



## LINKING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP TO EMPLOYEE GREEN BEHAVIOR: MEDIATING MECHANISM OF GREEN ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

Aiman Adnan <sup>1</sup>, Dr Safia Bano <sup>2</sup>, Nida Muhammad <sup>3</sup>, Saeeda Kakar <sup>4</sup>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v4i4.197>

### Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar,  
Institute of Management Sciences,  
University of Balochistan, Quetta  
Email: [aimanbaloch03@gmail.com](mailto:aimanbaloch03@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor,  
Institute of Management Sciences,  
University of Balochistan, Quetta  
Email: [sb\\_ims@yahoo.com](mailto:sb_ims@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Management Sciences,  
University of Balochistan, Quetta  
Email: [nidamkhan786@gmail.com](mailto:nidamkhan786@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Management Sciences,  
University of Balochistan, Quetta  
Email: [ms.saeedakakar@gmail.com](mailto:ms.saeedakakar@gmail.com)

### Corresponding Author's Email:

<sup>1</sup> [aimanbaloch03@gmail.com](mailto:aimanbaloch03@gmail.com)

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### Article History

Received: 10.10.2025  
Accepted: 06.11.2025  
Published: 14.11.2025

### Abstract

*This study aims to investigate the intricate relationships between Ethical Leadership (EL), Green Organizational Identity (GOI), and Employee Green Behaviour (EGB) within the context of public-sector universities in Balochistan, Pakistan. Increasingly, organizational sustainability is becoming an essential objective for organizational leaders, and scholars need to understand the challenges of how ethical leadership influences employees' sustainable behaviours within organizations. Based on Social Learning Theory and Social Identity Theory, this study aims to explain how ethical leaders can influence employee pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours, both directly and indirectly, through organization members' identification with the organization. Using quantitative research design, data were gathered through a structured questionnaire from 230 faculty members from different public sector universities in Balochistan. The Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 4) was used to analyse the data to test the hypothesized mediation model. The findings showed that Ethical Leadership has a significant, positive impact on both Green Organizational Identity and Employee Green Behaviour. Additionally, the research revealed that leaders who demonstrate fairness, integrity, and a strong environmental commitment are more likely to foster sustainable behaviour among their employees. However, it was not possible to confirm the mediation role of Green Organizational Identity as a mediator between Ethical Leadership and Employee Green Behaviour, as the impact of ethical leadership on employees' environmentally friendly actions does not occur solely through organizational identity or identification processes. The work makes a significant contribution to theory by integrating the moral and ecological facets of leadership and by extending the current frameworks of sustainable behaviour in the higher education sector. Besides, it offers practical implications to researchers and practitioners who may call for the increased development of ethical leadership programs, the fostering of sustainability-oriented values, and the facilitation of employee engagement in green activities. In brief, this research highlights the importance of ethical leadership as a driver of eco-friendly culture in organizations and paves the way for further investigations into additional variables that mediate or moderate the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' sustainable behaviours.*

**Keywords:** Ethical Leadership, Green Employee Behaviour, Green Organizational Identity, Balochistan, Social Learning Theory, Social Identity Theory



## Introduction

Due to the increasing environmental challenges of the world, organizations worldwide are becoming more conscious of their crucial role in enabling sustainable development and addressing environmental issues. Especially in developing areas, the higher education sector is facing increasing pressure to comply with ecological sustainability requirements in its operations and cultural framework. This research examines the relationships between Ethical Leadership (EL), Green Organizational Identity (GOI), and Employee Green Behavior (GEB) among university faculty members in Balochistan, Pakistan. The study also examines how ethical leadership practices can motivate faculty members to behave in an environmentally friendly manner in the university setting, including through the mediating role of organizational identity.

The significance of the study lies in the fact that academic institutions serve as providers of environmental solutions in a unique way, as well as a means of preparing future generations. Faculty members, including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers, are one of the most significant components in driving the sustainability agenda in universities. Faculty members, through their daily habits, such as the use of energy in classrooms and offices, can independently engage in university sustainability initiatives. Additionally, staff can manage resources sustainably and reduce waste in various ways; collectively, these actions contribute to the university's overall environmental footprint. Faculty members, in addition, serve as teachers and models, and their allegiance to the environment ultimately influences students' awareness and behaviour towards sustainability education.

This work is based on two theoretical frameworks: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social Learning Theory offers a framework for faculty members to observe, imitate, and adopt environmentally friendly behaviours of moral leaders within their universities. Similarly, Social Identity Theory posits that a shared sense of organizational identity can motivate faculty members to align their behaviour with the university's environmental ethos and sustainability goals. This research also takes into consideration several points that existing literature fails to acknowledge. While the authors have comprehensively discussed the general effects of leadership on employee behaviour, the studies about the effects of ethical leadership and environmental behaviours in higher education are scarce. Green organizational identity as a mediator between ethical leadership and employee green behaviours is a gap in the research, particularly in the context of developing countries and higher education institutions. The present research extends the theoretical and practical understanding of the relationship between ethical leadership and environmental behaviours by examining these issues within the university system of Balochistan. Moreover, through its findings, the study aims to make significant contributions to both the theorizing process and the practical implications, particularly in encouraging sustainability in higher education institutions, considering the common challenges faced by institutions globally.

Based on the research findings, university administrators, policymakers, and academic leaders can take meaningful actions to improve the environmental performance of universities, which is the primary contribution of this study. The research highlights the impact of ethical leadership on green behaviour among faculty, enabling data-driven insights to inform the development of effective leadership practices and inform institutional-level policies that foster a culture of sustainability in higher education institutions. Furthermore, although the study has not extended to the staff, it has involved academic staff at various ranks, thereby presenting the university's hierarchical system; nevertheless, it has acknowledged the possibility that all faculty ranks can contribute to environmental sustainability. This study reveals the potential of Green Organizational Identity (GOI) as a mediator in the relationship between Ethical Leadership (EL) and Employee Green Behaviour (GEB), the focus of this research. The research primarily focuses on public universities in Balochistan, Pakistan.

It extensively fills a significant gap in the understanding of social psychological processes that explain how leadership contributes to sustainability outcomes in the higher education sector. The research is based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which provides explanations for the process whereby employees copy the behaviour of leaders whom they think are credible, and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which argues that the primary driver of behaviour is the one common identity shared by the group (Chen, 2011).



### ***Research Objectives***

The primary goal of this research is to investigate the impact of ethical leadership on employees' green behaviour. Additionally, the study aims to examine the mediating role of green organizational identity in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee green behaviour.

### ***Problem Statement***

Organizations in the Third World are compelled to accept green practices. However, there is still much to be discovered regarding the ways leadership influences these environmental actions. While previous research has found leadership to be related to the overall performance, the mechanism through which ethical leadership influences employee green behaviour remains largely unexplored, particularly in educational institutions. Moreover, the mediation studies of Green Organization Identity in this relationship have yielded different outcomes, thus posing the question of how organizational identity affects the interaction of leadership and implementation. The lack of such information is an obstacle for organizations to facilitate the transition to environmental sustainability among their members effectively.

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to the understanding of the impact of leadership practices on employees' behaviour in environmentally friendly workplace settings. Investigating green organizational identity as a mediator helps to understand the cognitive processes of employees' environmental actions and decision-making, which is very insightful. Such figures grant organizations the opportunity to establish plans for sustainability and programs that help leaders grow, which, as an indirect effect, can be a beneficial approach to encouraging employees to be more environmentally friendly. The findings reveal the complex interplay between leadership styles, corporate identity, and employees' environmentally responsible behaviour, providing practical guidance for promoting environmental stewardship in various organizational contexts.

### ***Literature Review***

Previously, research has delved into leadership problems, but this study focuses on the relationships among three variables: Ethical Leadership, Green Organizational Identity, and Employee Green Behaviour, among faculty members of public universities in Balochistan. The research primarily focuses on the role of ethical leadership in fostering employee green behaviour, promoting a green organizational identity, and exploring the possibility that this relationship is mediated. As a result, this paper aims to clarify which leadership influences impact employees' environmentally friendly behaviours in the workplace by examining these processes.

### ***Ethical Leadership***

Ethical leadership is a complex concept that could be defined in less formal words as "a leader who demonstrates such behaviour to his/her followers by practicing personally the morally right behaviour and harmonious relationships with others and the leader who promotes through this kind of behaviour in the followers the communication, support and joint decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005, ). This explanation has two central ideas at its core: first, the leader as a moral person, who is made up of qualities such as integrity, honesty, and fairness, and second the leader as a moral manager who not only sets the example of ethical behaviour but also implements reward and punishment systems to support ethical standards (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leadership is based on the principles of accountability, justice, and respect, which ensure that leaders go beyond analysing financial results and consider the common good instead (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). For instance, by embracing the triple bottom line approach, corporate leaders can integrate economic performance with social and environmental concerns, thereby promoting sustainability under their stewardship (Ciasullo et al., 2023). Furthermore, an ethics-based approach to climate change is the most effective way to stimulate pro-environmental behaviour, and consequently, organizations' engagement in more sustainable activities, such as energy conservation (Preble et al., 2020).

### ***Employee Green Behaviour***

GEB stands for Green Employee Behaviour, and it is defined by Ones & Dilchert (2012) as "scalable actions and behaviours that employees engage in that are linked with and contribute to or detract from environmental sustainability." This one big concept encompasses a range of work-related behaviours that people engage in, which are beneficial for the environment. Typically, people categorize these behaviours into



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Task-related EGB, or in-role behaviours, refer to actions directly specified by job descriptions, such as adherence to environmental management systems and proper waste disposal (Kim et al., 2019).

### ***Green Organizational Identity***

Green Organizational Identity (GOI) refers to the extent to which individuals within an organization perceive environmental sustainability as the central, most distinctive, and enduring characteristic of their organization (Chen, 2011). It refers to the organization as a single "self" concept, where environmental values are integrated into the collective self-concept, allowing employees to identify it as a standard reference framework through which they interpret their green behaviour (Haldorai et al., 2023). A green organizational identity is an identity that "we are an environmentally responsible organization" has become the shared understanding of all employees, including." Such a shared understanding serves as the primary cognitive guide for individual attitudes and behaviours, as it contributes to workers' motivation and helps them recognize the importance of being green (Luu, 2019). Theoretically supported by Social Identity Theory, the concept posits that when employees are firmly committed to their organization's green values, they will be energetically engaged in actions congruent with those values, thereby maintaining their positive self-concept (Haldorai et al., 2025). Studies across various sectors, including hospitality and tourism, demonstrate that a strong GOI is a key factor that directly influences employees' green behaviour and, overall, enhances environmental performance (Haldorai et al., 2025; Omar et al., 2025).

### ***The Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Employee Green Behaviour***

One of the hypotheses is that ethical leadership has a positive influence on employee green behaviour. This idea stems from Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which argues that people learn socially acceptable behaviours by observing credible and attractive role models. By their fair treatment of the norm and the inclusion of moral accountability, ethical leaders lead by example and, therefore, become such models (Brown et al., 2005). Employees also learn the leaders' values when they observe the leaders applying these values in their everyday work—leaders demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by making eco-friendly decisions, rewarding green initiatives, and presenting stewardship as a moral obligation—then employees internalize these values through an observational learning process (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). There is a strong link, as research, between the two, that ethical leadership has statistically significant positive effects on different forms of employee green behaviour (EGB) in different cultural and organizational contexts (Ahmad & Umrani, 2019; Liu & Zhao, 2022) hence the employees are enabled to perform both roles in green behaviour, in-role and extra-role, as they understand these activities to be within the leader's expectations and the organization's ethical standards.

**H1:** The Relationship between EL and EGB is significant.

### ***The Relationship between Green Organizational Identity and Ethical Leadership***

It is hypothesized that ethical leadership is positively associated with a green organizational identity. Leaders are the primary interpretive filters for organizational policies and play a crucial role in defining and communicating organizational values (Chen & Chang, 2022). According to social learning theory, ethical leaders, through their actions and reinforcement mechanisms, signal what is important and valued within the organization (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders, through environmentally responsible behaviour and the thoughtful incorporation of sustainability into their strategic decisions, alter their followers' collective perceptions of the work environment (Norton et al., 2015). Such a process yields a green psychological climate, where employees share a common understanding of the organization's policies, procedures, and practices focused on environmental sustainability (Zhang et al., 2018). This climate is actually a committed organizational-level green psychological climate that acts as the immediate antecedent to a shared belief that environmental sustainability is a central, distinctive, and enduring feature of the organization, ultimately



leading to a strong green organizational identity (GOI) (Chen, 2011).

**H2:** The Relationship between EL and GOI is significant.

***The Relationship between Green Organizational Identity and Employee Green Behaviour***

It is assumed that green organizational identity will have a positive impact on green employee behaviour. This connection is supported by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which states that people derive a part of their self-concept from being members of social groups. When employees perceive a strong green organizational identity, they internalize environmental values as part of their own social identity (Chen, 2011). To maintain a positive self-concept and reduce cognitive dissonance, they become intrinsically motivated to behave in ways that are congruent with this identity (Luu, 2019). Therefore, a strong GOI acts as a powerful cognitive guide, motivating employees to voluntarily engage in pro-environmental behaviours that affirm their membership in an environmentally responsible organization (Hameed et al., 2023). The strengthening of the organization's environmental principles from within is one of the main psychological ways, according to the cited authors, which not only motivates but also encourages voluntary green actions (Wang & Li, 2025).

**H3:** The correlation between GOI and EGB is significant.

***The Mediating Role of Green Organizational Identity***

It is also hypothesized that green organizational identity mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and green employee behaviour. This integrated proposition implies that the impact of ethical leadership on employee green behaviour is not merely direct. Instead, the primary approach is that ethical leaders first establish a shared green organizational identity among employees (Asif & Asghar, 2025; Chen & Chang, 2022). This newly formed identity then becomes the primary psychological mechanism linking the leader's influence to followers' green actions.

A real-world study of Chinese manufacturing companies yielded evidence for this mediating process, showing that ethical leadership leads to employees' green innovation behaviour through their green organizational identity (Liu & Zhao, 2022). In fact, employees do not simply follow the leader's instructions by engaging in green behaviours; instead, they do so because these actions align with "who we are as an organization" (Chen, 2011). Therefore, GOI is the essential mediating link that converts ethical leadership into employee pro-environmental behaviour.

**H4:** The Relationship between the mediating role is significant.

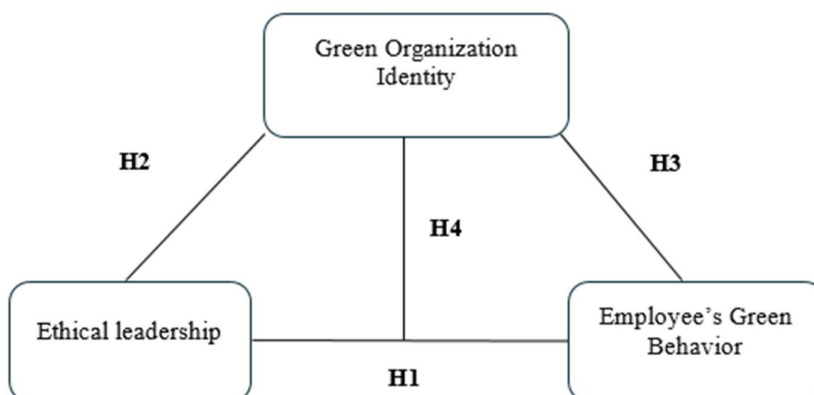
***Theoretical Framework***

**Social Learning.** Employees learn behaviours by observing and emulating others, especially leaders. Ethical leaders who model sustainable behaviour set a standard for employees to follow (Ahmad et al., 2021).

**Identity Theory.** Suppose employees can establish a connection with the environmentally friendly green principles of their company. In that case, they will not only internalize these values profoundly but also exhibit the right kind of behaviour, thereby increasing their degree of sustainability (Zhou & Zheng, 2024).

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical Framework*





### Research Methodology

Firstly a non-probability purposive sampling method was used; thus, the final sample consisted of 230 faculty members from various institutions. The breakdown of the faculty members is as follows: UoB (50 respondents, 21.7%), SBK (49 respondents, 21.3%), Lasbela University (71 respondents, 30.9%), BUITEMS (16 respondents, 7.0%), and Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology, Khuzdar (44 respondents, 19.1%).

This research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationships between ethical leadership, green organizational identity, and the green behavior of faculty members in higher education institutions. A correlational design was selected to examine the complex interrelationships among several variables simultaneously in real-world organizational contexts, thereby allowing for a broad spectrum of data to be collected from various universities. The study population consisted of faculty members from five public universities in Balochistan, specifically the University of Balochistan (UoB), Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology, University of Information Technology, Engineering, and Management Sciences (BUISTEMS) in Khuzdar: Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBK), Lasbela University, Balochistan.

### Data Collection and Instrument

The study employed a standardized questionnaire, developed and disseminated through Google Forms, consisting of five variables that gathered demographic information, including gender, university affiliation, and academic standing. We utilized a 10-item scale derived from Brown et al. (2005) to assess ethical leadership on a 5-point Likert scale. Used a 6-item scale established by Chen (2011) to measure Green Organizational Identity. Utilized a 3-item scale derived from Norton et al. (2015) to assess Employee Green Behavior. The data were collected via an online survey employing Google Forms. Before collecting data, the research ethics committees at the participating universities granted their permission. The researchers used university email accounts and professional social media networks to send out the link to the poll. The study included a cover letter that explained its purpose, assured participants of anonymity, and requested informed consent. Every week, automatic reminders were sent out to entice more people to react. Out of the surveys that were sent out, 230 persons filled them out and submitted them back.

### Data Analysis

SPSS version 26 and the PROCESS macro for SPSS were used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics were used to compile the study variables and demographic data. The internal consistency of the measuring scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Bivariate correlations between the primary study variables were investigated using Pearson correlation analysis. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses, and Model 4 of the PROCESS macro was used for mediation analysis to determine whether green organizational identity mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and green behaviour among employees.

## Results

### Demographics and Profile of Respondents

The survey had a total of 230 respondents from five universities. The demographic distribution of the respondents is shown below.

#### Gender Distribution

**Table 1**

*Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 230)*

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	83	36.1%	36.1%
Female	147	63.9%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	-

147 (63.9%) of the 230 responders were females, and 83 (36.1%) were males. The majority of the study participants were female, as evident from the sample, which consisted of almost two-thirds females. The

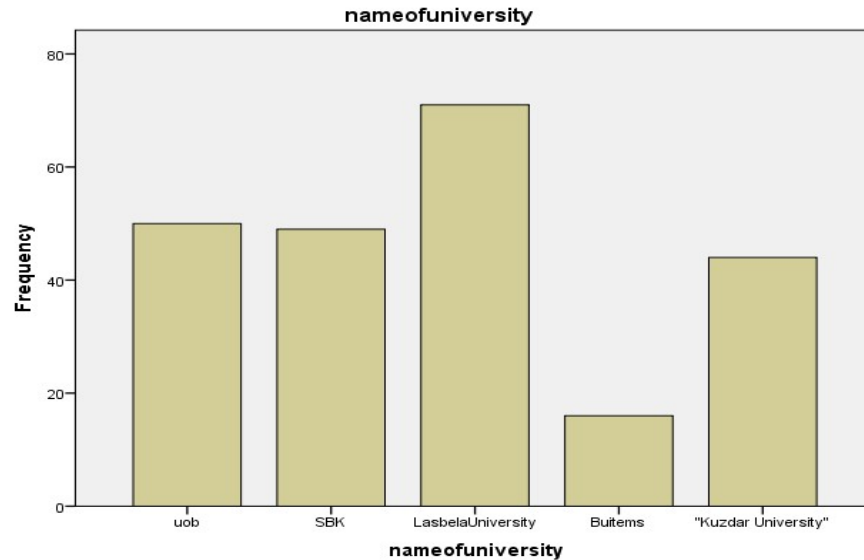


percentage of females is the basis for all the participants in the female part presented there.

***Distribution of Respondents by University***

**Figure 2**

*Name of University*



The participants in the research study were from five different universities. The majority of the responses (30.9%) were from Lasbela University, followed by UoB (21.7%), and SBK (21.3%), respectively. 19.1% of the respondents were from Khuzdar University, while only 7.0% of those were from BUITEMS. Such a distribution indicates a diverse sample from different universities of higher education, with a somewhat higher percentage from Lasbela University.

***Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations***

The associations between the three main study variables, Green Employee Behaviour (GEB), Green Organizational Identity (GOI), and Ethical Leadership (EL), were investigated using a Pearson correlation analysis. Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the overall consistency of each construct.

**Table 2**

*Correlation Analysis*

	<b>EL</b>	<b>GOI</b>	<b>GEB</b>
<b>EL</b>	0.897	-	-
<b>GOI</b>	0.749**	0.733	-
<b>GEB</b>	0.763**	0.601**	0.625

**Table 3**

*Model Summary*

<b>Model</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Unstandardized β</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig. (F)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>EL → GEB</b>	0.208	17.818	.000	.582	317.477	.000
<b>2</b>	<b>EL → GOI</b>	0.357	17.065	.000	.561	291.211	.000
<b>3</b>	<b>GOI → GEB</b>	0.344	11.344	.000	.361	128.679	

The first model examined the direct impact of one of the most ethical leadership styles on employees' green behaviour. The analysis output demonstrated that Ethical Leadership was a significant factor in Employees' Green Behaviour,  $F(1, 228) = 288.34, p < .001$ , indicating that the model fitted the data well and explained approximately 51.8% of the variance ( $R^2 = .518$ ). The unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 1.300, SE =$



0.076,  $\beta = .720$ ,  $t(228) = 16.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.151, 1.449]) showed that when Ethical Leadership was increased by one unit, Employees' Green Behaviour was increased by 1.30 units. These results suggest that leaders who are ethically consistent and possess moral integrity are more likely to motivate their followers to behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of Ethical Leadership (EL) on Green Organizational Identity (GOI). The results demonstrated that the model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 228) = 380.58$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining approximately 58.7% of the variance in Green Organizational Identity ( $R^2 = .587$ ). Ethical Leadership was found to have a strong and positive influence on Green Organizational Identity ( $B = 1.211$ ,  $SE = 0.062$ ,  $\beta = .766$ ,  $t(228) = 19.51$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.089, 1.333]). Green Organizational Identity is said to increase by about 1.21 units for every unit that Ethical Leadership increases.

The results suggest that leading figures, characterized by morality, such as those who exhibit justice, responsibility, and honesty, influence employee perception of their organization as an ethical one that cares for the environment. As leaders, ethical leaders demonstrate and live the values that, among other things, include not only caring for the community but also for the natural environment. Workers thus become more inclined to internalize these ethical and ecological values, which in turn deepen their sense of belonging to the organization and increase their shared commitment to sustainability.

The third model assessed how employees' green behaviour was impacted by their green organizational identity. The results of the regression analysis showed that 82.1% of the variance in employees' green behaviour could be explained by a statistically significant association,  $F(1, 228) = 1231.81$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $R^2 = .821$ ). According to the unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 1.036$ ,  $SE = 0.030$ ,  $\beta = 0.906$ ,  $t(228) = 35.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.977, 1.095]), employees' green behaviour increased by 1.04 units for every one-unit increase in green organizational identity. These findings indicate that employees are more likely to act in an environmentally conscious manner when they strongly identify with their company's green values and environmental commitments.

**Table 4**

*Analysis of (Hayes Model 4) Ethical Leadership, Green Organizational Identity, and Employee Green Behaviour*

Path	Relationship	Coefficient (B)	SE	t	p	LLCI	LCI
<b>a</b>	<b>EL → GOI</b>	1.211	0.073	19.508	.000	1.0898	1.3442
<b>b</b>	<b>GOI → GEB</b>	0.9723	0.0569	21.5421	.000	0.8921	1.0724
<b>c' (Direct Effect)</b>	<b>EL → GEB</b>	0.1948	0.0177	11.0357	.000	0.1600	0.2296
<b>Indirect Effect (a×b)</b>	<b>EL → GOI → GEB</b>	0.0137	0.0130	—	—	0.0144	0.0364

The mediation analysis conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 investigated the mediating function of green organizational identity (GOI) in the relationship between ethical leadership (EL) and employee green behaviour (GEB).

Results showed a significant direct effect of EL on GEB ( $B = 0.1948$ ,  $SE = 0.0177$ ,  $t = 11.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.1600, 0.2296]), meaning ethical leadership positively and significantly predicts employee green behaviour. It shows that leaders who display ethical values, fairness, and integrity typically encourage environmentally sustainable behaviours among their employees.

Conversely, the indirect effect of EL on GEB through GOI was not significant ( $B = 0.0137$ , Boot  $SE = 0.0130$ , Boot  $LLCI = -0.0144$ , Boot  $ULCI = 0.0364$ ) because it contained zero. Therefore, it means the mediating role of GOI in the relationship between EL and GEB is not supported. That is to say, while the influence of ethical leadership has a strong, positive effect on employees' green behaviour, this relationship does not function through green organizational identity.

Overall, the results suggest that ethical leadership plays a crucial role in promoting sustainability and pro-environmental behaviours among employees, without requiring a unified green identity within the organization. These results further emphasize the importance of ethical leadership as a mechanism for promoting environmental awareness and green behaviour in organizational contexts.



## Discussion

### ***The Influence of Ethical Leadership and Employee Green Behaviour (H1)***

The findings provide strong evidence for Hypothesis 1 (H1), which posited a positive correlation between green employee behaviour and moral leadership. Regression analysis indicated that EL is a robust and significant predictor of GEB ( $\beta = 0.763$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), hence accounting for a substantial proportion of the variance in green behaviours (58.2%). This result aligns completely with the theoretical framework of Social Learning Theory (Ahmad et al., 2021) and supports previous empirical research (Mayer et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2015). It demonstrates that leaders who are ethically sound and exhibit traits such as honesty, fairness, and genuine concern for the well-being of people and the environment can be effective role models. Employees imitate their leader's sustainable practices upon observing their leader's dedication to environmental compliance, resource conservation, or the use of green concepts in decision-making. This study demonstrates that moral leaders may convert the ethical imperative of environmental stewardship into tangible employee actions, as noted by Barnett (2005).

### ***The Influence of Ethical Leadership and Green Organizational Identity (H2)***

The data from the study gives solid backing to the second hypothesis. It demonstrates how ethical leadership contributes to establishing a green organizational identity. In the regression analysis, a clear link was identified that had a significant impact. The beta value was 0.749, and the p-value was less than 0.001. Ethical leadership accounted for 56.1 percent of the changes in green organizational identity. This aligns well with the findings of researchers on the topic. They argue that leaders primarily shape the organization's sense of identity (Gioia et al., 1998) for more on that. Leaders who prioritize ethics have a significant impact on how employees perceive the company's core values. They do this through their words, actions, and the ways they back certain things. (Xu et al., 2022) Talked about this in their work. When these leaders consistently prioritize environmental care and embody it, they integrate sustainability into what the organization stands for. They even tackle the core question of what defines the organization's identity. (Albert & Whetten, 1985) explored that idea. In this kind of setting, workers begin to view the company as naturally green. That strengthens the leader's role in guiding how everyone makes sense of things together. Refer to Gioia and Thomas et al. (1991, 1996) for support on this point.

### ***The Influence of Green Organizational Identity and Employee Green Behaviour (H3)***

Employee green behaviour. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.601$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and the simple regression analysis confirmed that GOI is a significant predictor of GEB ( $\beta = 0.601$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), accounting for 36.1% of the variance. This finding aligns with one of the central tenets of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When employees identify with the organization's green identity and consider it an integral part of their self-concept, they feel obligated to engage in activities that support and strengthen that identity (Lee et al., 2015; Su & Swanson, 2019).

They adopt the group's norms and values, thus making green behaviour a natural and voluntary manifestation of their organizational membership, in agreement with recent research results from Elshaer et al. (2024) and Haldorai et al. (2023). This harmony between individual and organizational value systems leads to the occurrence of organizational citizenship behaviours that target the environment (Mayer et al., 2009).

### ***The Mediating Role of Green Organizational Identity (H4)***

This is the most intriguing finding of the study. Hypothesis 4 (H4), which proposed that GOI mediates the relationship between EL and GEB, was not supported by the mediation analysis. While the direct effect of EL on GEB remained substantial ( $B = 0.1948$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the indirect effect through GOI was not statistically significant (Effect = 0.0137, BootLLCI = -0.0144, BootULCI = 0.0364).

This finding points to a significant difference. Although ethical leadership is a significant factor in promoting government organizational identity and can be considered a key factor in energizing green employee behaviour, the psychological path from a collective green identity to personal green behaviours may not be the primary way through which ethical leaders influence this particular context.

## Conclusion

This study provides evidence that ethically led organizations are better positioned to develop a green identity and witness green behaviour among their employees. Ethical leadership has been found to



significantly influence both the University's Green Organizational Identity and the University Faculty's Green Behaviour. While organizational green identity was not mediating the relationship between ethical leadership and green behaviour, the direct effect of ethical leadership on green behaviour was truly impactful. This suggests that ethical leaders most effectively demonstrate sustainable behaviours that faculty members can follow, which in turn encourages them to adopt these sustainable behaviours and ideals. These results have a far-reaching influence on the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and university policymakers.

Since ethical leadership has been demonstrated to be effective, sustainability initiatives should prioritize training leaders on ethical values and environmental concerns. The rules set by HEC can become a better barometer in measuring university performance and accreditation if ethical leadership capacities are added to the criteria. Also, institutions should ensure that their strategic plans align with the sustainability requirements set by HEC by initiating leadership training programs that emphasize environmental responsibility. Synchronizing institutional practices with HEC policies would create a cohesive ecosystem for developing leadership focused on sustainability. This would extend to a better environment across the higher education sector of Pakistan through direct leadership influence and resultant organizational culture changes.

#### **Limitations of Study**

The research is limited in several substantial ways. A cross-sectional design was employed in the study, which does not permit the determination of causal relationships between the variables. Data for all variables were collected through self-reported questionnaires and may, therefore, be subject to social desirability bias. The study was done only in public universities in Balochistan, Pakistan, so its findings are limited to these institutions. Moreover, the study only focused on academic faculty members; therefore, non-academic staff who may also be involved in environmental sustainability initiatives were overlooked.

#### **Future Research Directions**

The present study offers various theoretical and practical suggestions derived from its findings. One of the main findings showed that ethical leadership is the primary factor with a significant impact on employee green behaviour.

More specifically, ethical leadership refers to being fair, responsible, and honest in relation to the environment, which serves as an impetus for employees to engage in green workplace behaviours. However, green organizational identity (GOI) was found to have no mediation effect. This means that while ethical leadership relates positively to environmentally responsible behaviour, employees identifying their organization with green values does not explain or inform the relationship between ethical leadership and green behaviour.

Theoretically, future studies can examine other potentially mediating and moderating constructs that inform how ethical leadership may be connected to employee green behaviour. These constructs could include psychological empowerment, environmental commitment, or proactivity in green human resource management practices. Future studies may also consider applying longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to gain insights into how employee green behaviour and leadership ethics change over time.

As a practical implication, organizations may want to engage in the assessment and training of ethical leaders and enhance their capacity-building programs in practice to promote moral accountability, transparency, and sustainability awareness. By modelling ethical and eco-conscious behaviour, leaders can inspire employees to integrate green practices into their daily activities. Additionally, management can reinforce internal communication about environmental goals and initiatives to provide better insight and encourage employees to participate in the organization's sustainability activities.

Lastly, recognizing that the study took place in a specific region and within an academic context, subsequent studies would need to test a model in other sectors, industries, and/or cultural contexts. In addition to a comparative study, a broader comparative analysis could offer more comprehensive insights into how ethical leadership may foster sustainable behaviour across diverse organizational environments and cultures.

#### **Contributions of the Authors**

Each author made a substantial contribution to the work reported and took part in the ideation, development, and final approval of the manuscript.



### Funding

No outside funding was obtained for this study.

### Informed Consent Statement

Every participant in the study gave their informed consent.

### Statement of Data Availability

The corresponding author can provide the data used in this study upon request.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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