

Article

Applying Green Human Resource Practices toward Sustainable Workplace: A Moderated Mediation Analysis

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Abstract: The significant need to achieve business sustainability calls for a new business perspective grounded on leaders' abilities and the effective execution of green human resource management (GHRM). This study aims to emphasize the role of ethical leadership and GHRM in moving organizations toward sustainability. GHRM supports companies to match their corporate strategies to the environment mainly in the presence of ethical leaders who can walk the talk and the provision of adequate practices and training by HRM to foster a working environment, where employees can exhibit creativity, passion, and positive behaviors towards sustainability. Specifically, this research studies the impact of ethical leaders via GHRM and harmonious environmental passion on employees' green behaviors using a quantitative method in which a dyadic approach (supervisor–employee) was employed to collect data from two sources through a structured questionnaire from non-profit organizations in Lebanon. The research hypotheses were tested using Partial Least-Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM). The results showed a significant impact of ethical leadership on employees' green behaviors. In addition, GHRM and harmonious environmental passion mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' green behaviors. Besides, it was noticed that green creativity strengthened the association between ethical leadership and GHRM, while a psychological green climate strengthened the association between GHRM and employees' green behaviors. The study has practical implications for leaders and policymakers who are apprehensive about business sustainability.

Keywords: ethical leadership; employee's green behavior; GHRM; harmonious environmental passion; psychological green climate; green creativity; business sustainability



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1. Introduction

Business sustainability is “the ability of firms to respond to their short-term financial needs without compromising their (or others’) ability to meet their future needs” [1]. Therefore, time is vital to the concept of business sustainability [1]. Sustainable businesses put time at the heart of strategic management so that the short- and long-term influences of strategic decisions on cooperation and societal levels are carefully studied to avoid current and future imbalances [1]. Moving toward sustainability requires regulating performance against the triple-bottom-line principle (environmental, economic, and social) [2]. The environmental category involves reducing harm to the environment, while the economic category is deliberated on financial matters and the social category is related to the public good on two levels, namely the procedures that ensure social well-being in the short and long term and the role of social organizations that assist in economic and environmental sustainability [3]. As businesses act as agents in a bigger complicated system composed of the triple bottom line [4], the role of internal business elements becomes vital in achieving sustainability. As the earth has limited resources and is suffering from climate change, a new perspective on business is needed for a sustainable future. Accordingly, to possess a

sustainable business identity, organizations should integrate sustainability into the strategy [1] that is set by leaders who can lead organizational change through new approaches, procedures, as well as policies to encourage sustainable cooperation and social practices [5]. In this sense, GHRM is considered a focal component of business sustainability [6–8], which puts it at the heart of personnel management, as employees are key stakeholders in achieving business sustainability [6,7]. Therefore, a new business model that guarantees a sustainable workplace is needed on the premise of leadership and GHRM.

Companies have recognized the importance of sustainability commitment for future existence, and that a new managerial approach tailored to the environment is obligatory [9]. Nowadays, organizations must ensure equilibrium between financial development and pro-environmental operations [10]. Therefore, companies are in charge of attaining sustainable goals by weighing the environmental consequences of their actions [11]. The anthropogenic roots of climate change must be considered, in which the fruitful implementation of the organizational sustainability strategy largely depends on employees' green behaviors in the workplace harmonized with the green objectives of the organization [12]. Accordingly, a research interest related to the micro and macro factors that impact employees' green behaviors in the workplace has elevated [13] due to its positive impact on business sustainability [6–8]. In addition, these behaviors have valuable effects on climate change [14] and lead to the improvement of society through environmental protection [15].

Moreover, employees are firms' assets that can implement high-level strategies for sustainability [16]. Although any organization willing to enhance its environmental act should motivate its employees to be involved in green behaviors [17], research addressing encouraging employees' green behaviors is still scarce [15,18,19], especially in developing countries [20]. Furthermore, the scant literature is linked to the theoretical and boundary conditions of how the environmental policies and practices within organizations are related to employees' green behaviors [21]. Based on the synergistic perspective of the leadership and human resource management relationship by [22], these tend to strengthen each other when they communicate the same values to employees (e.g., green organization) as they do separately. Recently, a limited body of literature has begun to stress the role of ethical leaders and green human resource management in promoting green behaviors in the workplace [15,23,24]. Ethical leadership is positively linked to business sustainability [5], which is the focus of the current research as it focuses on the morality of leaders and their ability to adequately communicate business means to their followers with an emphasis on improving societies. Such leaders focus on spreading ethics by being role models through entailing organizations' employees and the society in which they function. Following the extant literature, the current research takes ethical leaders as advocates of morality with a focus on sustainability and green behavior into consideration, which consequently promotes green behaviors among employees.

GHRM aids the goodwill of the company, diminishes stakeholders' pressure, and adds to future generations in the long run [25]. Moreover, GHRM has a significant impact on the eco-innovation and green behavior of employees, leading to better performance for the organization in the green domain [26,27]. One of the recent vital issues faced by HR specialists is to guarantee the appropriate incorporation of environmental sustainability into HR procedures [19], as there is an association between GHRM and sustainability [10]. Previous research has shown green recruitment and training have a positive effect on sustainability [16], and companies should demonstrate a set of practices such as appointing candidates with environmental awareness and adopting appraisal procedures based on employees' adherence to the environment [19]. Even though the impact of GHRM on employees' green behaviors has been recognized by previous researchers [19,28,29], the GHRM field is still evolving [30] and offers gaps to fill [31]. While some leadership approaches have been assessed in this context (e.g., green transformational leadership) [27], this research focuses on ethical leadership as a particular approach that fits the scope of enhancing employees' behavior towards sustainability and improving the workplace environment accordingly. This is due to the characteristics of ethical leaders, which enable

them to incorporate both professional and societal aspects of sustainability in their practices, especially regarding communication with staff and encouraging green behavior through GHRM.

Moreover, leaders have the potential to convey sustainability-related messages, tapping into its prominence [32]. Based on the social learning theory [33], employees acquire acceptable and rewarded behaviors in the workplace through ethical leaders' role modeling. Furthermore, ethical leaders in particular play an essential role during organizational change by caring, truthful, and fair treatment and communication that yields an emotional link between staff and change initiatives [34] (i.e., green initiatives). This reveals a gap in the literature regarding the exploration of the mediators of this relationship between ethical leadership and employees' green behaviors [15,35]. Hence, this study aims to investigate the impact of harmonious environmental passion on this relationship as a positive environmental emotion evoked by leaders, thus fostering employees' green behaviors [20,23,35].

Consequently, due to the absence of a multilevel perspective related to the employees' green behavior literature [20,36] and responding to the mentioned gaps, the current research aims to contribute to the literature by examining the impact of ethical leadership on employee green behavior in the presence of GHRM and employees' harmonious environmental passion as mediators. In addition, the boundary condition placed by the green psychological climate in the effects of GHRM on employees' green behaviors is addressed, responding to [30], which called for the investigation of the potential moderating role of green psychological climate on the effects of GHRM on employees' green behavior. Furthermore, this research examines the role of green creativity and green climate on the green behavioral outcomes of employees in the presence of ethical leadership that further contributes to the theoretical conceptualization of this subject [27]. Thus, this research contributes to the organizational behavior literature, specifically employees' green behavior. Second, it contributes to the ethical leadership field as there is a scarcity of empirical evidence related to its outcomes in the workplace [37]. Third, it adds to the GHRM literature [38]. Fourth, based on [13], further research is needed on the interplay between the micro and macro factors that impact employees' green behaviors, as organizational elements impact the green behaviors of employees but employees also react to these elements and can be influential. So, by adding green creativity and the green psychological climate as boundary conditions to the interrelationship of ethical leadership, GHRM, and employees' green behaviors, we will be responding to this call. Lastly, as the study takes place in Lebanon, the OB literature related to the green psychological climate, green creativity, and employees' green behavior is contributed to as developing nations are less examined in the extant literature [39,40]. The article is structured in the succeeding sections: The next section examines the related literature and theories. Then, the research methodology for data collection is fully explained. After that, the study results are discussed. Later, findings are analyzed based on previous literature and their practical implications. Finally, the limitations of the current study are noted.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Ethical Leadership and Employee's Green Behavior

"Moral-based" practices of leadership seem vital in the twenty-first century [37]. As a result of organizational scandals worldwide, the research on ethical leadership has increased dramatically [41]. Ethical leadership is defined as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" [42]. Ethical leaders pay attention to society and act morally at personal and career levels [43]. They are viewed by followers as "attractive", "credible", and "legitimate" [42]. The moral person of ethical leadership includes traits, character, as well as altruistic motivation and is perceived by followers as being fair, truthful, with high levels of integrity, while the moral manager is shaped by his efforts to impact

followers' behaviors by having an ethical agenda, clearly sending moral messages, role modeling ethical conduct, and applying a compensation system that encourages ethical behaviors [42–44]. Accordingly, an ethical leader produces work-related outcomes directly through role-modeling and indirectly through social exchange as the leader acts as the source of information for expected behaviors in the workplace [45].

An ethical leader reinforces ethical business operations through reward and coercive powers [46]. Previous research on ethical leadership has largely investigated its positive impact on employees' non-green attitudes [47] including job satisfaction and organizational commitment [48], as well as behavioral results such as organizational citizenship behavior [49,50], creative performance [46], job performance quality [51], employees' trust in the organization, and service recovery performance [52]. Yet, its influence on employees' green behavior is still scarce [15] although leaders have a critical impact on the results of the companies, including environmental ones [53], and ethical leaders specifically have a moral responsibility to preserve the environment [54].

Employees' pro-environmental behavior or "green behavior" has attracted scholars' attention due to its relationship with climate change [55] and sustainability [13]. Based on [56], workforces spend one-third of their time, on average, in workstations in which internal and external factors, including the leader's exemplary behavior, have an impact on employees' green behaviors. These behaviors include 'scalable actions and behaviors that employees engage in that are linked with and contribute to environmental sustainability' [57]. Such behaviors provide value for companies [13] and enhance their environmental performance [58]. Ref. [13] differentiates among employee- versus organizational-level antecedents of employee green behaviors, and although past research has shown that many factors positively lead to green behavior in the workplace, such as environmental knowledge and awareness [59], pro-environmental attitudes [60], GHRM [19,28,29,61], collective green crafting [62], corporate social responsibility [63], green training [64], and environmental leadership [14], research on the causes of employees' green behaviors is still evolving [13,19,65].

Leaders should be a vital source of ethical direction for employees [42]. "The social learning theory" proposes that employees acquire proper behaviors through "role modeling" and the use of "reinforcement" [33]. Based on this theory, followers are affected by the behaviors of their role models including managers and supervisors in the workplace. They witness, replicate, and acknowledge the results of role models' behaviors [33]. An ethical leader has a noticeable ethical character and high awareness of employees with respect to environmental obligations [20]. In our assessment, the social learning theory is significant when the target behavior is green and is demonstrated by the leader [15]. For instance, employees will notice the actions of their managers, such as saving resources including electricity, printing on both sides, as well as recycling, and they will do the same. These leaders will walk the talk by promoting the logic behind responsible behaviors. Thus, given the importance of leadership in fostering employees' green behaviors and due to the scant studies on how managers can promote such behaviors at work and the rising need to study the impact of leadership on EGB [18,35,62], specifically ethical leadership models that improve green behavior [20,23,35,39], we suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Ethical leadership positively affects employees' green behaviors in the workplace.*

2.2. Mediation of Harmonious Environmental Passion

At a broad level, emotions are a response to an object or event and consequently control our behaviors [66]. Based on the leader–member exchange (LMX) theory [67], a two-way relationship between a leader and his followers is formed through trust, emotions, and respect [53], therefore leaders induce emotions in employees. Harmonious environmental passion is defined "as a positive emotion that results in an individual wanting to engage in pro-environmental behaviors", and it is this passion that leads employees to enroll in green behaviors [68]. These positive emotions are energetic and drive followers' motivation, so

they will be involved in green behaviors with passion and will be stimulated to make a difference [69]. Thus, when ethical leaders are involved in green behaviors, they send a message to their employees about the appreciated behaviors in the workplace. Employees will absorb these green behaviors and be inspired to perform them [68]. “Emotional contagion” between the leader and followers as an essential leadership process [70] will occur, and employees will attempt to harmonize with leader behaviors [39].

Employees are more enthusiastic about behaviors that are vital to society [39] and therefore more committed to their jobs [71]. Moreover, nurturing employees’ harmonious environmental passion enhances work outcomes such as green creativity, which contributes to environmental sustainability [36]. Previous research has shown that harmonious environmental passion is not limited to individuals but can be a property of a crowd, and ref. [72] showed that transformational leadership is positively related to team green behaviors and the relationship is mediated by the team–environmental harmonious passion. Although harmonious environmental passion as a positive emotion is linked to EGB [39,68,69,73], there remains a lack of research on it [39]. As factors mediating the relationship between ethical leadership and EGB have not been fully explored [15], it would be significant to investigate the impact of harmonious environmental passion on this relationship [20,23,35]. Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 2. *Harmonious environmental passion mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees’ green behavior.*

2.3. Mediation of Green Human Resource Management

Green human resource management (GHRM) is defined as “HRM activities, which enhance positive environmental outcomes” [38]. Such elements are important to improve sustainability in companies [31]. Recently, the call for green human resource practices—a sub-area of corporate social responsibility [41]—has increased as such practices support corporations to match HR strategies with strategic ones [23]. Green human resource management research is also known as HRM facets of environmental management and assists in inserting sustainability at the center of people management [38]. As a novel concept [30], GHRM has a holistic dimension that links employees to the organization’s environmental strategy in which certain practices (green recruitment and training) have a positive effect on sustainability [8]. Ref. [25] demonstrated that GHRM includes five practices, which are green recruitment and selection, green training, green performance appraisal, green compensation, and green participation. Such practices blend environmental goals with organizational ones, thus attaining sustainable growth [19].

GHRM has positive implications at both organizational and employee levels. At the organizational level, it positively contributes to the environmental performance of organizations [58,74] based on top management’s commitment to the execution of the GHRM practices [75]. At the employee level, it pushes employees to work harder as they will be involved in environmental issues, which will escalate their feelings of organizational belonging and pride [25]. In addition, successful implementation of the company’s green practices is bound by the behavior of its personnel [61] as GHRM is an antecedent of employees’ green behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior for the environment [31,62,76] and employees’ green behaviors [19,28–30]. The impact of GHRM on employees’ green behaviors can be elaborated on based on the social identity theory [77], in which individual identity is defined by the noticeable aspects of the group that he/she feels they belong to. Employees with green concerns working at companies with GHRM are more likely to identify with them, and this form of involvement will lead to green behaviors in the workplace [15].

Based on [78], employee behavior in the workplace is shaped by human resource management and leadership. GHRM and leadership as organizational antecedents of employees’ green behaviors offer researchers a great opportunity to add to this area and progress the knowledge related to employees as key contributors to ecological sustainabil-

ity [13]. Despite the theoretical connection between GHRM and employees' green behaviors, there is inadequate empirical proof related to this relation [19]. In addition, the interrelationship between leadership, GHRM, and employees' green behaviors has gained little interest in the past [23]. Ref. [55] mentioned that GHRM may affect the relationship between ethical leadership and employee work results, and only a few studies [15,23,24] responded to this claim. The responsibility and sustainability orientation of ethical leadership is defined as "leaders' long-term views on success and their concern for the welfare of society and the environment" [79], and GHRM is based on ethics and social responsibility [55]. Due to the fact that ethical leaders incorporate green values, social and environmental benefits can arise for employees. This is in line with the core concept of GHRM that aims to enhance environmental performance through various initiatives (e.g., planning, training, selection, and compensation). Thus, as ethical leaders promote morality and development (professional or individual), their role in adjusting GHRM practices cannot be neglected as their decisions are implemented in the reward systems, training, and selection of personnel. This implies that GHRM practices can act as a mediator for ethical leaders to enhance employees' green behavior [15,80]. With the focus of ethical leaders on green value communication and environmental training of GHRM, employees can increase their awareness and develop traits that are eco-friendly and be promoted or receive other incentives accordingly [58,81]. Based on the preceding, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 3. *GHRM mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' green behaviors.*

2.4. Moderation of Psychological Green Climate

The climate within organizations is one mechanism that organizations can depend on to assist employees in understanding their work environment through determining the acceptable codes of conduct [82]. The psychological climate is formed when employees encounter the social aspect of their organization and communicate about its guidelines and practices [35]. It is the outcome of "social interaction" among employees [20]. The psychological climate has a leading role in improving the performance of companies [83] as it is a contextual factor that influences employees' behaviors [84], whereas the green climate is relevant for organizations that attain sustainable goals through executing pro-environmental practices [85]. Psychological and green climates form the psychological green climate of organizations, which is defined as "the perception an individual has of the organization's pro-environmental policies, processes, and practices that reflect the organization's green values" [30]. The social-cognitive processes lead to this shared perception of the green climate among employees [17].

Previous research on the psychological green climate sheds light on the importance of psychological factors in improving green work-related outcomes in general and employees' green behaviors in particular. For instance, strengthening the green psychological climate through green management practices, procedures, and policies leads to better green product development performance [83]. Furthermore, voluntary environmental behaviors are enhanced through a positive psychological green climate, in which the workforce's perception of the company strategy regarding environmental sustainability nurtures the climate within organizations [86]. Furthermore, a green psychological climate can be a way to protect the natural environment through the pro-environmental behaviors of employees when the manager's formation of the shared pro-environmental perception of the organization is translated into actions such as energy preservation, reprocessing, and waste decreasing [35]. Moreover, respecting the organization's policy regarding environmental sustainability is higher in a green psychological climate. Employees engage with more green behaviors when they receive signs from the climate that the organization values such behaviors, and a deep feeling of a green psychological climate is reflected in the constant exhibition of such behaviors [20]. Thus, the existing literature offers empirical evidence

on the positive relationship between green psychological climate and employees' green behavior [20,30,84].

Although previous research offers preliminary insight into the role of GHRM in promoting employee's green behaviors, a robust comprehension of the psychological factors affecting this relationship is lacking [30], along with the organizational context that best facilitates GHRM practices [87]. Previous research states that a green psychological climate acts as a vital psychological and social element [36]. It guides employees to establish the value of organization rules, practices, and measures including those of GHRM elements that put "green" at the center of employees' attention [36]. GHRM has an important relationship with the psychological green climate in which GHRM influences employees' green behaviors while working in a positive psychological climate [19,30,88]. A green psychological climate guides employees on behaviors that are compensated within the workplace [85]. Motivated by the preceding studies, it is therefore estimated that a green psychological climate might reinforce the relationship between GHRM and employees' green behavior, thus responding to [30]. The person–environment theory review [89] can be used to explain the moderating role of a green climate in the workplace as individuals adjust their behaviors to fit into the work environment, therefore when employees sense a green climate, they are expected to adjust their behaviors to become pro-environmental thus adhering to the green human resource requirements. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 4. *Green psychological climate moderates the positive association between GHRM and employees' green behaviors.*

2.5. Moderation of Green Creativity

Living in the age of globalization, companies should have employees who strive for creating and executing novel and original ideas [90] as creativity can be a means to attain a competitive advantage and ensure organizational growth [91]. Society values creativity as a cherished characteristic of individuals, and furthermore, when organizations employ personnel, they expect them to be novel and carry out creative activities [92]. Based on the Amabile theory of organizational creativity [93], inner individual factors and contextual factors join together to impact the cognitive process through which original ideas are generated. For instance, motivating creativity in the workplace can be attained through productive workgroups composed of critical thinkers [94], as well as devoting resources to the organizational climate that forms a dynamic base for innovation [95]. Green creativity is defined as "the development of new ideas about green products, green services, green processes, or green practices that are judged to be original, novel, and useful" [96]. These practices include decreasing the usage of paper for printing and replacing them with technology for communicating, depending on renewable energy, and relying on reusable materials for production [41].

Although the philosophy of proper management of the environment is initiated in upper-level management of companies, several previous studies have focused on determining the antecedents of green creativity at both personal and contextual levels [97]. Thus, leadership and GHRM practices are gaining attention regarding their relationship with green creativity [41]. Creativity plays an active role in enhancing environmental sustainability in various sectors, and Ref. [98] found that green inclusive leadership fosters green creativity in the service sectors. Moreover, GHRM affects green creativity at both personal and group levels [99], and transformational leadership can positively impact employees' green creativity through creative process engagement [100] or GHRM [101]. Similarly, Ref. [97] showed the impact of green management initiatives (including green human resource management) and green transformational leadership on inspiring green creativity. Moreover, Ref. [102] indicated a positive impact of commitment to human resource management of the top management team via GHRM on green creativity.

When it comes to the ethical leadership style, Ref. [41] presented a novel model and was successful in finding empirical evidence that ethical leadership moderates the relationship between GHRM and green creativity. With the limited previous research on green creativity [41], the majority of previous studies are restricted to its conceptualization as an end outcome; however, in the present study, we predict that employees' green creativity will strengthen the positive effect of ethical leadership on GHRM in which the relationship is stronger when employees' green creativity is higher, thus providing "out of the box" solutions and suggestions that are welcomed and appraised [91], in this case, related to the greening of the organization. This reasoning is grounded in previous research showing that employees vary in their creativity [103,104]. Based on the componential theory of creativity [103], four components are joined to release creativity in the workplace, three of which concern individuals, which are expertise, creativity-thinking skill, and task motivation, and one of which is related to the work environment. Moreover, individuals with higher creativity characteristics are likely to show higher innovative capabilities, and companies managing a creative workforce have a better edge [104]. Therefore, we expect that employees' green creativity moderates the influence of ethical leadership on GHRM in which employees' green creativity will strengthen the impact of ethical leadership on GHRM:

Hypothesis 5. *Green creativity moderates the positive association between ethical leadership and GHRM.*

3. Materials and Methods

GHRM represents a research gap in Asia, especially comparing its adoption with western countries, and is the best way to engage employees in pro-environmental behaviors [105]. As GHRM research is still developing, several research questions are still present, mainly investigating its popularity in different sectors, such as service companies [31,106], and its role in encouraging employees to reach environmental excellence [106]. In addition, the causes of employees' green behaviors are still understudied in developing contexts [39,40] such as Lebanon.

Currently, Lebanon is struggling with a tough financial crisis. Based on [107], economic crises are a major threat to social and environmental initiatives as a firm's environmental practices may drop or even stop during such periods, leading to a decline in environmental acts, thus governments must be aware of a firm's environmental performance during economic crises as they pose a danger for nature and society. It is important not to neglect the Port of Beirut explosion, political conflicts, and environmental disasters [108], which make Lebanon a unique research context.

Based on the Lebanese ministry of environment, climate change will lead to a 14% decrease in Lebanon's GDP by 2040, reaching 32% by 2080. This change is estimated to increase the temperature and leads to water scarcity, causing more pressure on energy demands by businesses [108]. The Lebanese economy depends on the service sector, which accounts for 87.16% of the GDP as of 2020, in which employment in this sector reached 65.1% in 2019 [109]. Moreover, after the recent contextual changes in Lebanon, employment in non-profit organizations has increased dramatically as their role in society became more visible and vital.

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

Motivated by the preceding, the sample of organizations drawn on for this research is non-profit organizations in Lebanon. NGO employees in Lebanon work with various local and international organizations that require flexibility. Traveling, the usage of automobiles for humanitarian actions, and the provision of supplies have high environmental impacts. Therefore, this research focuses on the role of such organizations in the context of sustainability and environmental/green activities. Notably, through established connections with managers, a purposive approach was used to ensure that employees who are willing to par-

ticipate in the research are from the departments in which managers expressed willingness to provide data as well.

A quantitative methodology using a dyadic approach (supervisor-employee) was employed to reduce common method variance [110] in which data were collected from two sources. Employees' participation was voluntary, and their responses were confidential. A code was used to link employees' responses to their respective supervisors. In the first stage of data collection, employees completed an English questionnaire that included items on demographic information, perceived levels of ethical leadership and GHRM, their nearby psychological green climate, and their degrees of harmonious environmental passion. Moreover, their respective supervisors evaluated employees' behaviors including green behaviors and green creativity during stage two of data collection. The sample size required was calculated using G*power software [111,112] recommendations (statistical power = 80%, Min R² = 0.10, α = 0.01). The value is a range between 132 and 185. As the researchers collected data with care and with regard to the context of the respondents' jobs, a total of 200 complete responses were received and were regarded as satisfactory as they passed the edge level. Participants were selected from all departments of their NGOs (i.e., clerks, operations, executions, marketing, and finance). A total of 116 were male and 84 were female. The majority of participants had over 3 years of work experience (63%) and held a bachelor's or master's degree (71%). The age range of participants varied from under 30 (19%), between 30 and 40 (52%), and above 40 (29%).

3.2. Questionnaire and Measurements

In addition to what was noted, a collinearity test was deployed regarding common method bias, where VIF values were found to be below 3.3 [113]. In this respect, a ten-item scale used to measure ethical leadership was derived from the work of [42] with a sample item: "My supervisor is trusted". Employees' green workplace behavior was measured using a [114] six-item scale with a sample item: "The employee took a chance to get actively involved in environmental protection at work". GHRM was measured by using a [30] six-item scale with a sample item: "My organization sets green goals for its employees". Employees' harmonious environmental passion was measured by using a ten-item scale taken from [68] with a sample item: "I enjoy practicing environmentally friendly behaviors". Green Creativity was measured using a six-item scale taken from [96] with a sample item: "The member of the organization would rethink new green ideas". Finally, the green psychological climate five-item scale was taken from [85] with a sample item: "My organization is worried about its environmental impact. All items were measured on a 5-item Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. Respondents were informed of the aims and purposes of the study and were given additional information upon request. The questionnaire also included demographic variables such as age, gender, and work experience, which were controlled for as exogenous variables. To test the model in Figure 1, Partial Least-Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. This is justified as the current model includes latent variables, a relatively large sample size is not required, and the normality of distribution is not regarded as a concerning matter [115].

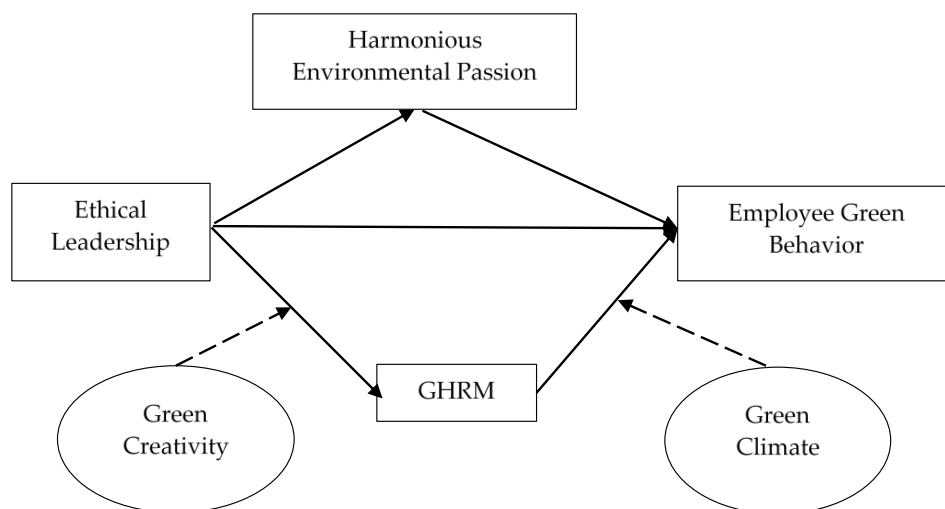


Figure 1. This figure presents the framework of the hypothesized model.

4. Results

As four criteria were met, Tables 1 and 2 show that the measurement model is qualified in terms of (a) an outer loading above 0.78 [115], (b) Rho A, composite reliability, and alpha values between 0.7 and 0.9, with (c) AVE being above 0.5, stating satisfactory convergent validity [112,116,117], and (d) heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) values being below 0.85, stating a satisfactory level of discriminant validity [118]. Hence, the results provided in Tables 1 and 2 show the validity and reliability of constructs and items, implying their adequacy for further analysis.

Table 1. Reliability and validity.

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	Alpha	Rho A	CR	AVE
Ethical Leadership	EL1	0.786	0.811	0.823	0.820	0.631
	EL2	0.814				
	EL3	0.903				
	EL4	0.779				
	EL5	0.778				
	EL6	0.780				
	EL7	0.781				
Employee Green Behavior	EGB1	0.819	0.863	0.880	0.874	0.738
	EGB2	0.831				
	EGB3	0.822				
	EGB4	0.813				
	EGB5	0.812				
GHRM	GHRM1	0.843	0.885	0.873	0.844	0.588
	GHRM2	0.865				
	GHRM3	0.883				
	GHRM4	0.781				
	GHRM5	0.783				
Green Climate	GC1	0.884	0.803	0.835	0.821	0.712
	GC2	0.876				
	GC3	0.743				
	GC4	0.779				
	GC5	0.778				
Green Creativity	GCR1	0.855	0.811	0.809	0.834	0.709
	GCR2	0.861				
	GCR3	0.873				
	GCR4	0.798				
	GCR5	0.781				
Harmonious Environmental Passion	HEP1	0.892	0.813	0.827	0.811	0.714
	HEP2	0.874				
	HEP3	0.822				
	HEP4	0.789				
	HEP5	0.782				
	HEP6	0.823				

Note: Due to outer loadings being below the threshold, some items have been omitted from the final analysis.

Table 2. Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) values.

	EL	GHRM	GC	GCR	HEP
EL					
GHRM	0.611				
GC	0.750	0.436			
GCR	0.748	0.499	0.526		
HEP	0.711	0.422	0.510	0.564	
EGB	0.575	0.466	0.487	0.502	0.514

In addition to the aforementioned reports, the structural model and its indices show an adequate degree of ‘fitness’ as the normal fit index (NFI) is 0.924 and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is 0.026 [119]. Additionally, multicollinearity was disregarded as a concern as VIF values are below the threshold of 3 [115]. Moreover, R2 (predictive power) and Q2 (predictive relevance) provide a statistically significant outcome that states a sound model [120] and are shown in Table 3. In this respect, the hypotheses of the research are tested through PLS-SEM.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing.

Effects	Relations	B	t-Statistics	F ²	Decision
Direct					
H1	EL → EGB	0.314	5.231 ***	0.123	Supported
Mediation					
H2	EL → HEP → EGB	0.115	2.872 **	0.031	Supported
H3	EL → GHRM → EGB	0.133	2.206 *	0.023	Supported
Interaction					
H4	GHRM × GC → EGB	0.148	2.338 *	0.043	Supported
H5	EL × GCR → GHRM	0.143	2.678 **	0.048	Supported
Control Variables					
	Gender → EGB	0.148	2.360 *		
	Age → EGB	0.106	2.176 *		
	Experience → EGB	0.122	2.245 *		
		R ² _{HEP} = 0.31/Q ² _{HEP} = 0.19			
		R ² _{GHRM} = 0.37/Q ² _{GHRM} = 0.24			
		R ² _{EGB} = 0.39/Q ² _{EGB} = 0.29			
		SRMR: 0.026; NFI: 0.924			

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion

In accordance with the analysis report in Table 3, this study achieves its aims and objectives while contributing to the extant literature on ethical leadership, especially in the context of the Middle East (as a region that has not been commonly studied), and the theoretical development through the proposed model. In consensus with the extant literature [15,20,23,39], ethical leaders show a direct and non-negligible effect on EGB, supporting the first hypothesis. Furthermore, the mediating effect of HEP ($F^2 = 0.031$) and GHRM ($F^2 = 0.023$) was supported (Hypotheses 2 and 3), providing consensus with prior findings of [39,68,73] and refs. [15,23,24]. Importantly, the moderating role of green climate (Hypothesis 4) $F^2 = 0.043$ and green creativity (Hypothesis 5) ($F^2 = 0.048$) are supported in the effect of ethical leaders on GHRM and subsequent green behaviors of employees, respectively, further exhibiting the consensus and development of the current understanding of the subject at hand examined in the Lebanese context [20,30,41,84]. Hence, the current findings contribute to the extant literature (i.e., organizational behavior, leadership, HRM, and sustainability) in terms of theory and practice by expanding geographical borders while using universal theories and frameworks that suggest tangible means for Lebanese NGOs on how to improve their sustainable performance. It further enhances knowledge

related to employees' green behaviors in the workplace as these behaviors have valuable effects on climate change [18].

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The current research has a number of theoretical implications. First, it provides deeper insight into the role of ethical leaders in promoting employees' green behaviors in the workplace thus adding to the ethical leadership literature [42]. The previous research on ethical leadership is limited to its positive impact on non-green attitudes and behaviors, while its effect on employees' green behaviors is still scarce [15]. Hence, this study developed a theoretical framework and relevant variables in this context that can be used for further expansion of the concept. Dependent on the social learning theory [33], the results of the study confirmed the direct effect of ethical leadership on employees' green behaviors, which implies the premises of this theory in the context of NGO employees. Second, the study contributes to the GHRM as a field that is still developing [30] and offers gaps to fill [31]. The study of the interrelation of ethical leadership, GHRM, and employees' green behaviors confirmed the mediating role of GHRM, thus adding to the GHRM literature, as the full explanatory mechanism for its antecedents and outcomes is still absent [55]. Additionally, the premises of social identity theory are developed regarding the implications in a Middle Eastern setting and, particularly, Lebanon. Moreover, social identity theory is in support of mediating role of GHRM as it aligns with the efforts of ethical leaders to promote green behavior among employees [15,27]. Third, our results are compatible with [22] as ethical leadership via GHRM strengthens employees' green behaviors in the workplace. Fourth, as the full exploration of the mediators of the relationship between ethical leadership on employee green behaviors is still missing [35], the results confirmed the mediating role of harmonious environmental passion in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee green behaviors. Furthermore, the psychological green climate was identified as a boundary condition in the effects of GHRM on employees' green behaviors, thus progressing the literature on the psychological green climate [35]. Finally, green creativity was identified as a boundary condition in the effect of ethical leadership on GHRM, thus adding to the green creativity research in which the previous studies are restricted to its conceptualization as an end outcome [41].

5.2. Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications that can assist practitioners in achieving green performance. The current findings emphasize the role of HR and their collaboration with leaders in yielding positive behavioral green outcomes among employees. This further suggests that ethical leaders can trigger moral aspects regarding green behaviors that lead to effective and tangible results despite the threats imposed by the macro environment. Therefore, we suggest leaders establish a direct and profound link with the HR department in their firms to ensure that the processes and practices embody green concepts (i.e., reward systems promoting green behavior and training initiatives for innovative and new undertakings for the benefit of the environment). As a psychologically green climate is established within the workplace, leaders can further promote such behaviors through strategized HRM practices [13]. Training employees through green practices of GHRM and adequate leadership (i.e., ethical) can lead to a better comprehension of company policies and strategies regarding the environment. This will aid the employees in their efforts toward higher degrees of sustainability [30]. As a result, the efforts of leaders and the HR department lead to a higher degree of motivation and actual positive behaviors as awareness enables individuals to consider green behaviors as vital for their society [39]. Furthermore, this can lead to higher rates of commitment as environmental passion in a harmonized way can yield increased creativity in green aspects [71]. Therefore, we suggest company decision-makers focus on recruiting or incorporating ethical leaders at their managerial level with autonomy so that their HRM practices can be enhanced in terms of sustainability.

Notably, the promotion of creativity within the organization as a desirable behavior can be further boosted through green initiatives conducted by the HR department, in which critical thinking is endorsed. Employees can engage in green behaviors if the psychological or organizational climate of the company is within the same scope. The role of leaders in establishing an environment where creativity is promoted and supported by GHRM initiatives is highly impactful on business sustainability. The current results show consensus with the extant literature [95] while providing a better understanding of vital factors for positive outcomes regarding employees' green behavior in the Middle East region and particularly Lebanon, stating that firms should undertake such initiatives by (a) enabling ethical leaders to lead in their firms, (b) aligning HRM practices, and (c) promoting their social responsibilities on a wider scale that can vividly benefit the society, hence creating a better image. The usage of virtual technologies to conduct an array of matters, especially in the current status of the world, is a tangible means for such individuals to reduce their transportation, particularly routine travel, which is essential for companies where remote work is possible. We suggest leaders deploy remote settings to reduce their environmental impact significantly while enhancing the work outcomes of their employees. Additionally, the usage of online platforms regarding company tasks and ongoing projects reduces the amount of paper or other needed office material. This further entails communication that can be creatively enhanced through leadership adequacy and HRM practices [41]. Hence, it is imperative that leaders implement sustainability at the core of their strategies by highlighting its benefits to the shareholders and board of directors.

Finally, leaders can benefit from understanding and implementing LMX theory in their conduct with staff based on mutual trust, engaged emotions, and respect. The current results state a high impact on green behavioral outcomes of employees through appropriate leadership and HRM practices that are in consensus with recent findings and further develop new borders [15,23,24]. Hence, Lebanese firms can improve their sustainability performance by using ethical leaders and establishing green approaches in their overall strategies. If ethically conducted, leaders' efforts can result in fruitful behaviors that are beneficial for staff, the organization, and society as a whole. Referring to social learning theory as a core concept of this research, individuals should be reinforced and provided with a role model to acquire and engage in new behaviors [33], implying that the existence of ethical leaders is of key vitality in this regard. Subsequently, adequate practices and training by HRM to foster an environment where employees can exhibit creativity, passion, and positive behaviors toward a sustainable workplace can be achieved. From small actions (e.g., personal items and behaviors) to company-wide initiatives (e.g., energy consumption, usage of recycled materials, etc.), both the leaders and HRM decision-makers can cause significant changes that lead to vivid behavioral outcomes. The existence of a psychological climate that encourages green initiatives is a key aspect that can yield positive perceptions of policies, values, regulations, and strategies of the company. Through social cognitive mechanisms, individuals perceive a climate that encourages green behaviors [35], and thus are more likely to exhibit and engage in such behaviors that are recognized by the firm and are incentivized. Hence, we suggest leaders and HR departments establish reward systems that encourage green behaviors and have tangible outcomes for employees. This further aids in making the climate of the company more eco-friendly and enables leaders to implement new practices through GHRM and gain sustainable performance for the company.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Regardless of the contributions of the current study, several limitations can be recognized, which offer opportunities for future researchers. First, the current study employs a cross-sectional design. Future researchers may apply a longitudinal design to detect changes in the long term. Second, to ensure the generalizability of data, future researchers are encouraged to collect data in other cities so that comparative analysis can take place. Third, similar studies can be performed in other developing countries in the Middle East

region that offer opportunities for culture analysis. Fourth, future studies can be qualitative to gain an in-depth understanding, and interviews with managers or employees can be conducted. Fifth, although NGOs in Lebanon are dynamic in all facets and areas of public life and they form an active and vital sector [121], it is feasible to conduct the same study in other industries of different sizes to understand their sustainable approach. Finally, future researchers can examine the role of other mediator or moderator factors to understand underlying effects.

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