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An Exploratory Study of Green Psychological Climate and Pro-Environmental Behavior in a Small Indian Organisation: Gaps between Managerial Intent and Employee Perception

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Abstract

This exploratory study investigates the relationships among management-reported green initiatives, employee-perceived Green Psychological Climate (GPC), and employee Pro-Environmental Behaviour (PEB) within a single organization comprising 12 employees and one management representative. Drawing upon Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a comprehensive survey instrument was administered to assess these constructs. The analysis revealed a generally positive GPC among employees (M = 4.25, SD = 0.41); however, a notable perceptual discrepancy emerged between management and employees regarding the value of green pay and reward (GPR) initiatives (Management M = 2.67 vs. Employee GPC M = 4.25). Pearson correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between GPC and Self-transcendence (r = 0.62, p = 0.032), suggesting that employees who perceive a strong green climate tend to prioritize broader environmental and social well-being. Similarly, a statistically significant moderate positive correlation was observed between Self-transcendence and Self-interest (r = 0.619, p = 0.032), indicating that these value orientations may coexist within the same individual. Contrary to theoretical predictions, the direct correlation between GPC and PEB was very weak and non-significant (r = 0.038, p = 0.906), implying that a positive green organizational climate does not automatically translate into pro-environmental action. Furthermore, associations between leadership behaviour and support with both GPC and PEB did not attain statistical significance, suggesting the absence of a strong linear relationship in this sample. These preliminary findings, constrained by a small sample and limited generalizability, reveal a nuanced interplay in which perceived green climate does not automatically predict pro-environmental behaviour. The study underscores the importance of aligning green initiatives with employee values and perceptions, particularly addressing the misalignment in green pay and reward effectiveness. Implications for theory and organizational practice are discussed, and directions for future research with larger, more diverse samples are recommended.

Keywords: Green Psychological Climate, Pro-Environmental Behavior, Green Initiatives, Personal Values, Leadership, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Social Cognitive Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior.

Introduction

The accelerating global environmental crisis demands a fundamental paradigm shift in organizational operations, compelling firms to transcend mere regulatory compliance and adopt holistic sustainability strategies[1]. This strategic imperative is reinforced by converging pressures: heightened public ecological awareness, increasingly stringent environmental legislation, and the expanding expectations of diverse stakeholder communities[2]. Organizations are no longer evaluated solely on conventional financial metrics; they are concurrently held accountable for their environmental stewardship and demonstrated commitment to sustainable development[3]. Central to the realization of sustainability aspirations is the active participation of employees, whose pro-environmental conduct is increasingly recognized as the critical conduit between organizational policy and ecological impact[4]. Green initiatives, encompassing energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction programs, sustainable supply chain practices, and environmental training, serve as tangible manifestations of organizational environmental values and are theorised to shape employee attitudes and behaviors accordingly[5,6].

Despite this growing recognition, significant theoretical and empirical gaps persist. The majority of extant research has focused on large organizations, neglecting the distinct dynamics of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where resources are constrained, communication structures are less formalized, and the direct influence of management on employee perceptions may be more pronounced yet simultaneously more idiosyncratic. Furthermore, the potential misalignment between managerial intent and employee perception in implementing green initiatives has received insufficient scholarly attention. This perceptual gap is particularly consequential because

employee interpretations, rather than objective organizational realities, are the proximate antecedents of behavioural engagement[7].

Employees' collective interpretations of organizational environmental commitment are conceptualized through the construct of Green Psychological Climate (GPC), defined as shared perceptions of the organization's environmental policies, practices, and procedures[8,9]. A positive GPC is posited to foster a sense of collective responsibility and create an enabling environment for Pro-Environmental Behaviour (PEB), the constellation of individual actions that minimize negative environmental impact, including energy conservation, waste reduction, and recycling[10].

This exploratory study addresses these gaps by examining the intricate relationships between management-reported green initiatives, employee-perceived GPC, and self-reported PEB in a single Indian SME. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)[11] and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)[12], this research investigates how personal values (Self-transcendence and Self-interest) and leadership (behaviour and support) interact with the green organisational climate to shape employees' sustainability behaviour. By juxtaposing management and employee viewpoints, the study yields insights into perceptual misalignments that may undermine the effectiveness of sustainability programs, with particular focus on green pay and reward mechanisms.

Literature Review

Extant research has consistently demonstrated the pivotal role of organizational green initiatives in shaping employee perceptions and catalyzing pro-environmental behaviour. Researchers have established that comprehensive and visible green initiatives cultivate employees' perceptions of organizational environmental commitment, thereby activating Green Psychological Climate (GPC)[13]. Other authors have further demonstrated that investments in green training programs and sustainable reward systems constitute key enablers of a robust GPC[14]. These findings are corroborated by researchers, who documented significant associations between human resource management practices and environmental management outcomes, underscoring the importance of HRM–sustainability integration[15].

Several researchers provided a comprehensive literature synthesis delineating the interconnectedness of environmental management, human resource management, and Green HRM (GHRM), emphasizing their collective impact on organizational sustainability[16]. Building on this foundation, other researchers explored mechanisms linking GHRM practices and environmental economic performance, revealing mediating roles of green organizational culture and GPC, suggesting that GHRM practices exert influence on environmental outcomes both directly and through the climate they engender[17].

The mediating role of GPC in the relationship between organizational sustainability policies and employee green behaviour was formally established by Norton, whose work demonstrated that employees' shared understanding of environmental commitment is a key behaviouraldriver[10]. Some researchers, in the context of Chinese organizations, further reinforced the GPC–PEB nexus, establishing significant positive relationships between GHRM practices, psychological green climate, and pro-environmental behaviors[17].

The role of personal values in environmental behaviour is well-documented. Grounded in Value-Belief-Norm Theory, Self-transcendence values, characterized by concerns for others and the natural world, are consistently found to predict pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. The interplay between extrinsic motivators (Self-interest) and intrinsic drivers (Self-transcendence) in organizational sustainability contexts remains underexplored, particularly in SME settings.

Leadership constitutes another critical antecedent of GPC and PEB. Ethical and green leaders serve as environmental role models, activating observational learning (SCT) and establishing pro-environmental subjective norms (TPB) that shape employees' behavioural intentions. However, research on leadership effectiveness in fostering sustainability in small organizational contexts is sparse, and the mechanisms through which leadership translates into environmental outcomes remain contested.

A notable lacuna in the literature concerns the alignment, or misalignment, between management and employee perceptions of green initiatives, particularly within SMEs. Most studies adopt a unilateral employee perspective, neglecting the management viewpoint and the potential perceptual discrepancies that may undermine initiative effectiveness. The present study directly addresses this gap, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which GPC successfully mediates the relationship between organizational green programs and employee PEB.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical frameworks, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which together provide a robust conceptual lens for understanding the psychological mechanisms linking green initiatives, organizational climate, and employee behaviour.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT): Developed by Albert Bandura (2017), SCT posits that human behaviour emerges from the reciprocal interaction of personal (cognitive and affective), environmental, and behavioural factors, a process termed reciprocal determinism. Three constructs from SCT are particularly salient to this study: **Observational Learning:** Employees acquire behavioural repertoires by observing peers

and leaders. Consistent pro-environmental modelling by leadership and coworkers reinforces the perceived organizational norm of environmental engagement and increases the likelihood of behavioural adoption. **Self-Efficacy:** An individual's belief in their capacity to perform a specific behaviour is a powerful predictor of behavioural engagement. Green training and resource provision, key components of organizational green initiatives, can enhance employees' self-efficacy for pro-environmental action. **Reciprocal Determinism:** Green initiatives (environmental factors) shape employee perceptions and attitudes (personal factors), which in turn drive PEB (behavioural factors); these behaviours may further modify the organizational environment, creating a dynamic feedback loop.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): IcekAjzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposes that behavioural intentions, the proximate determinants of action, are shaped by three components: **Attitude:** Employees' evaluative appraisals of pro-environmental behaviour, shaped by perceived outcomes and organizational green initiative communications. **Subjective Norms:** Perceived social pressure from supervisors, peers, and organizational culture to engage in environmentally responsible conduct, reinforced by leadership signals and team behavioural norms. **Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC):** Employees' beliefs about their capacity and access to resources required for environmental action. Organizational green initiatives that provide tools, time, and training directly enhance PBC and, thereby, behavioural intentions and PEB.

Integrated Application: The integration of SCT and TPB offers complementary explanatory power. SCT illuminates how the organizational environment (green initiatives, leadership modelling) and personal characteristics (values, self-efficacy) interact dynamically to shape PEB. TPB specifies the cognitive pathway through which environmental signals (GPC) are translated into behavioural intentions via attitude formation, normative perception, and control appraisal. Together, these frameworks explain why a positive GPC alone may be insufficient to drive PEB, particularly if self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control are not concurrently activated.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants: This study adopted an exploratory cross-sectional survey design, selected for its suitability to a preliminary inquiry in understudied organizational contexts. The participant group comprised 12 employees and one management representative from a single Indian SME. The non-probability sample reflects the organization's limited size and the focus on non-technical working staff. While the sample is small, imposing constraints on statistical power and external validity, it is appropriate for the exploratory purpose of the study and enables a detailed examination of perceptual alignment within a bounded organizational unit.

Participant Demographics: Age: Participants ranged in age from 21 to 50 years (M = 29.83, SD = 8.72), reflecting a diverse mix of younger and more experienced employees. **Gender:** The sample was exclusively male, which limits gender-based inferences and represents an acknowledged constraint of the study. **Educational Qualification:** One participant held a postgraduate degree; the remaining participants held undergraduate (bachelor's) degrees. **Organizational Tenure:** Mean tenure was 2.33 years (SD = 1.16), ranging from 1 to 4 years, indicating a relatively recent workforce with limited organizational socialization.

Measures: Established multi-item scales from peer-reviewed literature were employed to ensure measurement validity and reliability. All items were administered via a structured questionnaire. **Green Psychological Climate (GPC)**: GPC was measured using the scale developed by Norton[10], which captures employees' shared perceptions of organizational environmental policies, managerial support for green behaviour, peer environmental conduct, and integration of environmental values into organizational culture. This scale is widely utilized in environmental management research and aligns with the SCT environmental factor and the TPB attitude construct. **Pro-Environmental Behaviour (PEB)**: Self-reported PEB was assessed using the Blok[18] scale, measuring the frequency of workplace-specific eco-friendly behaviours (e.g., energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling participation). This scale serves as the primary outcome variable, providing a quantitative indicator of individual environmental performance. **Personal Values**: Self-transcendence (concern for others and the natural world) and Self-interest (concern for personal gain) were measured using the Blok value scales[18]. Inclusion of both constructs enables examination of potentially competing motivational orientations and their differential associations with GPC and PEB. **Leadership Behavior and Support**: Two separate scales from Blok[18] assessed employees' perceptions of leader environmental modelling (Leadership Behaviour) and resource/encouragement provision (Leadership Support). Response categories were recorded so that higher scores consistently reflected more favorable perceptions, facilitating directional alignment with other positive constructs. **Environmental Performance Efficiency (EPE)**: Adapted from Kim[19], the EPE scale assessed perceived effectiveness of the organization's environmental initiatives. Dual assessment by both management and employees enabled comparison of perceptual alignment across organizational levels.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, range) were computed for all variables. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to examine bivariate relationships among constructs. Given the exploratory nature and small sample, statistical findings are interpreted with appropriate caution, and effect sizes are noted alongside significance thresholds ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics: Table-1 presents descriptive statistics for all key study variables. Employee GPC was relatively high (M = 4.25, SD = 0.41), suggesting a generally positive perception of the organizational green climate. PEB was moderate (M = 3.59, SD = 0.51). Self-Transcendence (M = 3.89) marginally exceeded Self-Interest (M = 3.67). Leadership Behaviour (M = 1.14) and Leadership Support (M = 1.20) exhibited low mean scores with limited variance, reflecting favorably recoded perceptions.

Management vs. Employee Perceptions of Green Initiatives: Table-2 compares management and employee perceptions across three green initiative domains. While perceptions of Green Training were closely aligned (Management M = 4.33 vs. Employee GPC M = 4.25), a pronounced discrepancy emerged for Green Pay and Reward (GPR; Management M = 2.67 vs. Employee M = 4.25), signalling a significant perceptual misalignment with potential implications for motivational effectiveness. **EPE vs. Employee GPC:** Table-3 indicates that management's average Environmental Performance Efficiency (EPE) score (M = 4.00) was marginally lower than the mean employee GPC (M = 4.25), suggesting that management held a somewhat more conservative assessment of the organization's environmental effectiveness than employees' collective perception of the green climate.

Management Initiatives vs. Employee PEB: Table-4 juxtaposes management initiative ratings against the average employee PEB. Management rated Green Training (4.33) and Green Involvement (4.00) above the employee PEB mean (3.59), but rated GPR substantially lower (2.67), further corroborating the perceptual gap identified in Table-2.

Personal Values and Leadership Descriptives: Table-5 presents mean scores for personal values and leadership variables alongside the average PEB. Employees marginally endorsed Self-Transcendence (M = 3.89) over Self-Interest (M = 3.67). Both leadership dimensions scored near the minimum on the recoded scale, indicating generally favorable perceptions but limited variance.

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N = 12).

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	12	29.83	8.72	21	50
Organizational Tenure (years)	12	2.33	1.16	1	4
Green Psychological Climate (GPC)	12	4.25	0.41	3.67	5.00
Pro-Environmental Behaviour (PEB)	12	3.59	0.51	2.63	4.31
Self-Transcendence	12	3.89	0.57	3.00	4.67
Self-Interest	12	3.67	0.53	3.00	4.75
Leadership Behaviour (recoded)	12	1.14	0.22	1.00	1.67
Leadership Support (recoded)	12	1.20	0.28	1.00	1.75

Note. Higher Leadership Behaviour/Support scores reflect more favorable leadership perceptions (recoded scale).

Table-2: Comparison of Management and Employee Perceptions of Green Initiatives.

Initiative	Management Mean	Employee Mean
Green Training (GT)	4.33	4.25
Green Pay and Reward (GPR)	2.67	4.25
Green Involvement (GI)	4.00	4.25

Table-3: Comparison of Management EPE and Employee GPC Scores.

Variable	Mean Score
Environmental Performance Efficiency (EPE) - Management	4.00
Green Psychological Climate (GPC) - Employees	4.25

Table-4: Management Initiative Ratings vs. Average Employee.

Initiative	Management Mean	Employee Mean
Green Training (GT)	4.33	3.59
Green Pay and Reward (GPR)	2.67	3.59
Green Involvement (GI)	4.00	3.59

Table-5: Mean Scores for Personal Values, Leadership, and PEB.

Variable	Mean
Self-Transcendence	3.89
Self-Interest	3.67
Leadership Behaviour (recoded)	1.14
Leadership Support (recoded)	1.20
Pro-Environmental Behaviour (PEB)	3.59

Table-6: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Key Study Variables (N = 12) (*p < 0.05).

Variables	r	p-value	Interpretation	
GPC &PEB	0.038	0.906	Very weak positive	Not Significant
GPC & Self-transcendence	0.620	0.032*	Moderate positive	Significant
GPC & Self-interest	0.525	0.079	Moderate positive	Not Significant
GPC & Leadership Behaviour	-0.193	0.548	Weak negative	Not Significant
GPC & Leadership Support	0.430	0.163	Moderate positive	Not Significant
PEB& Self-transcendence	-0.414	0.181	Moderate negative	Not Significant
PEB& Self-interest	0.030	0.927	Very weak positive	Not Significant
PEB& Leadership Behaviour	-0.101	0.755	Very weak negative	Not Significant
PEB& Leadership Support	-0.349	0.265	Weak negative	Not Significant
Self-transcendence & Self-interest	0.619	0.032*	Moderate positive	Significant
Self-transcendence & Leadership Behaviour	-0.263	0.409	Weak negative	Not Significant
Self-transcendence & Leadership Support	0.158	0.624	Very weak positive	Not Significant
Self-interest & Leadership Behaviour	0.108	0.739	Very weak positive	Not Significant
Self-interest & Leadership Support	-0.065	0.842	Very weak negative	Not Significant
Leadership Behaviour& Leadership Support	0.224	0.485	Weak positive	Not Significant

Correlation Analysis: Table-6 presents the full Pearson correlation matrix. Two correlations reached statistical significance: GPC–Self-transcendence (r = 0.62, p = 0.032) and Self-transcendence–Self-interest (r = 0.619, p = 0.032). The GPC–PEB association was negligible (r = 0.038, p = 0.906). All associations involving leadership dimensions were non-significant (all p > 0.05).

Conceptual Model: Figure-1 presents the conceptual model underpinning this study, integrating SCT and TPB to map the proposed relationships among key constructs. The model positions GPC as the central mediating construct between organizational green inputs (leadership, initiatives) and individual PEB outcomes, moderated by personal value orientations. Consistent with empirical findings, the model depicts a very weak positive path from GPC to PEB, underscoring that climate perceptions alone are insufficient to drive behaviour. The significant GPC–Self-transcendence pathway highlights the importance of value alignment in environmental engagement. Leadership variables are depicted as GPC antecedents, with their weak empirical associations reflected in non-significant direct paths to PEB. The co-occurrence of Self-transcendence and Self-interest within individuals is represented as a bidirectional positive relationship, signifying the potential for motivational integration.

Discussion: This exploratory study provides critical insights into the interplay between green organizational initiatives, employee-perceived Green Psychological Climate (GPC), and pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) within an Indian SME. Regarding perceptual alignment, the study found a high average GPC (M = 4.25), indicating strong employee recognition of organizational environmental commitment. However, a significant "Green Pay and Reward" (GPR) perceptual gap emerged, where management rated these mechanisms much lower (M = 2.67) than employees' overall GPC. Through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this suggests that management's skepticism regarding the efficacy of these rewards may lead to inconsistent implementation or poor communication, ultimately weakening the extrinsic motivation required to transform positive climate perceptions into consistent individual action.

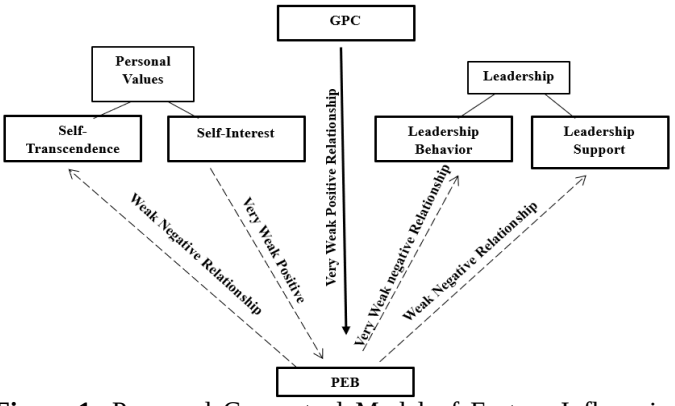


Figure-1: Proposed Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing Pro-Environmental Behaviour.

The study's most notable finding is the negligible, non-significant correlation between GPC and PEB (r = 0.038). While this contradicts broader research, it highlights that a positive climate is a necessary but insufficient condition for driving environmental action. This disconnect is explained by three key factors: the statistical limitations of a small sample (n = 12), the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasis on self-efficacy, and the TPB requirement for perceived behavioural control. Simply perceiving a "green" climate does not trigger behaviour if employees lack the confidence, tangible resources, time, or

explicit behavioural guidance necessary to execute environmental tasks. This study underscores the role of personal values, revealing a significant positive correlation between GPC and Self-transcendence (r = 0.62). Employees driven by prosocial and ecocentric values are more receptive to organizational environmental signals. Crucially, the finding that Self-transcendence and Self-interest are positively correlated (r = 0.619) challenges the notion that these motivations are mutually exclusive. Instead, they appear to coexist, suggesting that sustainability communications should be dual-framed to resonate with both altruistic concerns and personal incentives, thereby maximizing organizational impact.

The study reveals that leadership's impact on environmental outcomes is more nuanced than traditionally assumed. Despite existing literature, the absence of significant correlations between leadership and GPC/PEB in this study suggests that perceived "general" support is insufficient. From an SCT perspective, the effectiveness of leadership hinges on the visibility and behavioural specificity of role-modelling rather than mere presence; abstract support fails to catalyze employee action, highlighting a need for future research to focus on the quality of specific, actionable environmental guidance. Theoretically, these findings demonstrate that the transition from a green climate to behavioural engagement is neither automatic nor linear, particularly within SMEs. The research advances the field by positioning self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control as vital mediators that must be integrated into SCT-TPB frameworks to accurately model organizational sustainability. Practically, this study cautions against relying solely on the implementation of initiatives. Organizations must move beyond mere surface-level policies to incorporate transparent communication, clear behavioural guidelines, and value-aligned messaging. Furthermore, the identified discrepancy in Green Pay and Reward (GPR) perceptions serves as a critical call to action for management to recalibrate reward systems, ensuring they are not only implemented but also experienced as meaningful and motivating by the workforce.

Recommendations: To effectively cultivate pro-environmental behaviour within the workplace, organizations should adopt a comprehensive strategy that bridges the gap between organizational initiatives and employee perception. First, firms must redesign green pay and reward mechanisms by ensuring they are transparent, equitably distributed, and co-designed with staff to boost motivational relevance. By framing these rewards to address both self-transcendence and self-interest, organizations can maximize their appeal across diverse employee motivations.

Complementing these incentives, organizations should prioritize enhancing employee self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control. This requires moving beyond high-level policies to provide tangible support, such as specialized green skills training, clear behavioural guidelines, and the allocation of dedicated time and physical resources. Furthermore, leadership must embody these goals; executives should be coached to perform visible, behaviorally specific pro-environmental actions rather than merely providing abstract support, as this directly influences observational learning and strengthens subjective norms. Communication strategies should be intentionally crafted to leverage value alignment, using dual-framing to resonate with the full spectrum of employee values. This ensures that sustainability initiatives connect with both the individual's desire for personal gain and their commitment to collective, prosocial impact. Finally, to maintain long-term alignment, organizations should institutionalize structured feedback loops, such as joint management-employee environmental reviews, and implement transparent reporting of performance metrics. These mechanisms are crucial for fostering shared understanding and collective accountability, ensuring that the alignment between environmental initiatives and employee perceptions remains robust and responsive over time.

Conclusion

This exploratory study provides foundational insights into the complex interplay of green initiatives, organizational climate, personal values, leadership, and pro-environmental behaviour within an Indian SME. The findings reveal that while a positive GPC is achievable through green initiative implementation, it does not automatically yield higher PEB, a relationship that is contingent on the activation of self-efficacy, perceived behavioural control, and value-congruent motivation. The significant GPR perceptual misalignment between management and employees emerges as a critical practical concern, potentially undermining the motivational architecture of sustainability programs. The significant value-related findings, particularly the GPC–Self-transcendence and Self-transcendence–Self-interest correlations, offer valuable theoretical contributions, suggesting that prosocial and self-oriented motivations can be simultaneously mobilized in the service of organizational sustainability goals. Conversely, the non-significant leadership findings underscore the need for more nuanced conceptualizations of leadership influence in green behaviour research.

The study's limitations, including the small, homogenous, single-organization sample, cross-sectional design, and exclusively male composition, significantly constrain generalizability and causal inference. Future research should employ larger, longitudinal, multi-site designs, incorporate objective behavioural measures, and extend the investigation to diverse industry and cultural contexts. Mediation analyses testing self-efficacy and perceived behavioural control as mechanisms linking GPC and PEB represent particularly promising avenues. Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study advances understanding of the psychological and organizational mechanisms governing employee green behaviour, offering actionable insights for SMEs committed to cultivating genuinely sustainable workplaces.

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