

How Green Leadership Shapes Employees' Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Influence of Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable rise in the concept of green leadership (GL). Consequently, more leadership study has been conducted on this new notion, emphasizing the leading style of helping people combined with taking care of the environment. This study empirically investigates the mediating role of employees' emotional intelligence (EI) in the relationship between green leadership (GL) and green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB), highlighting GL as a pivotal driver of sustainable employee behaviors. The data of this research consisted of managerial professionals from the manufacturing and service industries of Pakistan. The non-probability sampling approach was employed on 381 employees from the respective sectors. PLS-SEM software was used to evaluate the data collected. The empirical results demonstrate that green leadership (GL) exerts a significant and positive effect on green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB). In addition, emotional intelligence (EI) partially mediates this relationship, highlighting its role as an underlying affective–cognitive mechanism that translates leadership influence into sustainable employee behavior. Specifically, leaders who display environmental commitment while demonstrating emotional awareness and responsiveness foster employees' emotional regulation and empathy, thereby encouraging greater participation in discretionary green initiatives. In turn, enhanced EI strengthens employees' intrinsic motivation and inspirational engagement, encouraging them to exhibit discretionary pro-environmental behaviors that extend beyond formal role requirements. This empirical study will give more in-depth insights into Pakistan's service and manufacturing industries. The research findings further suggest that managers can enhance their effectiveness by adopting a green leadership (GL) style, which enables them to cultivate stronger rapport and empathy with their subordinates. By understanding and addressing employees' needs and expectations, leaders foster higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) within the workforce. Over time, this enhanced EI contributes to a more positive organizational

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climate characterized by mutual trust, harmony, and collaborative engagement in the workplace.

Keywords: Green Leadership (GL), Emotional Intelligence (EI), Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB).

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing demand for ethical leadership in today's competitive business environment, so companies are struggling to find leaders who can provide this kind of service to their employees and help them grow by investing in their personal and professional development (Abbas, 2024; Kumari et al., 2021). Green Leadership (GL) has developed as a key idea that substantially impacts employee performance and reflects managerial principles that promote organizational integrity, business citizenship, and individual excellence in the workplace (Notanubun, 2021).

In 1970, Greenleaf introduced the concept of GL, which he viewed as a way to reconcile the need to care for others and succeed in leadership roles. This was a new way of leading, in which leaders put the interests of their employees ahead of their own agendas. GL's top priorities are integrity and self-confidence, helping employees reach their full potential (Hoch et al., 2018). The GL notion was influenced by Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and Blau's (1968) social exchange theory. Green leaders, according to Greenleaf (1998), establish open and transparent channels of interaction with their assistants and sympathize with their issues. In this way, the leader is always aware of what the employees expect, and they are better equipped to satisfy such requirements.

One of the most significant issues businesses have been addressing is ensuring that employees are committed to their employment and enhancing workplace productivity (Abbas, 2026; Nazeer et al., 2026) because their efforts and motivations contribute significantly to the organization's success (Notanubun, 2021). Employees' attitudes and actions at work are shaped by how committed and engaged they are with their jobs (Mahmood et al., 2019). Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB) represents a specific form of organizational citizenship behavior that reflects employees' voluntary and discretionary pro-environmental actions within the workplace. Despite the growing prominence and strategic importance of green leadership (GL) in recent years, most existing studies have primarily concentrated on its direct effects on employee behavior and organizational performance. Several research has suggested that organizational commitment may be a possible precursor of GL (Vondey, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). In the already available literature, numerous studies have examined the impact of various leadership styles on job performance, employee satisfaction, or both (Mekpor and Dartey-Baah, 2017).

This study seeks to examine the influence of green leadership on green organizational citizenship behavior within organizational settings. Between GL and

GOCB, Emotional Intelligence (EI) was employed as an intermediate variable because of its importance, and they investigated whether EI serves as a mediator between them. Multiple researchers found GL to be associated with employee behavior and actions (Elche et al., 2020a; Sendjaya et al., 2019), but this relationship was found to be insignificant by some others (Harwiki, 2016a). In addition, the bulk of this research was performed in advanced nations, where management already prioritizes employee interactions and inclinations (Chiniara and Bentein, 2016; Wang et al., 2017), and developing countries, such as growing Asian economies, receive less attention, even though their economic dynamics differ greatly, necessitating a full examination of this topic. This study's findings will be essential to the knowledge of Second Life from an Asian perspective.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations and Hypothesis Development

People who work for managers who practice the GL leadership style, according to Spears (2020), grow into leaders who put the needs of others ahead of their own. An excellent example of a good leader is putting the needs of others ahead of their own. This phenomenon is explained by Bandura's social learning theory (1971) and Blau's social exchange theory (1986). Grounded in Social Learning Theory, individuals develop and modify their behavior through observation, imitation, and interaction within their social environment. Let's pretend this was in GL translation. As a result, in this circumstance, leaders who empower their subordinates and even conduct community service are perfect role models for their helpers (Elche et al. 2020a). People who see their boss as a source of inspiration are more likely to follow in their footsteps and become more productive at work. When a subordinate sees GL behavior, they are more likely to be helpful to their coworkers and the community.

A devotee who has been well-treated and is guided by a GL idea will ultimately transmit it to his subordinates, according to Blau's social exchange theory (1968). Because Greenleaf's GL theory states leaders must first serve others before taking leadership, it is distinct from the very underpinnings of everything else (Greenleaf, 2003). GL is primarily concerned with how to help others rather than how to lead others. A fundamental operating principle that underpins all the GL framework decides that followers' needs take precedence over leaders' preferences.

2.2 GL and Employees' GOCB

Organizational management in today's society must be both ethical and people-oriented. GL is crucial since it significantly affects the company's success and effective operation at the departmental (team) and individual levels (Isabel et al., 2021). According to numerous academic studies, GL is beneficial to businesses. Scholars such as Ehrhart (2004) showed that transformational and leader-member

exchange styles were not comparable to GL. Organizations can benefit from GL because it creates a more equitable workplace, according to Ehrhart. Evidence supports the claim made by Perkasa et al. (2020) that GL positively affects employees' mindsets. It also improves organizational performance, leadership integrity, commitment, and customer satisfaction (Qiu et al., 2020). High-performing organizations must have lower employee turnover, which GL has been shown to reduce. In their study, Amah and Oyetuunde (2020) found that GL can be used to decrease employee turnover and instill followers' loyalty.

Many empirical studies have supported this claim, showing that GL and GOCB are linked. According to Isabel et al. (2021), leadership attitudes altered when the methodology was more employee-oriented and emphasized the assistants, unintentionally encouraging the subordinates' GOCBs. Subordinates who work with serving leaders are more likely to develop an empathetic and passionate personality, which ultimately leads them to help and care for others, according to research conducted in India by Saleem et al. (2020). Further research into leadership styles has shown that the GL method does increase workplace openness and cooperation (Bantha and Sahni, 2021; Elche et al., 2020a; Shafi et al., 2020). The first hypothesis is produced based on theory and actual investigations, as shown in Figure 1.

H1: *Green leadership exerts a strong and positive influence on green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB) of employees.*

2.3 GL and Employees' EI

Recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional awareness as central constructs in contemporary workplace research. The literature identifies EI as a fundamental component of transformational leadership, enabling leaders to inspire, motivate, and effectively manage interpersonal dynamics (Mysirlaki & Paraskeva, 2020). Indeed, EI is widely regarded as a critical capability for effective leadership performance and career success. Parallel streams of research have further examined the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their capacity to exercise green leadership (GL). These studies suggest that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to promote pro-environmental values, foster sustainable behaviors, and align organizational practices with environmental objectives. Wisdom, emotional healing, organizational stewardship, and altruism are the four most important GL qualities, and EI was in the middle of the pack (Kloosterman, 2020). You must be able to control your emotions to be an effective Green leader. As a result, a GL has a high EI and emotional maturity score. Green-leader may struggle to meet their emotional and mental needs if they lack mental and emotional health.

The opposite is true: while numerous studies have shown a strong link between a leader's emotional intelligence (EI) and their ability to lead effectively in the Workplace, several leadership theories have also attempted to investigate the link

between an individual's GL style and their EI (Pollock, 2017). However, this research found that leaders' EI was positively linked to their self-rated GL (Lumpkin and Achen, 2018).

Other theories have attempted to link the leadership style and nature to their followers' subsequent outcomes. These assumptions were put to the test in a significant amount of research. When dealing with their employees' emotional needs, the most effective green leaders have a distinct point of view and strategy. They know how to alleviate their followers' emotional pain, nurture a positive mental attitude, grant them authority, and support them in their professional and personal growth. There are many cases of employees who have been diagnosed with emotional voids because of emotional trauma. Green leaders take advantage of their employees' emotional vulnerability to settle them and help them feel whole again. To help people with their emotional needs and to fill emotional holes, Spears labels this trait of green leaders as "healing" (1995). Aspirations are shattered, or people require emotional healing to revitalize their spirits and mend their anguish after a devastating relationship experience, according to Spears (1995).

Prior studies suggest that green leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to employees' psychological well-being and emotional support, reflecting their emphasis on nurturing and ethically responsible leadership practices. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the underlying mechanisms through which green leaders foster emotional awareness and cognitive development among their followers. Although prior research acknowledges the growing importance of green leadership, insufficient attention has been given to understanding how such leadership enhances employees' emotional competencies. The literature emphasizes that emotional regulation skills are critical for both supervisors and subordinates, as employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) tend to perform more effectively and demonstrate adaptive, intuitive responses that contribute positively to organizational outcomes (Qomariah, 2020).

In light of these arguments, it is essential to further examine whether green leadership (GL) contributes to the development of employees' emotional intelligence. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: *Green leadership exerts a significant positive effect on the emotional intelligence (EI) of employees.*

2.4 Emotional Intelligence and Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Numerous behavioural patterns influenced by GOCB and EI may have an impact on a company's performance. Udayar et al. (2020) claim that individuals' performance is directly influenced by their emotional intelligence (EI), so a competitive advantage for emotionally intelligent people in the Workplace is

essential. Managing one's emotions at work should be a priority for everyone, not just the boss.

People's EI may have an even more significant impact on their ability to perform well than their IQ does on academics (Burcea and Sabie, 2020), making the use of EI stars a far more critical metric than IQ scores when evaluating performance (Uraz and Arhan, 2020). Furthermore, DUONG et al. (2020) argued that expertise and IQ are only two of many aspects that influence an individual's success. These two factors, along with higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI), were equally crucial to employees' success in the Workplace. People who score high on EI exams are regarded to perform well at work and contributing significantly to the companies in which they work (Qomariah, 2020).

The ability to recognize, regulate, and effectively utilize one's emotions has been consistently associated with improved job performance and reduced negative workplace experiences (Khan, 2020). Emotional management theory further suggests that the motivational mechanisms underlying green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB) are closely aligned with those driving emotional regulation and self-management (Dirican & Erdil, 2020). Employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) tend to demonstrate stronger coping strategies, enhanced well-being, and greater adaptability in professional settings. Their capacity to regulate emotions enables them to manage interpersonal dynamics constructively, thereby reducing workplace conflicts and fostering empathy toward colleagues. Empirical evidence indicates that emotionally stable employees are less likely to engage in interpersonal disputes and are more inclined to maintain harmonious workplace relationships (Coll et al., 2020; Andreana & Putri, 2020).

Employees with high emotional intelligence (EI) are more capable of understanding and interpreting both formal and informal workplace requirements, along with the behaviors expected of them. Their enhanced awareness of situations and sensitivity in interpersonal interactions allows them to respond effectively to organizational norms and social cues. Consequently, such employees are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors that support the organization, including voluntary actions aimed at promoting environmental sustainability (Kim & Park, 2020a).

Empirical evidence further indicates that employees with elevated EI levels tend to be more productive, experience higher job satisfaction, and contribute more positively to organizational performance. Research also highlights the role of EI in strengthening workplace social relationships, as emotionally intelligent employees are better able to navigate interpersonal interactions effectively. Notably, higher EI has been associated with reduced workplace conflict and improved relational harmony (Makkar & Basu, 2019). A comprehensive review by Kotsou et al. (2019)

further confirms that EI significantly influences psychological well-being, relationship quality, and work and academic performance (Abbas et al., 2026).

Employees with high emotional intelligence (EI) can effectively perceive, understand, and manage their emotions, enabling them to transition from negative states to more constructive moods. This emotional self-regulation fosters a positive mindset, even under challenging circumstances, and increases the likelihood of engaging in discretionary behaviors that extend beyond formal job responsibilities, thereby enhancing organizational performance. Drawing on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: *Employees' emotional intelligence (EI) has a significant positive effect on employees' green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB).*

2.5 Employees' Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator

According to Hypothesis 1, GL is directly linked to GOCB, but previous studies have also found an indirect correlation. One way to bridge the gulf between the two is through factors like organizational justice (Zehir et al., 2013), member-leader exchange (Alexander Newman et al., 2017), and trust in a leader's abilities (Amir, 2019). Research led by Ja'afaru Bambale (2014) found that employees' EI may mediate between GL and GOCB in meta-analysis studies. GL's impact on GOCB and the development of employees' EI is rarely studied, on the other hand. On the other hand, this study focused on the EI constructs of the employees rather than those of the EI leaders. This is because the improvement in employees' emotional intelligence (EI) can be used as a reliable indicator of the success or failure of GL programs (Qiu and Dooley 2019).

Wong et al. (2020) reported that leaders who demonstrate high levels of competence and integrity, and who prioritize their subordinates' emotional needs and well-being, are more likely to cultivate both emotional awareness and cognitive understanding among their followers. This assertion is supported by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971) and Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1971, 1968), which emphasize the role of observation, modeling, and reciprocal relationships in shaping behavior. When a leader's emotional intelligence (EI) enables subordinates to recognize and interpret both their own emotions and those of others in a constructive manner, it demonstrates the leader's significant role in enhancing employees' EI. Building on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence presented, EI emerges as a key psychological mechanism through which green leadership (GL) influences employees' green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB). Drawing upon leadership theory and emotional intelligence perspectives, green leaders foster emotionally supportive and value-driven environments that enhance employees' emotional regulation, empathy, and pro-social motivation. In turn, heightened EI encourages employees to engage in discretionary pro-

environmental behaviors that extend beyond formal role requirements. Therefore, employees' emotional intelligence is expected to function as an explanatory mechanism through which green leadership translates into green organizational citizenship behavior. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: *Employees' emotional intelligence (EI) plays a significant mediating role in the positive relationship between green leadership and employees' green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB).*

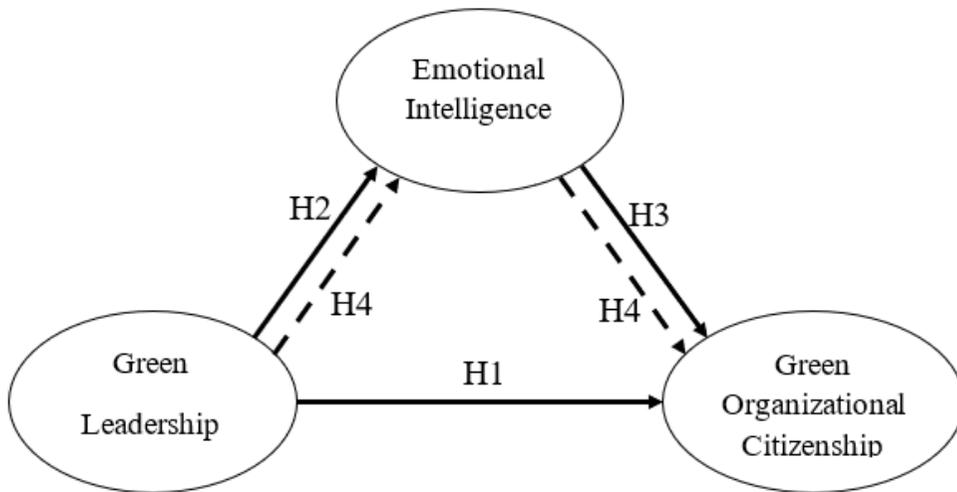


Figure 1 *Theoretical framework*

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Population and Sampling Procedure

The research is based on the positivist philosophy of deductive reasoning. They used a survey approach based on deductive reasoning. The intended recipients are workers from the manufacturing and service industries in the Pakistani cities of Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. The non-probability convenience sampling method was used to distribute 981 questionnaires to participants. The convenience sampling technique is ideal when you can't reach everyone in the population (Malhotra and Dash 2011). Employees with at least a year of work experience were asked to provide data on their supervisor's GL style, emotional intelligence (EI), and whether observational control behavior (GOCB) was practiced at work. More than 980 people were sent standardized self-administered questionnaires via email. Two hundred forty-five completed surveys were returned after four weeks at first. Reminder emails were sent to the remaining participants, and 210 additional responses were received. Four hundred and twenty-two complete and viable questionnaires, with a response rate of 43%, were obtained after the unusable ones were discarded during the data screening process.

3.2 Measurement

Previously used and validated questionnaires were consulted when compiling this list. Since English is the business language in Pakistan, presentations were also made in that language. The data were collected using a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement instrument comprised 33 items designed to assess the three constructs under investigation.

Liden et al. recently refined the 7-item measure of green leadership, which was previously used (2015). Additionally, Khan et al. (2020) used and modified this scale in their previous research, which was also used in this study. As a result, it was logical to use this particular scale in this study. The overall Cronbach's alpha in this study was 0.80.

Following the framework established by Wong et al. (2004), this study utilized their 16-item instrument to evaluate levels of emotional intelligence. The scale captures four key dimensions of EI: self-emotional appraisal, other-emotional appraisal, use of emotion, and emotion regulation, with each subscale comprising four items. The reliability analysis indicated excellent internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.924, demonstrating the scale's suitability for assessing employees' emotional intelligence in the workplace context.

Podsakoff et al. developed a 10-item scale for measuring GOCB (1990). This study found an overall reliability score of 0.843 on the 10-item scale.

3.3 Reliability and Validity

Following Hinkin's (1998a) advice, the authors conducted a pilot study before conducting the full survey to ensure that the questionnaires were feasible, clear, and appropriate. The pre-tests were designed and developed to ensure that the measures were logically consistent, complete, and valid. For the pilot study, Cronbach's Alpha (a) was used to measure the study's internal reliability. In a pilot test with 45 individuals, the Cronbach alpha for all constructions surpassed the permissible range of 0.7. These graphs confirmed the scales' consistency and reliability in this investigation. The suggested questionnaire instrument is simple and intelligible, according to the pilot study's findings.

3.4 Data Analysis Approach and Procedure

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data. Scholars across numerous sectors, ranging from hospitality and tourism to supply chain and operations management, have increasingly adopted PLS-SEM as a preferred analytical tool (Hair et al., 2012; Sarstedt et al., 2020). PLS-SEM analyses data using two distinct models. Creating a measurement model that explains

the relationship between the latent and observable variables is the first step. According to Joseph F. Hair et al. (2019), structural models look at the connections between the latent variables.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Following established PLS-SEM protocols, the analysis involved a dual-stage approach consisting of measurement model estimation and structural model path analysis. Measurement reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR), both of which assess the internal consistency of the constructs.

4.1 Result and Interpretation

The relationships among the latent variables in the measurement model were examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) analyses. The factors presented in Table 1 indicate statistically significant positive associations. Following Peterson (1994), a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 is considered acceptable for research purposes. In this study, all constructs exceed this threshold, confirming adequate internal consistency and overall measurement reliability.

Table 1 Factor Loading, Mean, SD, CA, CR, AVE

Variables	Items	Loading	Mean	SD	CA	CR	AVE
Green Leadership	GL 2	0.656	0.356	0.048	0.843	0.881	0.555
	GL 3	0.724					
	GL 4	0.760					
	GL 5	0.830					
	GL 6	0.752					
	GL 7	0.732					
	Emotional Intelligence	EI 1					
EI 4		0.648					
EI 5		0.730					
EI 6		0.620					
EI 7		0.805					
EI 8		0.737					
EI 10		0.765					
EI 11		0.763					
EI 12		0.694					
EI 13		0.740					
EI 14	0.739						
EI 15	0.786						
EI 16	0.663						
	GOCB 1	0.685	0.469	0.035	0.843	0.881	0.521

Green	GOCB 2	0.805
Organization	GOCB 3	0.817
Citizenship	GOCB 4	0.778
Behavior	GOCB 5	0.648
	GOCB 7	0.748
	GOCB 8	0.826

To ensure that all constructs were distinct, both convergent and discriminant validities were assessed. Convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Hu and Bentler (1998), AVE values above 0.4 are acceptable; in this study, all constructs exhibited AVE values greater than 0.5, as presented in Table 1. Items with low factor loadings, which may indicate measurement errors or cross-loading issues, were identified for removal. Following Byrne (1989) and Peterson (1994), items with loadings below 0.40—specifically GL1, EI2, EI3, EI8, GOCB6, GOCB9, and GOCB10—were eliminated. After this refinement, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.6 (Hair et al., 2018), confirming internal consistency.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 2, the square roots of the AVE for each construct were higher than the correlations with other latent variables, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Consequently, none of the off-diagonal correlations exceeded the diagonal AVE values, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct (Hair et al., 2018).

Table 2 *Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Discriminant validity)*

Variables	EI	OCB	SL
EI	0.719		
GOCB	0.452	0.732	
GL	0.458	0.499	0.751

The structural model was utilized to assess the model's explanatory power through R^2 values, while path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values were used to test the hypotheses (see Table 3). Demographic controls—specifically age, gender, and job position—demonstrated no statistically significant impact on cognitive ability.

Results in Table 4 confirm that all hypothesized paths were significantly and positively correlated. The most robust direct effect was identified between Green Leadership (GL) and Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB) ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, GL significantly influenced Emotional Intelligence (EI) ($\beta = 0.241$), which in turn significantly predicted GOCB ($\beta = 0.212$).

While EI served as a significant mediator in the GL–GOCB relationship, its effect size was the smallest among the tested paths ($\beta = 0.201$). Consequently, while H1, H2, and H3 received full empirical support, H4 was only partially sustained.

Table 3 *PC, TS, PV, R²*

Variables	β	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
GL toward GOCB	0.269	2.337	0.007	Accepted
GL toward EI	0.241	2.412	0.004	Accepted
EI toward GOCB	0.212	2.110	0.018	Accepted
EI b/w GL and GOCB	0.201	2.009	0.029	Partially Accepted

To investigate the mediating role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the relationship between Green Leadership (GL) and Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB), this study utilized bootstrapping within a PLS-SEM framework, as recommended by Kline (2010) and Fritz et al. (2012). Path coefficients were calculated using the PLS algorithm. Initially, the direct impact of GL on GOCB was found to be substantial ($\beta = 0.605$; see Figure 2). Further analysis revealed a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.290$), confirming that EI serves as a key intermediary between leadership and green behaviors.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the extent to which Emotional Intelligence (EI) serves as a mediating mechanism, bridging the gap between Green Leadership (GL) and Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB) among employees. The findings indicate that GL has a significant positive impact on employees' GOCB. Prior research has linked GL to increased employee engagement, commitment, loyalty, enhanced performance, and a willingness to go beyond formal job responsibilities, highlighting its critical role in fostering discretionary pro-environmental behaviors (Brohi et al., 2018; Harwiki, 2016b).

Moreover, GL was found to have a significant positive relationship with employees' EI, supporting the study hypotheses. This aligns with previous research demonstrating the beneficial effects of green leadership on employees' well-being (Beck, 2010; Jit et al., 2017b; Lu et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence and well-being are closely connected, as individuals with higher EI tend to be happier, more optimistic, and more satisfied with their lives (Schutte et al., 1998, 2002). Therefore, it can be inferred that green leadership enhances both EI and overall employee well-being in the workplace.

The results also reveal a significant positive relationship between employees' EI and their GOCB. Employees with higher EI are better able to regulate their emotions, manage stress, and cope with negative experiences, leading to greater resilience, sustained motivation, and reduced risk of burnout (Lee, 2017). In addition,

emotionally intelligent employees are more empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others, which fosters a positive work environment and promotes discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Miao et al., 2021; Makkar & Basu, 2017).

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the effect of green leadership on GOCB is partially mediated by employees' EI. This suggests that GL influences GOCB both directly and indirectly through the enhancement of employees' emotional competencies. These findings are consistent with prior research exploring indirect mechanisms through which leadership behaviors influence organizational citizenship, highlighting the critical role of psychological and emotional factors in promoting discretionary pro-environmental behavior (Elche et al., 2020b; Newman et al., 2017). Overall, the results indicate that employees' EI is a key mechanism through which green leadership fosters GOCB, underscoring the importance of developing emotionally intelligent leadership in organizations aiming to promote sustainable and positive employee behaviors.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study advance our understanding of green leadership (GL) in three key ways.

First, this research contributes to the literature by providing fresh empirical data on the advantages of Green Leadership (GL) within Pakistan's industrial and service sectors. While the link between GL and Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB) has been explored internationally, the Pakistani landscape remains under-researched, with only a few exceptions (Brohi et al., 2018; Zeeshan et al., 2021). The results indicate that when leaders prioritize the needs of their employees alongside organizational objectives, they positively influence employee behaviors. Employees demonstrating GOCB voluntarily go beyond their formal duties, actively contributing to the organization's sustainability and overall performance.

Second, this research represents a pioneering effort to provide empirical evidence for the link between Green Leadership (GL) and Emotional Intelligence (EI)—a relationship that has remained largely unexplored in previous literature. While prior research has explored the association between leaders' emotional intelligence and green leadership styles, the direct impact of GL on employees' EI has remained largely unexplored (Jha & Bhattacharya, 2021; Miao et al., 2021). The present findings provide robust evidence that GL enhances employees' EI, reinforcing previous research indicating that emotionally intelligent leaders foster employee well-being, optimism, and pro-social behavior (Beck, 2010; Black, 2010; Wheeler, 2012).

Third, this study contributes to the literature by incorporating employees' EI as a mediating mechanism through which GL influences GOCB. Prior studies have not sufficiently explored EI as an outcome of GL, nor as a conduit linking leadership behavior to employee discretionary actions. The current findings demonstrate that GL enhances employees' EI, which in turn fosters higher levels of GOCB, highlighting the critical role of EI in translating leadership influence into positive employee behaviors.

Furthermore, these results offer empirical validation for Poon's (2006) theory, which posits that mentoring and supportive engagement are the primary drivers through which leadership fosters employee advancement. In line with this framework, Green Leadership (GL) serves as a catalyst for both the personal and professional evolution of staff. Furthermore, the findings confirm that Emotional Intelligence (EI) acts as a vital psychological bridge, explaining how green leadership behaviors translate into increased Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB).

Overall, this study underscores the strategic importance of developing green and emotionally intelligent leadership to promote sustainable, discretionary behaviors that benefit both employees and organizations.

5.2 Practical Contributions

The practical insights from this research offer valuable guidance for organizational leaders, particularly those operating within Pakistan. A key takeaway is the significant role of leadership style as a primary driver of employee productivity, aligning with previous evidence from Nawaz et al. (2020) and Setiawan et al. (2021). Specifically, green leadership (GL) was found to enhance employees' overall job performance, as measured by green organizational citizenship behavior (GOCB). These findings suggest that organizations should actively encourage green leadership and implement strategies to cultivate it at all levels, which is particularly critical in Pakistan, where hierarchical structures and high power distance are prevalent.

In many Pakistani organizations, decision-making remains highly centralized, and employees often have limited influence over workplace processes. The absence of democratic practices has contributed to a prevalence of autocratic leadership, which prior studies have shown to negatively affect employee well-being, safety, motivation, and ultimately, productivity (Cheema & Din, 2014; Gul et al., 2018; Briker et al., 2021; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Fiaz et al., 2017). Transitioning toward more democratic, participative, and service-oriented leadership styles, such as GL, can enhance employee performance and overall organizational outcomes. To achieve this, organizations should implement training and development programs aimed at building green leadership competencies across all managerial levels.

Furthermore, the study highlights the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in promoting GOCB. Research consistently shows that EI can be developed through targeted interventions (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004; Goleman, 2011). Organizations should therefore design comprehensive EI development programs not only for managerial staff but also for non-managerial employees with lower EI levels, in order to strengthen employees' capacity for discretionary pro-environmental behaviors (Kim & Park, 2020b; Sy & Côte, 2004). By investing in EI development across all organizational levels, firms can foster higher engagement, motivation, and sustainable performance.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This research clarifies the underlying psychological mechanisms by which Green Leadership (GL) fosters Green Organizational Citizenship Behavior (GOCB), specifically identifying Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the critical intermediary in this process. GL appears to be a key driver of employees' intrinsic motivation and discretionary pro-environmental behavior. However, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

First, the generalizability of the results is limited, as the data were collected exclusively from employees in the service and manufacturing industries in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Future research should replicate this study across diverse industries, regions, and cultural contexts to ensure the broader applicability of the findings.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, with all data collected at a single point in time. Consequently, causal inferences should be made with caution. For instance, it is possible that employees with higher EI may perceive their leaders' green behaviors more favorably. Longitudinal or experimental research designs could address this limitation and strengthen the validity of causal interpretations.

Finally, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to empirically examine the relationship between green leadership and employees' EI, identifying a positive association. Future research could further explore this relationship under different conditions, using varied samples, methods, and longitudinal designs to examine the long-term effects of GL on employees' emotional intelligence and its subsequent impact on GOCB.

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