

# Employee Ecological Behaviour (EEB)

Subjects: Management | Green & Sustainable Science & Technology

Contributor: Adnan ul Haque

Employee green behaviour involves two aspects: task-related green behaviour implemented within employee responsibilities and proactive green behaviour implemented beyond employee responsibilities as stated by the autonomous standards of behaviour (organisational requirements and individual requirements self-determination). Task-related green behaviour denotes the green behaviour performed by employees when completing the core tasks demanded by organisations (e.g., environmental protection responsibilities stipulated in performing duties, compliance to environmental standards, and others). Discretionary and environmentally-friendly behaviour not clearly acknowledged by the formal reward system is known as proactive green behaviour. Organisations encourage EEB to ensure the environmental management system is successfully implemented, and environmental performance achievement increases

Keywords: employee ecological behaviour ; challenges ; higher educational institutes

---

## 1. Employee Ecological Behaviour (EEB)

EEB is environmental-friendly or pro-environmental behaviour particular to workplaces <sup>[1]</sup> compared to individual green behaviour that refers to taking action to minimise negative implications on the environment or positively benefit environmental protection <sup>[2]</sup>. EEB directly associates environmental protection and other positive actions with conserving resources in daily organisational operations. EEB is defined as employee engagement in ecological behaviours, including employees' actions in performing environmentally-friendly work (e.g., recycling, rational resources usage, participation in environmental initiatives, and establishing green policies) by De Roeck and Farooq <sup>[3]</sup>. Ones and Dilchert <sup>[4]</sup> distinguished green behaviour as scalable actions and behaviours employees engage in that contribute or detract from environmental sustainability <sup>[5]</sup>. Thus, employees' sustainable behaviours consist of initiatives and actions <sup>[6]</sup>, such as switching off lights to save energy when leaving offices, correcting documents electronically without printing to avoid waste, adopting teleconference instead of travelling to meetings for efficient resource utilisation, and recycling <sup>[7]</sup>.

Employee green behaviour involves two aspects: task-related green behaviour implemented within employee responsibilities and proactive green behaviour implemented beyond employee responsibilities (Bissing-Olson et al. <sup>[8]</sup>) as stated by the autonomous standards of behaviour (organisational requirements and individual requirements self-determination). Task-related green behaviour denotes the green behaviour performed by employees when completing the core tasks demanded by organisations (e.g., environmental protection responsibilities stipulated in performing duties, compliance to environmental standards, and others). Discretionary and environmentally-friendly behaviour not clearly acknowledged by the formal reward system is known as proactive green behaviour <sup>[9]</sup>. Organisations encourage EEB to ensure the environmental management system is successfully implemented, and environmental performance achievement increases.

The ecological behaviours at workplaces are measurable behaviours that aid in accomplishing environmental sustainability in organisations <sup>[10]</sup>. The prevention of pollution and excessive carbon emissions, reusing or recycling, reducing energy used, and influencing others to adopt green initiatives are examples of ecological behaviours in the implementation of environmental management. Environmental psychologists agree that developing employee green behaviour motivation is significantly concerning <sup>[11]</sup>. However, encouraging sustainable behaviour among employees is an intimidating task because employees do not bear the cost of utilising resources in the workplace <sup>[12]</sup>.

With the increase in environmental issues such as pollution, change in the climate, deforestation, natural resource overconsumption and so on the organizations are taking environmental concerns more often and direct mode by incorporating them into their corporate and competitive sustainable strategies <sup>[13][14]</sup>.

Some of the solutions included voluntary environmental practices to attain competitive advantage while increasing financial performance <sup>[15]</sup>. In other words, the environmental management systems (EMS) are a solution to attain EEB, which is beneficial not only for the companies but also for the employees.

The study of Ababneh <sup>[16]</sup> revealed that employee engagement and personality attributes are significant factors for increasing green HRM practices as well as green behaviours. EEB is also significant in forming human capital as the employees learn to develop Green-HRM practices <sup>[17]</sup>. It helps in improving environmental management <sup>[18]</sup>.

The corporate image of the company improves because of EEB as the Green-HRM implementations improve due to proper learning about effective and efficient environmental management <sup>[19][20][21][22]</sup>. Interestingly, EEB could improve green learning, which further improves their tendencies to adopt green behaviour <sup>[16]</sup>. This also leads to improving the organization's sustainable development <sup>[18]</sup>.

## **2. Challenges in Implementing Employee Ecological Behaviour (EEB)**

The researchers were motivated to undertake the research as available literature on the challenges in EEB is scarce. Nevertheless, previous studies were found to have specific challenges. The commonly reported barrier is the attitude towards pro-environmental activities <sup>[23][24]</sup>. Attitude involves the moral obligation to conduct pro-environmental activities, nature-concerned, and personal values that unlikely differ for individuals in the office and home <sup>[25]</sup>. Lack of environmental knowledge <sup>[26]</sup> and consciousness <sup>[27]</sup> among workers closely relate to individuals. Individuals' past experiences and habits influence the willingness to change behaviours in the workplace <sup>[28]</sup>, which plays a part in the workers' willingness to act ecologically friendly in the office.

Several authors (e.g., Paillé et al. <sup>[29]</sup>; Blok et al. <sup>[30]</sup>) stated that organisations' green internal culture and management practices consider green behaviours the normality, and workers are prone to implement them. Likewise, employees are prone to act with responsibility when facilities and infrastructures offer greener options, such as parking, ecological-friendly food options, and self-adjusting air-conditioning are identified as easily accessible <sup>[31][28]</sup>. Several barriers, such as perception of the infrastructure, personal values, the time required, and social expectations, are part of employees' fundamental beliefs that impact the probability of conducting specific behaviours. Lamm et al. <sup>[32]</sup> empirically proved that employees are prone to act responsibly when organisations are acknowledged as green.

Paillé et al. <sup>[29]</sup> proposed that a workplace setting that nurtures employee readiness to act environmentally friendly could positively influence the probability of green behaviour in offices due to an increased awareness of corporate values and objectives. Yuriev et al. <sup>[33]</sup> disputed that insufficient internal resources such as financial, human capital, and time often hinder managers and employees from incorporating green initiatives. Ruepert et al. <sup>[24]</sup> assessed that several employees specified that they would frequently display pro-environmental actions in workplaces when organisations would establish the right conditions for acting upon their moral obligation feelings by securing adequate autonomy and control over pro-environmental behaviour. Boira et al. <sup>[27]</sup> asserted that managers who adopt green practices encourage their subordinates to act similarly.

## **3. Solutions to Implement Employee Ecological Behaviour (EEB)**

A critical element observed in the literature indicates that employees must positively perceive corporate social responsibility to engage in green behaviours <sup>[34]</sup> through internal communication strategies to emphasise their standpoint on social responsibility <sup>[3]</sup>. Organisations could influence employees' green practices by establishing pro-sustainability strategies in their offices' design by utilising energy-efficient materials. For example, an office's layout and lighting design can considerably impact occupants' behaviour <sup>[35]</sup>. Environmental training and development denote a system of activities that encourage employees to study environmental conservation skills and focus on environmental issues critical in achieving environmental objectives <sup>[36]</sup>. Saeed et al. <sup>[37]</sup> discovered that environmental training could expand employees' awareness, knowledge, and skills results in improved employee's ecological behaviour.

Norton et al. <sup>[7]</sup> added the role of green psychological climate as a significant contributor of EEB in workplaces. A crucial contemporary challenge human resources professionals face is ensuring environmental sustainability's proper incorporation into human resource policies <sup>[38]</sup>. For instance, Saeed et al. <sup>[37]</sup> findings that green human resources management practices positively impacted employees' workplace ecological behaviour. Conversely, Leidner et al. <sup>[39]</sup> added that green human resource management practices are not peripheral, intermediate, or embedded but formed by sustainability advocates as they are critical when practicing EEB in workplaces.

Besides this, the researchers identified the significant role of environment-specific transformational leadership and top management support as solutions in implementing ecological behaviour <sup>[40]</sup>. Yuriev et al. <sup>[33]</sup> offered insights for overcoming barriers by stating that individual perception is critical. For example, information on the environmental impact of specific behaviours (Greaves et al. 2013), such as driving against cycling to work, might inspire individuals to change their transportation mode. Similarly, an employee may feel "out-of-group" if the colleagues and managers leave the office

in the dark at night, but the employee did not do the same. However, turning off lights is a discretionary behaviour. Furthermore, Lasrado and Zakaria [35] proposed introducing incentives, corrective pressure, and creating awareness through education as excellent strategies to encourage workplace ecological behaviour.

The existing literature that includes [41][6][8] is primarily focusing on the quantitative approaches for examining EEB. It has focused on manufacturing units to attain mathematical objectivity. Furthermore, the existing literature has used a deductive approach to investigate the impact while there should be an absolute premise for the deductive approach. Therefore, an inductive approach should have been used. Similarly, the work of Yureiv et al. [33] and Ruepert et al. [24] has considered partially the use of green behavior in organizational settings but fails to incorporate the industry 4.0 drivers affecting EEB. The exploration from the human resource management lens is still under-explored.

---

## References

1. Ramus, C.A.; Steger, U. The roles of supervisory support behaviors and environmental policy in employee 'ecoinitiatives' at leading-edge European companies. *Acad. Manag. J.* 2000, 43, 605–626.
2. Steg, L.; Vlek, C. Encouraging pro-environmental behaviour: An integrative review and research agenda. *J. Environ. Psychol.* 2009, 29, 309–317.
3. De Roeck, K.; Farooq, O. Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical Leadership: Investigating Their Interactive Effect on Employees' Socially Responsible Behaviors. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2018, 151, 923–939.
4. Ones, D.S.; Dilchert, S. Environmental Sustainability at Work: A Call to Action. *Ind. Organ. Psychol.* 2012, 5, 444–466.
5. Muangmee, C.; Dacko-Pikiewicz, Z.; Meekaewkunchorn, N.; Kassakorn, N.; Khalid, B. Green Entrepreneurial Orientation and Green Innovation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). *Soc. Sci.* 2021, 10, 136.
6. Szczepańska-Woszczyna, K.; Kurowska-Pysz, J. Sustainable Business Development Through Leadership in SMEs. *Èkon. Zarz.* 2016, 8, 57–69.
7. Norton, T.A.; Zacher, H.; Parker, S.L.; Ashkanasy, N.M. Bridging the gap between green behavioral intentions and employee green behavior: The role of green psychological climate. *J. Organ. Behav.* 2017, 38, 996–1015.
8. Bissing-Olson, M.J.; Iyer, A.; Fielding, K.; Zacher, H. Relationships between daily affect and pro-environmental behavior at work: The moderating role of pro-environmental attitude. *J. Organ. Behav.* 2012, 34, 156–175.
9. Boiral, O.; Cayer, M.; Baron, C.M. The Action Logics of Environmental Leadership: A Developmental Perspective. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2009, 85, 479–499.
10. Andersson, L.; Shivarajan, S.; Blau, G. Enacting Ecological Sustainability in the MNC: A Test of an Adapted Value-Belief-Norm Framework. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2005, 59, 295–305.
11. Ture, R.S.; Ganesh, M. Understanding Pro-environmental Behaviours at Workplace: Proposal of a Model. *Asia-Pacific J. Manag. Res. Innov.* 2014, 10, 137–145.
12. Davis, M.C.; Challenger, R. Environmentally Sustainable Work Behavior. *Wiley Encycl. Manag.* 2013, 3, 1–10.
13. Bansal, P.; Gao, J. Building the Future by Looking to the Past. *Organ. Environ.* 2006, 19, 458–478.
14. Hoffman, A.J.; Bansa, P.I. Retrospective, perspective, and prospective: Introduction to the Oxford handbook on business and the natural environment. In *The Oxford Handbook on Business and the Natural Environment*; Hoffman, A.J., Bansa, P.L., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2012.
15. Molina-Azorin, J.; López-Gamero, M.; Tarí, J.; Pereira-Moliner, J.; Pertusa-Ortega, E. Environmental Management, Human Resource Management and Green Human Resource Management: A Literature Review. *Adm. Sci.* 2021, 11, 48.
16. Ababneh, O.M.A. How do green HRM practices affect employees' green behaviors? The role of employee engagement and personality attributes. *J. Environ. Plan. Manag.* 2021, 64, 1204–1226.
17. Dwyer, R.; Lamond, D.; Molina-Azorin, J.F.; Claver-Cortes, E.; Lopez-Gamero, M.D.; Tari, J.J. Green management and financial performance. *Manag. Dec.* 2009, 47, 1080–1100.
18. Albertini, E. Does Environmental Management Improve Financial Performance? A Meta-Analytical Review. *Organ. Environ.* 2013, 26, 431–457.
19. Claver-Cortés, E.; López-Gamero, M.D.; Molina-Azorín, J.F.; Zaragoza-Sáez, P.D.C. Intellectual and environmental capital. *J. Intellect. Cap.* 2007, 8, 171–182.
20. Chen, Y.-S. The Positive Effect of Green Intellectual Capital on Competitive Advantages of Firms. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2007, 77, 271–286.

21. López-Gamero, M.D.; Zaragoza-Sáez, P.; Claver-Cortés, E.; Molina-Azorín, J.F. Sustainable development and intangibles: Building sustainable intellectual capital. *Bus. Strat. Environ.* 2011, 20, 18–37.
22. Young, W.; Davis, M.; McNeill, I.M.; Malhotra, B.; Russell, S.; Unsworth, K.; Clegg, C.W. Changing behavior: Successful environmental programmes in the workplace. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* 2015, 24, 689–703.
23. Graves, L.M.; Sarkis, J.; Zhu, Q. How transformational leadership and employee motivation combine to predict employee proenvironmental behaviors in China. *J. Environ. Psychol.* 2013, 35, 81–91.
24. Ruepert, A.; Keizer, K.; Steg, L.; Maricchiolo, F.; Carrus, G.; Dumitru, A.; Mira, R.G.; Stancu, A.; Moza, D. Environmental considerations in the organizational context: A pathway to pro-environmental behaviour at work. *Energy Res. Soc. Sci.* 2016, 17, 59–70.
25. Kollmuss, A.; Agyeman, J. Mind the Gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environ. Educ. Res.* 2002, 8, 239–260.
26. Chan, E.S.W.; Hon, A.H.Y.; Okumus, F.; Chan, W. An empirical study of environmental practices and an empirical study of environmental practices and employee ecological behavior in the hotel industry. *J. Hosp. Tour. Res.* 2014, 41, 585–608.
27. Boiral, O.; Raineri, N.; Talbot, D. Managers' Citizenship Behaviors for the Environment: A Developmental Perspective. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2016, 149, 395–409.
28. Adams, E.J.; Esliger, D.W.; Taylor, I.M.; Sherar, L.B. Individual, employment and psychosocial factors influencing walking to work: Implications for intervention design. *PLoS ONE* 2017, 12, e0171374.
29. Paillé, P.; Boiral, O.; Chen, Y. Linking environmental management practices and organizational citizenship behaviour for the environment: A social exchange perspective. *Int. J. Hum. Resour. Manag.* 2013, 24, 3552–3575.
30. Blok, V.; Wesselink, R.; Studynka, O.; Kemp, R. Encouraging sustainability in the workplace: A survey on the pro-environmental behaviour of university employees. *J. Clean. Prod.* 2015, 106, 55–67.
31. Manika, D.; Wells, V.; Gregory-Smith, D.; Gentry, M. The Impact of Individual Attitudinal and Organisational Variables on Workplace Environmentally Friendly Behaviours. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2013, 126, 663–684.
32. Lamm, E.; Tosti-Kharas, J.; King, C.E. Empowering Employee Sustainability: Perceived Organizational Support Toward the Environment. *J. Bus. Ethic* 2015, 128, 207–220.
33. Yuriev, A.; Boiral, O.; Francoeur, V.; Paillé, P. Overcoming the barriers to pro-environmental behaviors in the workplace: A systematic review. *J. Clean. Prod.* 2018, 182, 379–394.
34. He, J.; Morrison, A.M.; Zhang, H. Being sustainable: The three-way interactive effects of CSR, green human resource management, and responsible leadership on employee green behavior and task performance. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* 2020, 28, 1043–1054.
35. Lasrado, F.; Zakaria, N. Go green! Exploring the organizational factors that influence self-initiated green behavior in the United Arab Emirates. *Asia Pac. J. Manag.* 2019, 37, 823–850.
36. Jabbour, C.J.C. How green are HRM practices, organizational culture, learning and teamwork? A Brazilian study. *Ind. Commer. Train.* 2011, 43, 98–105.
37. Bin Saeed, B.; Afsar, B.; Hafeez, S.; Khan, I.; Tahir, M.; Afridi, M.A. Promoting employee's proenvironmental behavior through green human resource management practices. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* 2018, 26, 424–438.
38. Dang, T.M.H.; Tran, T.T.H.; Tran, A.H. High-performance human resource management practices and creative organizational climate effects on manufacturing industry performance. *Pol. J. Manag. Stud.* 2020, 23, 72–89.
39. Leidner, S.; Baden, D.; Ashleigh, M. Green (environmental) HRM: Aligning ideals with appropriate practices. *Pers. Rev.* 2019, 48, 1169–1185.
40. Graves, L.M.; Sarkis, J.; Gold, N. Employee proenvironmental behavior in Russia: The roles of top management commitment, managerial leadership, and employee motives. *Resour. Conserv. Recycl.* 2018, 140, 54–64.
41. Lo, S.H.; van Breukelen, G.J.; Peters, G.-J.Y.; Kok, G. Proenvironmental travel behavior among office workers: A qualitative study of individual and organizational determinants. *Transp. Res. Part A Policy Pract.* 2013, 56, 11–22.