik, 2012). In literature, there is a distinction in workplace pro-environmental behavior; firstly task-oriented pro-environmental behavior, which is part of job duties and secondly voluntary pro-environmental behavior (VPBE), which is discretionary pro-environmental behavior which is not part of job duty and not prescribed nor rewarded. Such behaviors are conceptually different (Norton, Parker, Zacher, Ashkanasy, & Environment, 2015; Ones & Dilchert, 2012) while having different antecedents (Norton et al., 2015). Usually, VPBE target environment directly and indirectly. Through direct way it addresses environmental issues, like energy saving, waste issues like recycling, resources saving of paper, materials, or water), and pollution reduction by using less-polluting means of transportation, contaminant emissions prevention. While through indirect way VPBE acts as an enabler for improvements such as suggestions to organization for improvement in environmental practices of the company, questioning environmentally destructive corporate practices and identifying technical failures that can significantly dangerous to environment.

As employees' pro-environmental behavior is multidimensional, this research focus merely on voluntary behavior. The reason behind is voluntary pro-environmental behavior signify the vast majority personnel enact as compared to 13%-29% required pro-environmental behavior (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). Pro-environmental behavior is type of pro social behavior so with traditional leadership approaches it is difficult to convince and motivate employees to engage in such behavior by managers (Paillé & Boiral, 2013). Brown, Treviño, Harrison, and processes (2005) proposes ethical leaders to be very concerned about society, organizations and for employees instead of own self-interest. Perhaps to trigger such behavior, our study proposes ethical leadership approach that can arouse pro environmental behavior.

2.1. Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate behavior in both personal and interpersonal contexts and the active promotion of socially responsible behavior at all levels in the organization reinforcing a moral ethos through communication and ethical decision making”(Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Leader's ethical behavior is key component of every leadership style like spiritual(Fry & Slocum Jr, 2008), charismatic (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), authentic (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), or transformational leadership(Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). But ethics is just one aspect among different aspects of leadership style, researcher studied ethical leadership is a concept on its own in to capture the features of ethical leadership conduct and investigate its antecedent and consequences.

Ethical Leadership is unique from former leadership styles on theoretical and experimental bases (Ofori, 2009). “Transformational type leaders mainly focus on values, vision and intellectual stimulations as compared to ethical leadership that emphasizes moral values and moral management” (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 598). Similarly, moral administration is basic difference between ethical and spiritual leadership. Unlike authentic leadership that emphasis on “self-awareness”, ethical leaders emphasize on “others” awareness. The ethical leaders enhance moral management while focus of spiritual leader is visioning, optimism, and belief(Brown & Treviño, 2006).

But all leadership styles have some common characteristics and overlap each other. Ethical leadership influence on follower's behavior is similar to any other leadership style like idealized influence(Brown et al., 2005), individual consideration and inspirational motivation (Wazni et al., 2010). Ethical leader like transformational leaders through role modeling influences follower behavior (Avolio, 1999), integrity and in ethical decision while like transactional leaders use reward and punishment system for employees.

2.2. Ethical Leadership, Green HRM and VPEB

SLT theorizes that individuals learn through role modeling and by observing others. Ethical leaders are authentic role model of normative behaviors. These leaders can imply values, thoughts, and moral behaviors in employees and also influence their perceptions about policies and procedures of organization towards environmental sustainability. Ethical leader's green behavior determines company strategy towards environmental concern and through green HR platform, leader disseminate this strategy to their employees. Green human resource management (GHRM) comprises of organization's HRM practices to environmental protection strategy. According to Tang, Chen, Jiang, Paille, and Jia (2018), green human resources management practices are promoted with intention of environment friendly use of resources, which in general reinforce environmental performance and increases employee's awareness and commitment in particular. It is beneficial for business, environment and individual, business to use green human resources management practices to make their employee's environmental friendly (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014) and

ensuring environment protection (Jabbour & Santos, 2008). For implementation of practices of green HRM, different researchers used different framework. For example a conceptual framework suggested by Daily, Huang, and management (2001) included senior management support, employee's training, employee's empowerment and reward. Similarly Milliman and Clair (1995) HRM model recommends "environmental vision", "environmental training of employees", "environmental performance evaluations", and "recognition of environmental performance through reward". In this way top management share organization vision regarding environmental concern, communicates related policies, plans and procedures, provide training and empowered employees to understand environmental practices and engaged them into environmental friendly activities. They also use rewards to stimulate them to participate in responsible behavior of environment consciousness.

Green human resources management practices support organization to form a workforce that help to take green inventiveness. Basically green human resources management is application of theories and principle of environmental management in human resources management, practices and processes (D. Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2008). Although many firms have recognized the strategic implementation of GHRM in the environmental sensitive agenda, but such environmental action have not generated the anticipated behavioral results from the employees. Green HR practices require supportive working environment where employees are willing to participate and helps in implementation of environment friendly attitudes (Nikolaou, Evangelinos, & Leal Filho, 2015). Firms that boost employee's pro-environmental behavior accomplish higher efficiency, which result in ecological competitive advantage. Green human resources management practices work as facilitator for green conscious employees and refine employee's behaviors in their personal and working lives in developing pro environmental attitudes.

Therefore, many researchers recommended that managing and improving employee green awareness and abilities plays significant role in environmental management (Longoni, Golini, & Cagliano, 2014). Green training enhance workforce abilities and skills to manage environmental related issues (Govindarajulu, Daily, & systems, 2004), provides deep understanding of complex environmental related problems (Perron, Côté, & Duffy, 2006). Better knowledge of their working activities can affect the environment (Daily et al., 2001). Green training enhance capability of employees in identifying environmental issues (Jabbour & Santos, 2008), and improve their decisions making and taking actions for environmental protection (Vidal-Salazar, Córdón-Pozo, & Ferrón-Vilchez, 2012). Combination of environmental training and green involvement creates an environment where employees engaged in green activities. It also provides opportunity to enhance environmental performance by using green skills and abilities (DuBois & Dubois, 2012). Incorporation in appraisals provide clear message about employee's role in organization environmental activities, extrinsically motivate employees to adopt green behaviors (Becton, Giles, & Schraeder, 2008). This will encourages employees in taking environmental related initiatives (Ramus & Steger, 2000). Moreover, rewarding green efforts stimulates employees and improve their environment related performance (Cordeiro, Sarkis, & Environment, 2008).

In line with above arguments it is summarizes that ethical leader influences their followers' behavior as describe by social learning theory, and to engage employees in greening activities, use of green HRM encourages environment friendly practice (Cincera & Krajhanzl, 2013). Green HR practices provides supportive working environment where employees are willing to participate and helps in implementation of environment friendly philosophies (Nikolaou et al., 2015). Dumont, Shen, and Deng (2017) suggested role of green HRM practices in enhancing the employees' pro environmental behavior. Thus we proposed that

Hypothesis 1: Ethical Leadership is positively related to green HRM practices

Hypothesis 2: GHRM practices are positively related to employee's voluntary pro environmental behavior.

Hypothesis 3: GHRM mediates ethical leader and employee's voluntary pro environmental behavior relation.

Hypothesized Model



Figure 1

3. Methodology

For this paper, survey was administered (N=316) in healthcare sector of Pakistan by using convenience sampling method. Participations is voluntary in this research and all participants were provided with questionnaire along with a cover letter that briefly explains the purpose of the study. It was also ensured to all participants that their provided data will be kept confidential, and used only for research purposes. The employees completed this survey at one time including EL, GHRM, VPEB and control variables. Out of 316 distributed questionnaire, 260 participants completed

the survey, with a response rate of 82 percent. Out of which 56 questionnaires were eliminated due to incomplete information. Demographic information of respondents comprises of gender, education, organization size and age. Males comprises of 38% of respondents and females 62 % are of total respondents of the study. 38% respondent are of above 30 age group where 55% respondent have master degree holders and 49 % respondent works in medium size organization. To overcome the linguistic issues and improve the understandability of the questionnaire (which was administer in English), focus group discussion was conducted before the actual use of survey questionnaire. Pre-test was also administered on the final questionnaire.

3.1. Measurement

3.1.1. Ethical Leadership

Total 10 items scale was used for measurement of ethical leadership ,from the most widely used scale for ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005). Employees valued their ethical leadership on 5-point scale. Sample questions are “My supervisor listens to what employees have to say”, “My supervisor disciplines employees who violate ethical standards”. Cronbach alpha for this measure was .88.

3.1.2. Green HRM

6 items scale (Dumont et al., 2017) was used to measure GHRM. This scale was also widely used by researcher. Sample questions include “My organization sets green goals for its employees”, “My organization provides employees with green training to promote green values”. Cronbach alpha for this measure was .94.

3.1.3. Voluntary Pro Environmental Work Engagement

Employees’ voluntary pro-environmental behavior is measured on 12 item scale developed by Lamm, Tosti-Kharas, Williams, and Management (2013). Sample questions include “.....Is person who recycles bottles, cans, and other containers”, “.....Is a person who uses scrap paper for notes instead of fresh paper?”. Cronbach alpha for this measure was .91.

3.2. Control Variables

Data also collected on gender, age, educational level, and organization size which re control variables because their impact on ethical leadership has been already studied previously (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015).

4. Analyses and Results

In current study, to test associations, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis conducted. Regression analysis was conducted to check the mediation.

4.1. Reliability Analysis

For reliability test, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for every constructs. Table 1 shows Cronbach alpha values ranged from 0.87 to 0.79 which shows that all measures are reliable (Nunnally, 1994).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Ethical Leadership	10	.879
Green HRM	6	.937
VPEB	12	.796

4.2. Regression Analysis

To test the hypothesis of the research regression analysis was conducted. Table 2 shows values of regression analysis to test our hypothesis.

The value of regression co-efficient between EL and GHRM is significant (i.e., $\beta=0.659$, $p=0.000<0.05$). This shows that EL positively influences GHRM. Likewise, the regression co-efficient between GHRM and VPEB is also significant (i.e., $\beta=0.226$, $p=0.000<0.05$), indicating a significant positive impact of GHRM on VPEB. Thus, our hypothesis H1 and H2 are accepted

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	β	R ²	P	Result
EL \longrightarrow GHRM	0.659	0.22	0.000	Accepted
GHRM \longrightarrow VPEB	0.226	0.101	0.000	Accepted

4.3. Analysis of Mediation Using Multiple Regression:

We used multiple regression in order to test mediation of GHRM between the relationship of EL and VPEB. Table 3 shows result for mediation.

This study examines the mediating role of GHRM on EL and VPEB through a three step hierarchical regression method. Where in the 1st step all the demographic variables are included to control their effect. In the second step independent variable is added while in the third step mediating variable is added and noted it's significant. In our result GHRM ($\beta=.142$, $p<.01$) is significant which shows that there exist a mediation and accept our third Hypothesis H3.

Table 3 : Hierarchical Regression for Mediation

Variable	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)
<u>Control Variable</u>			
Gender	-.305**	-.307**	-.274**
Orga_Size	-.020	.033	.097
Educat	.075	.109	.073
Age	.146	.047	.064
R ²	.071		
<u>Independent Variable</u>			
EL		.348**	.257**
R ²		.18	
ΔR^2		.11	
<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
GHRM			.142**
R ²			.21
ΔR^2			.03

Note: N = 260; *P < .05, **P < .01;

5. Discussion & Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This research meant to explore a mechanism that links ethical leadership (group level) to employee's voluntary pro environmental behavior (VPEB) through green human resources management (GHRM). In this model, this research has explored the positive effect of ethical leadership on employees' voluntary pro environmental behaviors.

Ethical leadership weakens unethical behaviors of employees (Khan, Ali, Usman, Saleem, & Jianguo, 2019; Zhao & Zhou, 2019) and considerable effect on employee work related outcomes (Junsheng, Masud, Akhtar, & Rana, 2020) and influence workplace behaviors and attitudes (Bavik, Tang, Shao, & Lam, 2018). As per SLT of Bandura and Walters (1977), we stated that ethical leader via role modeling influences the employee's behaviors. Moreover, ethical leader plays important role in establishing GHRM practices.

This research also contributes to current literature on ethical leadership with VPEB relation through the mediation of GHRM. Our results proposed that ethical leader consider environmental protection as their ethical responsibility (Suifan, Diab, Alhyari, & Sweis, 2020). Furthermore, they set ethical standards with the help of green HR practices that describe the significance of ethical standards to its employees that enhance employees' awareness concerning environmental policies and procedures. This in turn, stimulate employees to display VPEB. Barnett, Clarke, Cloke, and Malpass (2005) clarified that leaders should help and motivate employees to resolve unethical issues of environment. Both (leaders and employees) play a noteworthy role in exhibiting pro-environmental behavior because leader is a role model for employee (Afsar et al., 2016; Zhao & Zhou, 2019). Ethical leaders also very concerned about moral responsibilities of employee, which in turn reduces the business destructive effects on environment. The "others concern" is a crucial feature of ethical leader. Therefore, ethical leaders are very concerned for society, business and employees and create moral obligation in employees to strive for ethics (social justice, peace etc.) (Kuenzi, Mayer, & Greenbaum, 2020) and to display ecofriendly behavior (recycling, energy saving etc).

5.2. Practical Implications

This study provides numerous practical insights. Organizations can increase VPEB by keeping leaders and employees' green awareness in check. More precisely, organizations must focus on their leaders' ethical behaviors to achieve their ecological goals. Moreover, leadership should consider the GHRM practices as critical factor in fostering VPEB. In this respect, organizations by arranging training sessions (Law, Hills, Hau, & Environment, 2017) to existing employees to enhance employee's environmental awareness. Organization can prepare workforce which is environment conscious with the help of GHRM practices of selection, recruitment, training, compensation and reward practices.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

This research is not without limitations. This Study is conducted in health sector of Pakistan that may limit the generalizability of result. Future research will be conducted in other countries. This research is cross sectional in nature. Future research should be conducted longitudinal research design to better understand the ethical leadership and its work related outcome. Our research focuses on organizational level mechanism (Green HRM) to describe ethical leaders influence on followers' engagement in voluntary pro environmental behavior. Future studies should explore ethical leadership practices at individual and group levels.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study identifies an important mediator of green HRM practices in ethical leadership and followers' behavior relationship. By identifying green HRM practices, this study answers the important questions of how ethical leaders affects followers' engagement in voluntary pro environmental behavior. This research provides a valuable contribution in ethical leadership literature.

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