Supervisor's Green Commitment as a Predictor of Employee Green Work Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Scant amount of research led to conduct an empirical investigation with the purpose of identifying the effect of supervisor's green commitment on employee green work behavior. While addressing this gap in the extant literature, the study made a methodological contribution by validating a scale for green work behavior. A sample of 96 machine operators from often ready to wear apparel-manufacturing firms in Katunayake and Pallekele industrial zones in Sri Lanka responded to a survey. The collected data were analyzed with the hierarchical regression analysis. The results reported that the commitment demonstrated by supervisors in terms of their dedication to the environmental sustainability and willingness to engage with pro-environmental behavior fosters employees to engage with green work behavior. The outcomes of the study provide implications to psychological contract theory and the social sustainability theory. In terms of policy implications, the study proposes decision makers to implement green commitment- and green behavior-enhancing human resource management (HRM) practices. The policy makers should introduce green commitment-enhancing HR practices for their employees such as rewards, recognition programs, inclusion of green criteria in performance management, as well as green training. Consequently, managerial and supervisory level employees will commit on achieving environmental sustainability goals and assist other employees to perform their green work. The limitations of the study and directions for future studies are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Green Commitment; Green Work Behavior; Machine Operators; Ready to Wear Garment Manufacturing Industry; Sri Lanka.

1. INTRODUCTION

The organizations believe that they must develop a powerful social integrity and a sense of green responsibility since the sustainable development is concerned with meeting the needs of current and future generations (Rhead *et al.*, 2015; Robertson and Barling, 2017). Thus, the effect of businesses on environment is a significant concern of both businesses and national-level policy makers over the last years.

More specifically, the management scholars have paid a greater attention today on environmental concerns of managing organizations (Masri and Jaaron, 2017; Renwick *et al.*, 2013), with an emphasis on aligning environmental management strategies with human resource management, which is labeled as "green human resource management" (GHRM) (Renwick *et al.*, 2008). In addition, in order to enhance environmental performance, employees' involvement in green citizenship behavior is necessary (Robertson and Barling, 2017), since such behavior contributes to deal with environmental issues and promotes organizations' sustainable development (De Groot and Steg, 2010).

So far, scholars have published research on numerous aspects of GHRM and green behavior. There are theoretical studies (Ren *et al.*, 2017; Renwick *et al.*, 2016) as well as empirical studies that have explored the contributions of GHRM to enhanced performance in areas such as the environment (Guerci *et al.*, 2016; Masri and Jaaron, 2017) and the financial performance (Longoni *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the prior studies have focused on whether green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB) is related to the organizations' support for the environment (Paillé and Raineri, 2015; Wesselink *et al.*, 2017), employees' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Paillé *et al.*, 2018; Paillé and Mejía-Morelos, 2014), and the organizational identification (Afsar *et al.*, 2018). While researchers have explored the effects of GHRM and GOCB on some organizational and employee-level factors, a group of researchers have explored the reverse causation, i.e., whether some organizational and employee-level factors influence the employee green behavior as explained in the next paragraph.

Since the employers are responsible for the implementation of organization's green policies, the managers should promote and change their employees' green behavior (Daily *et al.*, 2009; Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Ramus and Steger, 2000). Therefore, contemporary organizations have implemented green HRM practices for promoting their employee's workplace

green behavior (Renwick *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, past studies on green behavior have explored the effects of organizational sustainability programs (Paillé *et al.*, 2013; Norton *et al.*, 2014) and leaders' influence (Ramus and Steger, 2000; Robertson and Barling, 2013) on the workplace green behavior. However, the review of extant literature did not report any studies that have tapped supervisor's green commitment and its impact on the employee green behavior, even though the psychological mechanisms such as Psychological Contract Theory (Argyris, 1960) provide implications for such a relationship. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to empirically investigate whether supervisors' green commitment promotes their employee's green work behavior. Current study contributes to the GHRM literature in three ways. First, a green work behavior scale is validated which includes all three dimensions of green work behavior: green organizational citizenship behavior, green interpersonal behavior, and green official behavior. Second, this is the first empirical study that has investigated the effect of supervisor's green commitment on employee's green work behavior since the review of extant literature does not report any prior studies. Third, national culture has an impact on the green practices (Song *et al.*, 2018; Petruzzella *et al.*, 2017) which demand for country-specific studies. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by undertaking the research in a developing country context.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The current study is framed by psychological contract and social sustainability theories. The psychological contract theory explains that there is a relationship between an employer and an employee where there are unwritten mutual expectations for each party (Argyris, 1960; Rousseau, 1989). The psychological contract theory introduced by Argyris (1960) suggests that the employment relationship goes beyond the formal economic employment contract. The psychological contract is defined by Rousseau (1990) as "an individual's beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations set in the context of the employee relationship." The psychological contract emerges when the employee believes that "a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations" (Rousseau, 1989). By referring psychological contract theory to GHRM, a reasonable prediction can be made. That is, the supervisor's green commitment results in building a reciprocal obligation in employees to demonstrate green behavior which is anticipated by the firm. Rogers (2014) defines social sustainability as "the ability of societies to meet human physical, social, and emotional needs on an ongoing basis". Therefore, social sustainability reflects the moral and ethical reasoning of what is right, whereas psychological contract provides the basic mutual expectations of the employee and the employee. Based on the premise of these two theories, prior studies claim that the employees reciprocate with green behavior when they perceive support in terms of favorable green practices and supervisor's green attitudes.

The extant literature supports the argument that the GHRM practices have a positive effect on green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB) (Dumont *et al.*, 2017; Pinzone *et al.*, 2016). When employees perceive that they are being supported for green practices, they are likely to involve in green activities as volunteers (Alt and Spitzeck, 2016; Paillé and Mejía-Morelos, 2014). Ren *et al.* (2017) claim that the green human resource management strategies may promote employees to involve in discretionary behavior concerning the environment. Two recent studies conducted based on healthcare employees found that the OCB is positively related to employee commitment (Pham *et al.*, 2019; Paillé *et al.*, 2018). A study of 531 employees in France revealed that the green commitment has a positive effect on employee green citizenship behavior (Raineri and Paillé, 2016). A study conducted by Bamberg and Möser (2007) found that the general environmental attitudes positively predict pro-environmental intentions and behavior. Based on these theoretical arguments and outcomes of empirical studies, it can reasonably be presumed that the supervisors' green environment commitment has a positive effect on employees' green behavior. Therefore, this study was guided by the prediction that the supervisor's green commitment has a positive effect on employees' green behavior.

3. METHOD(S)

3.1. MEASURES

3.1.1. GREEN COMMITMENT

For the purpose of this research, green commitment was defined as the extent to which an individual is committed to environmental sustainability and is willing to involve in pro-environmental behaviors (Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2012). Environmental commitment was measured with an eight-item scale developed by Raineri and Paillé (2016). Some of the questions of this scale are "I really care about the environmental concerns of the company," "I would feel guilty about not supporting the environmental efforts of my company," and "the environmental concern of my company means a lot to me."



Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Source: Author developed.

3.1.2. GREEN WORK BEHAVIOR

Green work behavior was defined as the extent to which a particular employee takes actions in respect of greening (Opatha, 2019). Green work behavior was measured with three dimensions, namely green organizational citizenship behavior, green interpersonal behavior, and green official behavior (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014; Opatha, 2016). Green organizational citizenship behavior was defined as "the extent to which the employee engages in positive actions aimed at helping the organization as a whole to achieve greening" (Opatha, 2014) and measured with a single item "I always go beyond my normal job duties and help with the organization to achieve its goals of environmental sustainability." Green interpersonal citizenship behavior was defined as "the extent to which the employee engages in positive actions aimed at helping specific co-employees to do their green work" (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014) and measured with a single item "I always help my co-employees through various influences to do their green work." Green official behavior was defined as "the extent to which the employee as "the extent to which the employee as "the extent to which the employee sto do their green work" (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014) and measured with a single item "I always help my co-employees through various influences to do their green work." Green official behavior was defined as "the extent to which the employee engages in official duties assigned by the superior with regard to greening" (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014) and measured with a single item "I always perform green duties assigned by the immediate supervisor."

3.2. SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

The study was conducted based on a survey of a random sample of 200 machine operators of 10 apparel-manufacturing firms in Katunayake and Pallekele industrial zones in Sri Lanka. Firms that have ISO 20000 certification were selected presuming that these firms have implemented sustainable human resource management practices. Surveys were distributed among a random sample of 20 machine operators of each firm. Only 96 employees responded to the survey which was a 48% response rate. The collected data were analyzed with multiple hierarchical regression statistics by using the version 22 of the SPSS software.

3.3. CONTROL VARIABLES

Prior studies suggest that the demographic factors influence employee green behavior (Abrahamse and Steg, 2009). Therefore, demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and tenure were controlled.

4. RESULTS

The questionnaire was distributed and collected with the support of the HR department of each company. A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted only for the employee green behavior scale since it has been devised solely for the purpose of this study which required validation. The results of Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test are given in Table 1. Since the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value is close to1 and the significance value is less than .05, the sample is considered as adequate for the factor analysis. The total amount of variance accounted for in the construct by factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 was 78.39%.

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.978
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx Chi Square	.9566.628
	df	68
	Sig	.000

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's test for employee green behavior questionnaire.

Source: Survey Data, 2020.

The following Pattern Matrix shows the extracted and rotated factors. As shown in Table 2, all three questionnaire items loaded into one component and the factor loadings were above .4. Therefore, all the initially proposed scale items were retained. The Cronbach's alpha values were computed for each scale item in the questionnaire to measure the internal consistency, and higher alpha values indicate that the scale items are closely related as a set of items.

Table 2.	Green	work	behavior	questionnaire.
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Scale Item	Component	Cronbach's Alpha
I always go beyond my normal job duties and help with the organization to achieve its goals of environmental sustainability.	.702	.994
I always help my co-employees through various influences to do their green work.	.817	.863
I always perform green duties assigned by the immediate supervisor.	.705	.870

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Source: Survey Data, 2020.

Means, standard deviations, and interitem correlations are shown in Table 3. The diagonal of this table presents Cronbach's alpha values which indicate that all measures demonstrated adequate levels of reliability since the alpha values are greater than .8. Many employees were female (78%). Mean and standard deviation statistics relating to these demographic variables are presented in Table 3. The mean age of respondents was 29, and the average organizational tenure was 4.2 years. The interitem correlation coefficients indicate that there are significant positive correlations between study variables.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age (Years)	29.0	4.6						
2. Gender	N/A	NA	.254					
3. Tenure (Years)	4.2	2.30	.377*	.361*				
4. Supervisor Green Commitment	2.93	1.22	.396**	521*	367*	.880		
5. Employee Green Behavior	3.71	1.50	.230**	.311*	402**	.667**	.978	

Table 3. Correlation matrix of variables.

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

Source: Survey Data, 2020.

4.1. HYPOTHESES TESTING

As shown in Table 3, all the demographic factors have reported significant correlations with the outcome variable. Therefore, the hierarchical regression analysis was employed to test hypothesized relationship by controlling the effects of demographic factors in measuring the relationship between predictor variable and the outcome variable.

The study hypothesized that the supervisor's green behavior has a significant positive effect on determining employee green work behavior. Table 4 presents the results of hierarchical regression analysis. After controlling the effects of age, gender, and tenure, the results indicated that the supervisor green commitment has a significant positive effect on determining their employees' green work behavior (β = .461, p < .05). Therefore, the hypothesized relationship proposed in this study was accepted.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression for supervisor green commitment and employee green behavior.

Predictors (Beta)	Step 1	Step 2
Step 1:		
Age	.230*	
Gender	.311*	
Tenure	402*	
Step 2:		
Age		.217*
Gender		.299*
Tenure		137*
Supervisors' Green Commitment		.461*
F Statistic	4.761*	3.675*
Adj. R-Sq.	.007*	.125*
R-Sq. Change	.009	.123

Note: *p < .05.

Source: Survey Data, 2020.

5. DISCUSSION

The current study revealed that the supervisor's green commitment is a driver of the employee green work behavior. This outcome implies that the employees demonstrate three types of behaviors when they perceive that their supervisors are committed to environmental sustainability and are willing to engage in pro-environmental behaviors such as going beyond their normal job duties and help with the organization to achieve its goals of environmental sustainability, helping co-employees to do their green work, and performing green duties assigned by the immediate superior. This finding provides implications to both psychological contract (Argyris, 1964; Rousseau, 1989) and social sustainability (Rogers, 2014) theories. Referring to the psychological contract theory, if the supervisor is committed to be green oriented, the employees feel a moral obligation to demonstrate green behavior. As suggested by social sustainability theory (Rogers, 2014), the employee ability to meet human, physical, social, and

emotional needs by demonstrating green work behavior is enhanced when their supervisors provide moral and ethical reasoning by being committed to environmental sustainability. This research outcome agrees with prior studies which support that there is a positive relationship between employee green commitment and their green behavior (Pham *et al.*, 2019; Paillé *et al.*, 2018; Raineri and Paillé, 2016). However, no prior empirical studies were found for the positive effect of supervisor green commitment on employee green work behavior which includes all three dimensions of green work behavior: green citizenship behavior, green official behavior, and the green interpersonal behavior.

5.1. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although this study was conducted in the context of Sri Lanka, it has significant implications for management in general, since green management has become a global issue in the current business environment (Norton et al., 2014). Therefore, the policy makers should introduce green commitment-enhancing HR practices for their employees such as rewards, recognition programs, inclusion of green criteria in performance management, as well as green training. Consequently, managerial and supervisory level employees will commit on achieving environmental sustainability goals and assist other employees to perform their green work. Moreover, green HRM results in increased employee awareness of the environment, reasoning of green management, and the organizational green values.

5.2. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has several limitations that need to be addressed. First, the sample of the study may not be representative of wider Sri Lankan industries since it covers only a limited number of industries. Second, any HRM practice may take time to influence employee behavior and generate expected outcomes. Therefore, a cross-sectional study may not be adequate to fully explore the purpose of this study. Therefore, future studies should be conducted with a wide range of industries, and a longitudinal study is worthwhile. Finally, the only outcome of supervisor green commitment may not be the employee green behavior. Therefore, future studies should examine the effect of supervisor green commitment on other employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, work performance, and employee green commitment. Future research to explore employee non-green attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of supervisor green contributions to the HRM literature.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on responses from a sample of 96 machine operators of Sri Lankan garment-manufacturing firms, the study reported that the supervisors' green commitment positively impacts on determining the employee green work behavior. Since there is a scant amount of literature that has examined the relationship between supervisor green commitment and employee green work behavior, the study made a significant contribution to literature by conducting the study in the context of a developing country. The study made a methodological contribution by validating a green work behavior scale that comprises green work behavior dimensions such as green citizenship behavior, green interpersonal behavior, and green official behavior. The study provides implications to psychological contract theory and the social sustainability theory. In terms of policy implications, the study proposes decision makers to implement green commitment- and green behavior-enhancing HRM practices.

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APPENDIX-A

Green work behavior questionnaire

Dimension/s	Questions
Green organizational citizenship behavior	1. I always go beyond my normal job duties and help with the organization to achieve its goals of environmental sustainability.
Green interpersonal behavior	2. I always help my co-employees through various influences to do their green work.
Green official behavior	3. I always perform green duties assigned by the immediate supervisor.