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Mediating Role of Green Hrm in Ethical Leadership And Employee Green Behavior at Kp Banking Sector in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of ethical leadership on employee green behavior at KP banking sector with reference to HRM Management practices. According to Social Learning Theory, the study argued that leaders with ethical values promoted sustainability-oriented HRM policies in organizations and stimulated employees to adopt friendly behavior. Data were collected through questionnaire from the respondents (Bank Employees in KP). Findings and results were drawn in the light of Structural Equation Modeling by revealing that ethical leadership had positive effects on employees' green behavior via Green HRM. The results showed that ethical leaderships established a pro-environmental culture when HRM practices like green recruitment, training and performance appraisal reinforced the ecological objectives. The findings revealed that bank managers and policy-makers needed to consider it when integrating ethical leadership together with Green HRM for attaining long-term environmental goals. Recommendations were suggested that Ethical leadership may be promoted in banks by providing training to bank supervisors and managers to become fair, accountable and transparent in all perspectives. Green HRM practices may be strengthened. Environmental goals may be linked with HR practices and employees may be rewarded for encouragement. Employees' green behavior may be motivated towards awareness campaigns and green culture may be created. Banking authorities may ensure policy support and investment may be ensured by training sessions for all employees serving in banks. Organizational culture, technology usage, better evaluation and monitoring may be promoted to develop banking system.

Keywords: Green HRM, Mediating Role, Ethical Leadership, Employees' Green Behavior, KP Banking Sector & Pakistan

Introduction

The role of ethical leadership in the green behavior of employees has been acknowledged as a factor in determining the moral cues and norms within the organizational context. It is recognized that ethical leadership can be a significant enabler of employees' green behavior by influencing how the employees understand their environmental responsibilities through cues and norms (Ahmad et al., 2021). For the organizational sustainability in Pakistan, a context where banking institutions are increasingly demanded environmental and social sustainability by the regulators and stakeholders, it is particularly important to explore the leadership-employee pathway (Javed et al., 2022). But, the impact of ethical leadership on employee green behavior is more likely to happen indirectly via internal process which converts the leaders value into their daily behaviors. Therefore, Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) is suggested as a mediating mechanism between HR practices (including training, performance evaluation and reward systems), and environmental objectives (to motivate employees to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors; Renwick et al., 2013). Ethical leadership and green HRM logics are used as the foundation of this study to understand the effect of ethical leadership on green behavior among employees of KP banking in Pakistan, and the role of GHRM as mediator factor in the process as to how ethical leadership becomes actionable sustainability practices (Suh et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2018).

Aukhoon et al., (2024) asserted that due to the growing global focus on sustainability, organizations in several sectors have begun embedding socially responsible practices to promote a decrease of ecological footprint without undermining the corporation's ability to achieve long-term success and prosperity. According to Gul, Karaatmaca and Raza (2025), banking industry includes all requirements that indirectly impact the environment, by facilitating sustainability through financing and sustainability in its operations. Sang and Nguyen (2024) described that ethical leadership helps to create an environment in which employees feel empowered to engage in pro-environmental behavior and trust the institutional policy and programs, including a Green HRM focused policy and programs; and not just creating a good working environment, this dynamic also spontaneously motivates employees to involve in environmental protection activities actively so they are more aware and take more responsibilities of the company's green activities.

Gul, Karaatmaca and Raza (2025), stated that the examination is very significant as institutional theory provides a foundation for explaining how the external environment and social norms affect the adoption of sustainable practices in organizations in a developing economy like Pakistan. Sayem et al., (2025) revealed that green trust and environmental sustainability awareness have a negligible predictive effect on pro-environmental intentions in these regions, thus highlighting the role of institutional and organizational factors in posturing pro-environmental intentions. Sayem et al., (2025) emphasized the need to identify relevant leadership styles and HRM practices that can actually mitigate the attitude- behavior gap commonly seen in sustainability research in these contexts.

Khan et al., (2025) elaborated by integrating Upper Echelon Theory and Ability-Motivation-Opportunity framework, this study examines the bottom-line implications of top leadership

commitment and its diffusion into green HRM practices- green recruitment, training and performance management, to deliver positive input towards environmental performance of organizations; and some specific Green HRM initiatives, particularly those related to eco-literacy and environmental awareness, may close the attitude-behavior gap in green purchase and general pro-environmental behavior among the employees. Wegner et al., (2025) cited the mediation role of Green HRM by which ethical leadership translates its strong commitment to the environment into employee behaviors performing green actions that cause any environmental impact as this impact has been manifested in individual discretionary actions which are voluntary in nature.

The study has its main contribution on sustainable HR practices and the mediating role of Green HRM in associating ethical leadership with employee green behavior in KP banks by providing key insights to both practitioners and academicians revealing its leadership role and human resource strategies as well as policies to promote and enhance environmentally mature behavior in workers. The study is quite helpful in providing proper guidance for institutions and policymakers like state bank by implementing and formulating policies based on green banking and sustainable frameworks. Nevertheless, the study is highly supportive or banking organizations to know how to integrate "Ethical Leadership" with Green Human Resource Management practices may promote the performance environmentally, diminish operational leftover, and promote the reputation of an organization. The findings were mostly relevant in the perspective of emerging economies such as Pakistan where environment based challenges were noted to be growing and the need to sustain the practices of an organization was found quite urgent.

Literature Review

Sayem et al., (2025) explained that besides, the paper would include some ideas about institutional theory by demonstrating how stakeholder pressure and normative forces affect the adoption of green practices in banking firms. Alherimi et al., (2024) investigated that GHRM translates an organization's environmental management goals into human resource practices by integrating green considerations into HR functions such as performance management, incentives, training and development, recruitment and selection, and promoting green entrepreneurship behavior both at organizational and individual levels. Qian, Poshakwale and Tan (2024) highlighted that GHRM practices like environmental-performance-based management systems and employee training play a key role in avoiding "green washing" by improving the assertiveness of environmental disclosures.

Sun et al., (2024) mentioned that it's possible to assess the influence of managerial values at the top of the organization and the cognitive bases of decision-makers on adopting green practices and the environmental performance of banking organizations; and this new setup allows for a fine-grained examination of the role that leadership increasing its ethical behavior plays in shaping the firm behavior of green institutionalization in the banking sector in the diverse socio economic environment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and by delivering proof regarding practices of

green banking at much more localized levels, it comprehensively contributes to both regional and global scholarship of the mere concept of an environmental sustainability behavior within the financial area. Sang and Nguyen (2024) narrated that environmentally conscious workforce is built that is working toward the firm sustainability targets that provides a specific and measurable connection between ethical leadership and green outcomes.

Huang et al., (2023) found that it proffers solutions for the considerable practices and challenges for the implementation of green initiatives within banking industry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa keeping in view the specific socio- economic and regulatory environment of the region. In addition, this research differs from past studies in that it incorporates organizational management mechanisms like ethical leadership to improve social performance, rather than merely to explore corporate social responsibility or ESG initiatives.

Siddiqui et al., (2023) illustrated the banking industry of Pakistan; a fast-growing sector provides an interesting case for these dynamics because Pakistan is another country where severe environmental issues exist. Saleem et al., (2020) described that employees can observe ethical leaders' pro-environmental behaviors and their environmentally friendly attitudes, and then adopt these values internally and manifest these into their own green behaviors in the banking context. Ahmed, Yusuf and Ishaque (2024) pointed out that from this theoretical base, it becomes possible to take a closer look at how banks, especially those from developing nations, can balance their financial mission with environmental sustainability guided by strategic leadership and human resource management practices. According to Yu et al., (2025), it would be within the upper echelons theory, social role theory, and role congruity theory to show how leadership traits influence strategic outcomes similar to ESG performance and disclosures.

Research Gap

Many studies have been conducted on employees' green behavior and Green HRM to manufacture and educate healthcare sectors rather than banking that obviously reveals lack of empirical evidence towards banking especially in KP. Furthermore, KP is the province where there is no research trend due to which awareness, organizational culture and environmental practices may be quite different. Green HRM has been found to be seldom tested as mediator between employee green behavior and ethical leadership by creating theory based gap. Moreover, integrated model usually not existed. To sum up, the current studies has its key focus on other regions and sectors by using mediator like psychological climate and green self-efficacy etc.

Research Methodology

Research Design of the Study

The study design was based on quantitative investigation by examining the hypothesized relationship among banks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sample of the Study

The total numbers of (n=450) respondents i.e. mixed workforce from both public and private banks working in the region were taken as sample of the study (Saif et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2025).

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire (Saif et al., 2026).

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling technique was used according to bank size and type (i.e., commercial, Islamic, microfinance) to guarantee proportional representation.

Pilot Testing

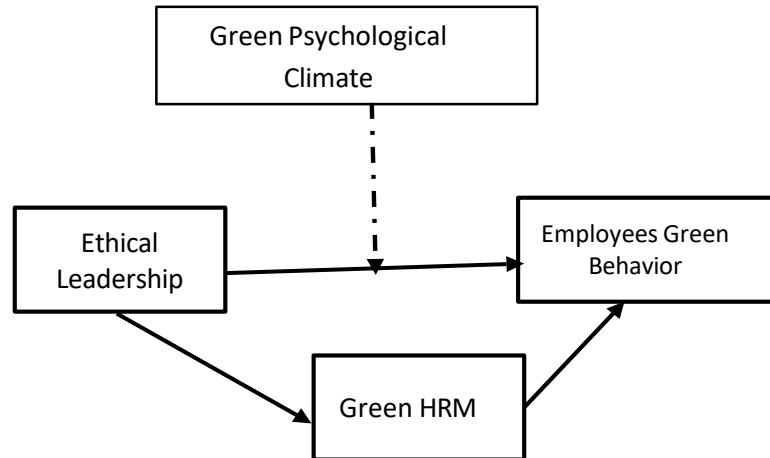
The total numbers of (n= 50, contacting employees) were carried out for face and content validity of the instruments in Pakistani banking sector by ensuring that the questionnaire was clear, concise, meaningful and culturally appropriate. The final questionnaires were sent through face-to-face visits or secure websites to reach and facilitate participant availability. The consents of participants were taken in written for their active participation.

Data Collection Procedure

The numbers of responses obtained during March-May, 2023 were 78 percent that was falling in acceptable range revealing extreme level of external validity and dependability in perspectives of respondents' views of the outcomes of the study in banking-industry to analyze it with longitude. The total numbers of (n=340) valid responses were ensured for SEM model with the contribution to the model robustness and statistics. The existing study exceeded the least requirement for SEM modeling that yielded adequate statistics to statistically identify the significant relationship in the model.

H1: Green HRM act as a mediator between ethical leadership and employee green behavior.

H2'; GPC act as a moderator between ethical leadership and employee green behavior



Results and Discussion

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 320)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Bank Type	NBP	80	25.0%
	BOP	60	18.8%
	BOK	55	17.2%
	Sindh Bank	45	14.1%
	FWBL	30	9.4%
	ZTBL	25	7.8%
	SME Bank	15	4.7%
	IDBP	10	3.1%
	Total		320

Table 4.1 gives the distribution of respondents in the various public sector banks. NBP has the greatest percentage of respondents of 25.0% (n = 80), meaning that it is the most prevalent in the sample. BOP (n = 60) and BOK (n = 55) have 18.8 and 17.2 percentage involvement

respectively, respectively, with a high participation of provincial banks. Sindh Bank accounts for 14.1% (n = 45), while FWBL represents 9.4% (n = 30). Smaller proportions are observed for ZTBL (7.8%, n = 25), SME Bank (4.7%, n = 15), and IDBP (3.1%, n = 10). In general, the sample is well represented by a well-distributed data throughout large public sector banks.

The gender distribution of the respondents is reflected in Table 4.2. Most of the respondents are male with 65.6% (n = 210) representing the total sample and 34.4% (n = 110) representing the female respondents. It means that the workforce of this research consisting of the public sector banks is dominated by male employees. Nevertheless, the proportion of female respondents is not insignificant, as it is over a third of the sample. The distribution corresponds to the present gender ratio in the banking industry in Pakistan where men are more involved but women are slowly gaining ground.

Table 4.3: Demographic Profile of Respondents Age (N = 320)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	20–30 years	90	28.1%
	31–40 years	120	37.5%
	41–50 years	70	21.9%
	51+ years	40	12.5%
Total		320	100%

Table 4.4: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Marital Status = 320)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	(%)
Marital Status	Married	200	62.5%
	Unmarried	120	37.5%
Total		320	100%

Table 4.5: Demographic Profile of Respondents Qualifications (N = 320)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	110	34.4%
	Master's Degree	150	46.9%
	MPhil/MS	40	12.5%
	PhD	20	6.2%

Table 4.6: Demographic Profile of Respondents Job level (N = 320)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Job Level	Entry-Level	140	43.8%
	Mid-Level	120	37.5%
	Senior Management	60	18.7%
Total		320	100%

The age distribution of respondents is indicated in table 4.3. The most significant population is the 31-40 years group, which consists of 37.5% (n = 120), which means a rather mature and experienced workforce. The 20-30 years segment comes next with 28.1% (n = 90) which has a good number of young workers. The age range of 41-50 years deviates 21.9% (n=70) and those in the age range of 51 years and above have the lowest percentage of 12.5% (n=40). On the whole, the data will indicate a balanced ratio of young and old employees in the banking industry.

The marital status of the respondents is given in table 4.4. Most of the respondents are married people and 62.5% (n = 200) of the total population is married. In contrast, unmarried respondents represent 37.5% (n = 120). This shows that the majority of the workers in the banking industry are married, which might portray job security and maturity in career that comes with this occupation. The diversity of the workforce can also be observed in the presence of unmarried employees, especially the younger workers. In general, it can be seen that the distribution indicates that the workforce is mainly made up of those who have family commitments.

Table 4.5 shows the level of education of the respondents. The workforce is highly educated with most of the respondents having a master degree of 46.9% (n = 150). This is followed by the bachelor degree holders at 34.4% (n = 110). The number of MPhil/MS and PhD holders is

12.5% (n = 40) and 6.2% (n = 20) respectively. The information shows that a majority of the employees are highly educated, which is a requirement in professional jobs in the banking industry. Generally, the labour force has a good academic qualification.

Table 4.6 shows the level of job distribution of the respondents. The biggest sample of the respondents is the largest proportion in the entry-level, which is 43.8 percent (n=140), meaning that there are many junior employees. This is then topped by the mid level staff at 37.5 percent (n = 120) which represents a significant number of the experienced staff. The senior management represents 18.7% (n = 60), which is the leadership roles in the banks. The distribution implies the balanced organizational framework in which the representation at all hierarchical levels is provided. In general, the information offers the in-depth picture of employees in various career levels.

Validation of Mediation Model

Table 4.7: Validation of Model 1(Ethical Guidance attribute of ETL ---GHRM---EGB)

	Beta	Mean	SD	T statistics	P values
ETG -> EGB	0.095	0.097	0.075	1.266	0.206
ETG -> GHRM	0.615	0.615	0.056	10.982	0.000
GHRM -> EGB	0.161	0.161	0.075	2.152	0.031
GPSC -> EGB	0.377	0.378	0.069	5.424	0.000
GPSC x ETG -> EGB	-0.032	-0.030	0.020	1.588	0.112
ETG -> GHRM -> EGB	0.099	0.100	0.048	2.067	0.039
<i>GPSC=Green Psychological Climate; ETG= Ethical Guidance; EGB= Employees Green Behavior</i>					

The findings suggest that ETG is not significantly directly related to EGB ($\beta=0.095$, $t = 1.266$, $p = 0.206$), because the p-value is more than 0.05 (see table (4.7)). Nevertheless, the positive impact of ETG on GHRM ($\beta= 0.615$, $t = 10.982$, $p < 0.001$) is strong and significant, which means that the ETL practices play an important role in boosting the green HRM programs. Moreover, GHRM demonstrates a strong positive impact on EGB ($\beta = 0.161$, $t = 2.152$, $p = 0.031$), which indicates that green HR practices help in fostering the employee behavior in an environmentally responsible manner.

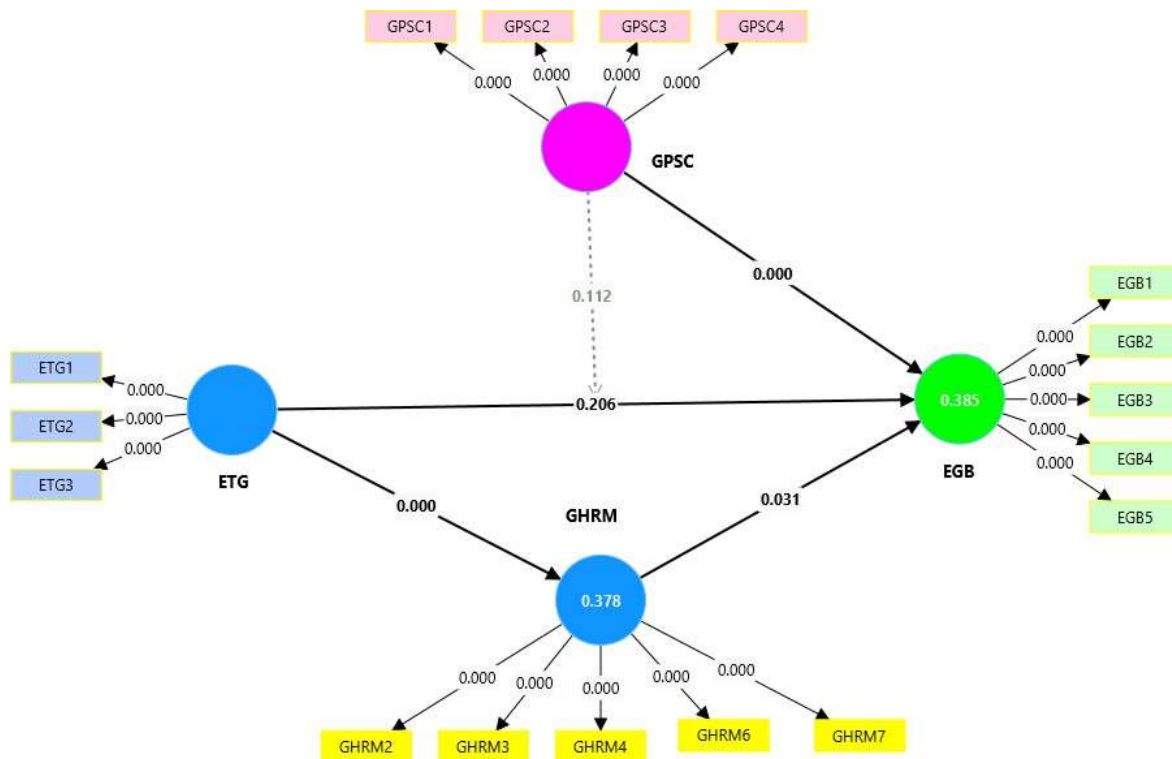
Also, the influence of GPSC on EGB is very high and significant ($\beta= 0.377$, $t = 5.424$, $p = 0.001$), which means that employees are more inclined to green behaviors in the presence of a favorable environmental climate. The interaction effect (GPSC \times ETG \rightarrow

EGB), however, does not prove significant ($\beta=0.032 = -.112, t = 1.588, p = 0.112$) meaning that the moderating effect of GPSC between ETG and EGB is not endorsed. Mediation analysis was carried out to analyze the relationship between GHRM and the relationship between ETG and EGB. The indirect effect (ETG \rightarrow GHRM \rightarrow EGB) is found to be positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.099, t = 2.067, p = 0.039$). This means that GHRM plays a major mediating role in the association between ethical guidance and green behavior of employees.

In line with the mediation approach, a large indirect impact and non-significant direct impact indicate complete mediation (Hair et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2010). Here, ETG affects EGB indirectly via GHRM, and not directly. This means that ETL improves employee green behavior mainly because of creating green HRM practices.

These results are visually supported by the findings of Figure 4.2 which indicate that ETG is a major contributor of GHRM, which subsequently impacts EGB, but the direct relationship between ETG and EGB is not significant.

In general, structural model demonstrates that the ethical guidance can indirectly affect the green behavior of employees in the form of green HRM and directly promote the green behavior of employees through green psychological climate. The model presents a very good empirical evidence of the mediating effect of GHRM and the significance of organizational context in fostering sustainability results.



Nevertheless, GPSC moderating effect on the PSH and EGB relationship is not significant ($\beta = -0.020$, $t = 0.997$, $p = 0.319$) implying that the interaction between leadership and climate does not play a significant role in this model. This means that PSH is an independent determinant of EGB and does not depend on the psychological climate.

The mediation analysis also shows that the indirect relationship between PSH and EGB mediated by GHRM is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.095$, $t = 2.125$, $p = 0.034$). It means that GHRM partially mediates power sharing and the relationship between power sharing and the green behavior of the employees. The mediation theory states that in a case where direct and indirect effects are both important, it indicates partial mediation (Zhao et al., 2010).

These findings are illustrated in Figure 4.3 which reveals that PSH has both a direct and an indirect effect on EGB via GHRM.

In general, the results indicate that power sharing as a leadership quality contributes to the improvement of green behavior of employees both directly and indirectly via green HRM practices. The model highlights the importance of participative leadership and organizational systems in promoting environmental sustainability within the banking sector (Hair et al., 2019).

Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the complex relationship between ethical leadership; green HRM and employee green behavior in banking sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where environmental issues were paid much awareness. The results revealed that ethical leadership had substantial effects on employees' green behaviors that were totally mediated by green human resource management and thereby extend the existing literature on pro-environmental organizational behaviors (Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), Work-Life Dynamics, and Employee Environmental Behavior, 2024). This mediating effect further revealed the potential significance of HRM policies for transferring ethical leadership into enacted environmental behaviors in banking services. Ethical leadership, with its potential to cultivate a value-based organizational culture (such as integrity and environmental awareness), greatly promoted the effectiveness of green HRM practices in order to enhance employees' green behavior. This highlighted that leaders who represented ethical and environmentally sustainable behaviors were important role-models by driving employees' behavior at least to incorporate green behavior into the performance within the organizational setting.

Recommendations/Suggestions

1. GHRM practices may be strengthened and continuously improved.
2. Conscious employees may be recruited to support environmental goals.
3. GHRM training and workshops may be organized to raise awareness and enable better practices.
4. Further research may be conducted on GHRM and related areas to support ongoing development.
5. Managers may be trained to act as role models for environmentally responsible behavior.
6. Transparency, sustainability, and fairness may be reinforced regularly.
7. A green organizational culture may be developed across the workplace.

8. Eco-friendly norms such as recycling, paperless banking, and energy saving may be promoted.
9. Green self-efficacy among employees may be built through education and supportive initiatives.
10. All HR strategies may be aligned with broader environmental priorities.

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Authors' Contributions

Dr. Mati Ullah made a substantial contribution to conception and design. Dr. Muhammad Saqib Khan analyzed data. Mr. Sher Zaman conducted the intervention and participated in drafting the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest/Disclosure

The authors declare no competing interests.

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