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Sustainable Leadership and its Reflections on Green Behavior of Employees

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze sustainable leadership and its reflections on green behavior of employees. This was quantitative study. The data were analyzed using the SPSS, Ver. 26. This study involved employees of the Director of Electricity Distribution Center Nineveh in Iraq, who were taken using proportional random sampling techniques so that 97 employees were selected as research respondents. The results of the study showed that sustainable leadership has a positive and significant effect on green behavior of employees. The practical implications of these findings underscored the importance of developing sustainable leadership as strategies for improving green behavior of employees in public organizational environments. These implications could help organizations make more effective employees.

Keywords: Sustainable Leadership, Green Behavior of Employees, Director of Electricity Distribution Center Nineveh.

1. Introduction

With the development of modern industry, environmental problems have emerged globally, such as rising temperatures and pollution of water and soil resources. Environmental preservation and sustainability have become a top priority for decision-makers in the 21st century, leading to the search for new alternatives to traditional human resource management (Ercantan and Eyupoglu, 2022).

One of these alternatives is green behavior for employees, Green employee behavior (EGB) is an important and current topic in organizational behavior research (Tian et al., 2020). It refers to environmentally beneficial behavior exhibited by employees within an organization and denotes a

specific form of pro-environmental behavior in the workplace (Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Norton et al., 2017).

In addition, sustainable leadership plays a vital role in the success of organizations through the diversity of human resources, achieving organizational justice among employees, developing them at all administrative levels, and creating a balance between work and personal life (Ali and Habeeb, 2026).

In this study, the researchers highlighted the relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees.

2. Theoretical Issues and Hypothesis

2. 1. Sustainable leadership:

Sustainable leadership is a management approach that seeks to achieve better and more sustainable results, reduce unwanted employee turnover, and accelerate innovation (Minelgaite et al., 2019). In addition, it is a leadership style characterized by its ability to maintain organizational values in a convincing and efficient manner, relying on succession to ensure organizational cohesion (Nartgun et al., 2020).

Moreover, it is a leadership style characterized by a commitment to justice and ethics, implemented over the long term, with all stakeholders inside and outside the organization (Bulmer et al., 2021) .

Then, the sustainable leadership refers to employees who influence and create significant positive changes within organizations and communities by fostering trust and organizing structures and processes that encompass multiple stakeholders, resources, and cultures (How and Ishak, 2021).

Finally, the researcher believes that sustainable leadership is a style of leadership that is adopted with a kind of responsibility towards employees, groups and the organization, by evaluating environmental, social and economic principles, within the framework of a work group, organization or community and by successfully mastering sustainability ideas, from cooperation with the environment and successful learning and teaching based on sustainability principles and on people's self-expression (Ali and Habeeb, 2026).

2.2. Green behavior of employees:

Scherbaum et al. (2008) described employee green behavior as a willingness to engage in environmentally friendly activities. It is a measure of individuals' attitudes toward environmental protection, reflecting employees' stances on environmental protection (Zhu et al., 2021). Organizations encourage their employees to adopt green behaviors to ensure the effective implementation of their environmental management systems and policies. This green behavior in the workplace is measurable and helps achieve environmental sustainability goals within organizations (Fawehinmi et al., 2020). Green behavior refers to a set of more environmentally friendly individual

behaviors. These behaviors aim to mitigate the undesirable impacts of human activities on the ecosystem and contribute to environmental sustainability. Green behavior has become essential for organizations in our time (Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Norton et al., 2015).

Based on the above arguments, the researchers concluded that green behavior of employees could encourage the employees to display positive environmental behavior.

2.3 The relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees:

The sustainability and green care are gradually conversed and has become a very related topic now. Green stability occurs as a very significant element in the corporate world in the 21st century (Starik and Marcus 2000). Pollution is seen growing from year to year until the development of a green which offers a method to the use of income professionally with savings and green care (Chen and Chang, 2013).

In addition, Along with global tests from resource lack and environmental pollution, sustainable leadership fixing on long-term development, social charge, and ecological sustainability has involved widespread attention. Therefore, the study of (Nie, Lan and Mo, 2025) aimed to examine the influence of mechanism and boundary condition of sustainable leadership on employees' pro-environmental behaviors.

Hence, further research needs to be carried out for determining the presence/absence of a relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees in organizations generally and researched organization epically.

Based on the above discussion, the researchers investigated the relationship between the sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees in Director of Electricity Distribution Center Nineveh in Iraq.

Hence, the below-mentioned hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There is a significant correlation between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees in the researched organization.

H1.1: There is a significant correlation between dimensions of sustainable leadership (individually) and green behavior of employees (combined) in the researched organization.

H2: There is a significant effect of sustainable leadership on the green behavior of employees in the researched organization.

H2.1: There is a significant effect of the dimensions of sustainable leadership (individually) on the green behavior of employees (combined) in the researched organization.

2.4 The Proposed Conceptual Framework:

Developing a theoretical model required a thorough investigation of literature related to specific topics and formation of speculative suppositions. As a single model cannot clarify the state of the study, the researchers developed a notional model in this study using the configuration proposed by framework included the major components of sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees (Figure 1). Furthermore, the sustainable leadership dimensions included the factors of Cohesive diversity, Organizational justice, Employee development, Work-life balance, Orientation towards progress (Ali and Habeeb, 2026). The green behavior items were derived from the study conducted by (Robertson and Barling, 2013; Temminck et al., 2015; Boiral and Paillé, 2012).

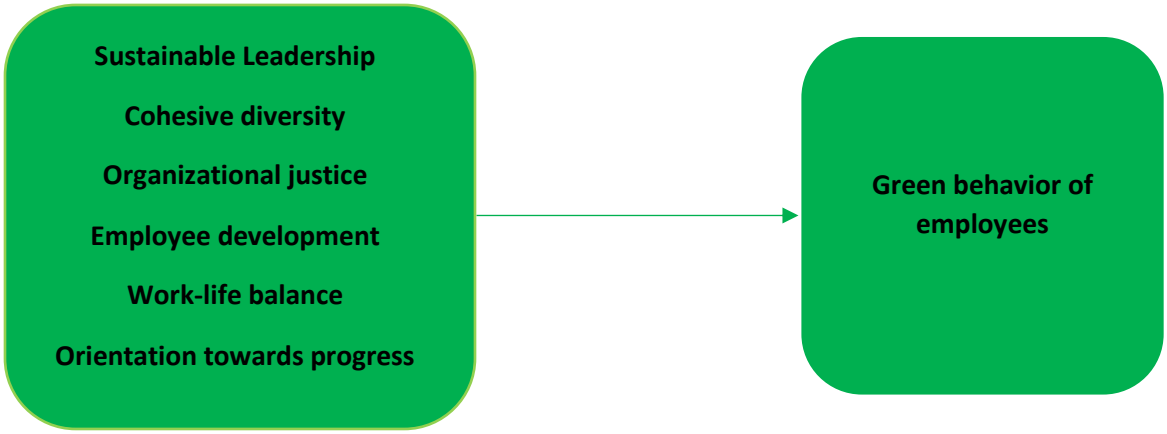

Figure (1): Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology and Findings

3.1 Methodology:

The researchers implemented a quantitative research technique in the study. All data was collected from the employees working in the Director of Electricity Distribution Center Nineveh in Iraq. The researchers implemented a conceptual framework for determining the relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees. They distributed the survey questionnaires physically to the randomly-selected respondents. The questionnaires were written in the Arabic languages. The questionnaires included 4 sections; Section 1 included questions related to the demographic information of the respondents; Section 2 covered the sustainable leadership dimensions (20 items); Section 3 highlighted the green behavior of employees (13 items). These questionnaires were distributed amongst 150 employees. Out of the 147 questionnaires that were collected, 3 were filled (i.e., 98%) Thereafter, these were categorised and analysed. Thus, it was concluded that the employees were willing to share information with the researchers, which increased their trust in the data.

3.2 Findings:

3.2.1 First: Descriptive Analysis:

Frequencies, percentages, relative importance index, means, standard deviations, and relative significance will all be calculated for all items in the questionnaire

1. Descriptive Analysis of Sustainable Leadership Variable Dimension Items: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and response rates for the Sustainable Leadership dimensions were calculated, as shown in the tables below:

a. Coherent Diversity Item Analysis:

Table (1): Description and diagnosis of coherent diversity items

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
X1_1	21	21.6	63	65.0	7	7.2	5	5.2	1	1.0	4.01	0.77	80.2
X1_2	21	21.6	61	62.9	15	15.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.062	0.609	81.2
X1_3	36	37.1	31	32.0	30	30.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.062	0.827	81.2
X1_4	51	52.6	37	38.2	8	8.2	0	0.0	1	1.0	4.412	0.732	88.2
X1	33.2%		49.5%		15.5%		1.3%		0.5%		4.137	0.735	82.7%
	82.7%						1.8%						

Table (1) shows that the coherent diversity dimension was represented by items (X1_1 to X1_4). The percentage of agreement (strongly agree, agree) was (82.7%) of the total sample, while the percentage of disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) was (1.8%), and the percentage of neutral was (15.5%). This is supported by the arithmetic mean of (4.137), the standard deviation of (0.735), and the response rate of (82.7%). Item (X1_4), which states: "The administrative leadership in the department activates diversity among employees to achieve the adopted goals," received the highest arithmetic mean of (4.412), a standard deviation of (0.732), and a response rate of (88.2%).

b. Analysis of Organizational Justice Items:

Table (2): Description and diagnosis of organizational justice items

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
X2_1	29	29.9	46	47.4	22	22.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.072	0.725	81.4
X2_2	26	26.8	50	51.6	20	20.6	0	0.0	1	1.0	4.031	0.756	80.6
X2_3	37	38.2	46	47.4	13	13.4	1	1.0	0	0.0	4.227	0.715	84.5
X2_4	41	42.2	32	33.0	22	22.7	2	2.1	0	0.0	4.155	0.846	83.1
X2	34.3%		44.8%		19.8%		0.8%		0.2%		4.121	0.761	%82.4
	79.1%						1.0%						

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Table (2) shows that the dimension of organizational justice is represented by items (X2_1 to X2_4), where the percentage of agreement (strongly agree, agree) was (79.1%) of the total sample, while the percentage of disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) was (1.0%), and the percentage of neutral was (19.9%). This is supported by the arithmetic mean of (4.121), the standard deviation of (0.761), and the response rate of (82.4%). Item (X2_3), which states: "The administrative leadership in the department distributes tasks based on efficiency," received the highest mean of (4.227), a standard deviation of (0.715), and a response rate of (84.5%).

c. Analysis of Employee Development Items:

Table (3): Description and diagnosis of employee development items

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
X3_1	28	28.9	54	55.7	14	14.4	1	1	0	0	4.124	0.681	82.5
X3_2	34	35.1	43	44.3	20	20.6	0	0	0	0	4.144	0.736	82.9
X3_3	28	28.9	45	46.4	24	24.7	0	0	0	0	4.041	0.735	80.8
X3_4	35	36.1	46	47.4	16	16.5	0	0	0	0	4.196	0.702	83.9
X3	32.3%		48.4%		19.1%		0.3%		0.0%		4.126	0.714	82.5%
	80.7%						0.3%						

Table (3) shows that the employee development phase was represented by items (X3_1 to X3_4). The percentage of agreement (strongly agree, agree) reached 80.6% of the total sample, while the percentage of disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) was 0.3%, and the percentage of neutral was 19.1%. This is supported by the arithmetic mean of (4.126), the standard deviation of (0.714), and the response rate of (82.5%). Item (X3_4), which states: "The administrative leadership in the department focuses on the quality of educational services provided to its students," received the highest mean of (4.196), a standard deviation of (0.702), and a response rate of (83.9%).

d. Analysis of Work-Life Balance Items:

Table (4): Description and diagnosis of work-life balance issues

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
X4_1	37	38.1	47	48.5	13	13.4	0	0	0	0	4.247	0.677	84.9
X4_2	30	30.9	49	50.5	18	18.6	0	0	0	0	4.124	0.696	82.5
X4_3	28	28.9	52	53.6	17	17.5	0	0	0	0	4.113	0.675	82.3
X4_4	35	36.1	39	40.2	22	22.7	1	1	0	0	4.113	0.789	82.3
X4	33.5%		48.2%		18.0%		0.3%		0.0%		4.149	0.709	83.0%
	81.7%						0.3%						

Table (4) shows that the work-life balance dimension was represented by items (X4_1 to X4_4). The percentage of agreement (strongly agree, agree) was 81.7% of the total sample, while the percentage of disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) was 0.3%, and the percentage of neutral was 18.0%. This is supported by the arithmetic mean of (4.149), the standard deviation of (0.709), and the response rate of (83.0%). Item (X4_1), which states: "The administrative leadership in the department is concerned with balancing the needs of employees and the requirements of the work," received the highest arithmetic mean of (4.247), a standard deviation of (0.677), and a response rate of (84.9%).

e. Analysis of the Items Related to the Orientation Towards Progress:

Table (5): Description and diagnosis of items related to progress orientation

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
X5_1	22	22.7	55	56.7	20	20.6	0	0	0	0	4.021	0.661	80.4
X5_2	23	23.7	56	57.7	17	17.6	1	1	0	0	4.041	0.676	80.8
X5_3	32	33	50	51.5	15	15.5	0	0	0	0	4.175	0.677	83.5
X5_4	36	37.1	43	44.3	17	17.6	1	1	0	0	4.175	0.75	83.5
X5	29.1%		52.6%		17.8%		0.5%		0.0%		4.103	0.691	82.1%
	81.7%						0.5%						

Table (5) shows that the orientation towards progress was represented by items (X5_1 to X5_4), where the percentage of agreement (strongly agree, agree) reached 81.7% of the total sample, while the percentage of disagreement (disagree, strongly disagree) reached 0.5%, and the percentage of neutral was 17.8%. This is supported by the arithmetic mean of (4.103), the standard deviation of (0.691), and the response rate of (82.1%). Item (X5_3), which states: "The administrative leadership in the department reviews the performance evaluation process to ensure the achievement of its intended objectives," received the highest arithmetic mean of (4.175), a standard deviation of (0.677), and a response rate of (83.5%).

2. Descriptive Analysis of the Green Behavior Variable Items:

Frequencies and percentages, in addition to the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and response rate for the dimensions of the variable (green behavior), were calculated, as shown in the tables below:

Table (6): Description and diagnosis of green behavior items

Items	Response Scale										Mean	Standard Deviation	Relative Importance (%)
	Strongly Agree(5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
Y_1	22	22.7	67	69.1	8	8.2	0	0	0	0	4.144	0.54	82.9
Y_2	23	23.7	62	63.9	12	12.4	0	0	0	0	4.113	0.593	82.3
Y_3	34	35.1	42	43.3	20	20.6	0	0	1	1	4.113	0.802	82.3
Y_4	38	39.2	38	39.2	19	19.6	1	1	1	1	4.144	0.841	82.9
Y_5	44	45.4	38	39.2	14	14.4	1	1	0	0	4.289	0.749	85.8
Y_6	37	38.2	33	34	25	25.8	1	1	1	1	4.072	0.881	81.4
Y_7	30	30.9	42	43.3	24	24.8	1	1	0	0	4.041	0.776	80.8
Y_8	32	33	46	47.4	16	16.5	3	3.1	0	0	4.103	0.784	82.1
Y_9	34	35.1	43	44.3	14	14.4	5	5.2	1	1	4.072	0.893	81.4
Y_10	43	44.3	32	33	20	20.6	2	2.1	0	0	4.196	0.837	83.9
Y_11	42	43.3	35	36.1	17	17.5	3	3.1	0	0	4.196	0.837	83.9
Y_12	30	31	43	44.3	23	23.7	1	1	0	0	4.052	0.769	81.0
Y_13	39	40.2	33	34	22	22.7	2	2.1	1	1	4.103	0.895	82.1
Y	35.6%		43.9%		18.5%		1.6%		0.4%		4.126	0.784	82.5%
	79.5%						2.0%						

Table (6) shows that green behavior was represented by items (Y_1 to Y_13), with 79.5% of the sample agreeing (strongly agree, agree), 2.0% disagreeing (disagree, strongly disagree), and 18.5% remaining neutral. This is supported by a mean of (4.126), a standard deviation of (0.784), and a response rate of (82.5%). Item (Y_5), which states: "In the circle, I encourage my colleagues to adopt more environmentally conscious behaviors," received the highest mean of (4.289), a standard deviation of (0.749), and a response rate of (85.8%).

3.2.2 Results of Study Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis Testing Regarding Correlation:

The hypotheses related to correlation will be tested as follows:

First: The relationship between the sustainable leadership variable and the green behavior variable:

The first main hypothesis will be tested, which states that Table (7) includes Pearson's correlation coefficient and its associated significance for the relationship between the sustainable leadership variable and the green behavior variable.

Table (7): Correlation between the Sustainable Leadership Variable and the Green Behavior Variable

Variables		Green behavior of employees
Sustainable Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	0.782
	Sig	<0.001

As we can see from the table, the correlation between sustainable leadership and green behavior is significant because the Sig value is less than the significance level of 0.05. This relationship is direct, as evidenced by the correlation coefficient.

Second: The relationship between the dimensions of the sustainable leadership variable and the green behavior variable:

The sub-hypothesis of the first main hypothesis will be tested. Table (8) includes Pearson's correlation coefficient and its associated significance for the relationship between each dimension of the sustainable leadership variable and the green behavior variable.

Table (8): Correlation between the dimensions of the sustainable leadership variable and the green behavior variable

Variables		Green behavior of employees	
		Correlation Coefficient	Sig
Sustainable Leadership Dimensions	Cohesive diversity	0.614	<0.001
	Organizational justice	0.582	<0.001
	Employee development	0.587	<0.001
	Work-life balance	0.575	<0.001
	Orientation towards progress	0.621	<0.001

As we can see from the table, the correlation between each dimension of sustainable leadership and the green behavior variable is significant because the Sig value is less than the significance level of 0.05. All these relationships are positive, as evidenced by the correlation coefficients.

Hypothesis testing regarding the causal relationship:

The hypotheses related to the effect will be tested as follows:

First: The effect of the sustainable leadership variable on the green behavior variable:

The second main hypothesis will be tested. Table (9) includes the regression coefficients, the F-test value and its associated significance, as well as the coefficient of determination for the effect of the sustainable leadership variable on the green behavior variable.

Table (9): Analysis of the impact of sustainable leadership on green behavior

Dependent Variable: Green behavior of employees					
Independent Variable	B0	B1	F	Sig	R^2
Sustainable Leadership	0.861	0.803	149.12	<0.001	61.1%

From the table we note that the second main hypothesis was accepted because its Sig value is less than the significance level of 0.05, meaning that the effect of sustainable leadership on green behavior is significant. This effect explains 61.1% of the variation in the dependent variable (green behavior).

Second: The Effect of Sustainable Leadership Dimensions on Green Behavior:

The sub-hypothesis of the second main hypothesis will be tested. Table (10) includes the regression coefficients, F-test values, and their associated significance, as well as the coefficient of determination

for the effect of sustainable leadership dimensions on green behavior.

Table (10): Analysis of the impact of sustainable leadership dimensions on green behavior

Dependent Variable: Green behavior of employees					
Independent Variables	B0	B1	F	Sig	R^2
Cohesive diversity	2.336	0.459	57.497	<0.001	37.7%
Organizational justice	2.392	0.446	48.71	<0.001	33.9%
Employee development	2.336	0.458	49.827	<0.001	34.4%
Work-life balance	2.295	0.465	46.869	<0.001	33.0%
Orientation towards progress	2.152	0.505	59.583	<0.001	38.5%

The table shows that we accept the sub-hypothesis for the second main hypothesis because the Sig values are less than the significance level of 0.05 for all dimensions, indicating that the impact of the sustainable leadership dimensions on green behavior is significant. The dimension with the highest impact is "orientation towards progress" with a coefficient of determination of 38.5%, and the dimension with the lowest impact is "work-life balance" with a coefficient of determination of 33%.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

The results noted in this study highlighted the positive relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees. It was also noted that sustainable leadership has a positive effect on green behavior of employees.

There is limited empirical evidence regarding the relationship between sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees. Very few studies were examined this relationship, as (Daud et al., 2023) have investigated Leadership Style that Influences Employees'Green Behavior: A Literature Review.

This was one of the first studies that attempted to investigate different variables in the Director of Electricity Distribution Center Nineveh in Iraq. Hence, the results of this study could fill the gap existing in the empirical data regarding sustainable leadership. In this study, the researchers used sustainable leadership as an independent variable, while the earlier studies considered sustainable leadership as the independent variable (Yabut et al., 2024) have investigated the role of sustainability leadership in transforming business organizations and the study of Ali and Habeeb (2026) was investigated the relationship between sustainable leadership and employees' creative behavior.

Currently, Green behavior among employees is achieved through sustainable leadership by setting an environmental example, linking organizational goals to sustainability, providing ongoing training, and offering incentives and rewards for environmentally friendly initiatives. This approach builds a conscious organizational culture that motivates employees to reduce waste and rationalize resource consumption on an ongoing, self-directed basis. In this study, the researchers have investigated the relationship between the sustainable leadership and green behavior of employees. Here, the data has offered empirical support which highlighted the effect of sustainable leadership on green behavior of employee. Further research could provide a better understanding and support for the effect of sustainable leadership on green behavior of employees.

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