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ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING AND GREEN EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR*

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Received 11 March 2025; accepted 10 June 2025; published 30 September 2025

Abstract. The present study explores the relationship between organizational environmental identity and employees' green behavior in the workplace. The current study contributes to the field by examining this relationship, which has not been extensively researched. Consequently, the domain of environmental components in employee education has emerged as a particularly significant issue. The primary objective of this study is to explore proactive environmental aspects and their impact on employee engagement. The present study employed correspondence analysis, and the ensuing results were interpreted through the implementation of a chi-square test, wherein the chi-square value was juxtaposed with the critical value. In this test, degrees of freedom (df) play a pivotal role, as they are employed to ascertain the critical value of the chi-square distribution. This critical value serves as a benchmark against which the calculated Chi-square value from the test is evaluated. The critical values are contingent on the degrees of freedom and the designated significance level. In this study, a significant level of 0.05 was employed. Notably, there is no statistically significant difference between initial or regular green learning and employee engagement. Furthermore, our findings indicate a substantial discrepancy between the size of the organization and the impact of both initial and regular employee environmental training. The integration of environmental practices into the daily routines of employees has been identified as a key factor in reducing the environmental impacts of organizations. The present study contributes to the extant literature on human capital and environmental management.

Keywords: learning; education; training; employee engagement; behavior

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Masárová, T., Kordoš, M. 2025. Environmental training and green employee behavior. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 13(1), 87-94. <http://doi.org/10.9770/n9362747373>

JEL Classifications: M53, M54, F66

Additional disciplines: sociology; ecology and environment

1. Introduction

The purpose of business is not just to make a profit. Global warming and environmental issues have become critical for the whole world. Therefore, businesses must adopt and adhere to green growth strategies. Their future survival depends on sustainability, which is considered as one of the fundamental responsibilities of business (Ahmed et al., 2023). Nowadays, companies accept responsibility for the negative impact of their

* The research was funded by the Slovak Ministry of Education's grant agency - Slovak Research and Development Agency: "Application of circular economy principles to the creation of circular business models in manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors in Slovakia and creation of new performance metrics to identify and quantify circular economy effects". Project registration number: [Reg. No.: APVV-23-0562].

The research was funded by the Slovak Ministry of Education's scientific grant agency - Vega: "Research on key determinants of human capital and economic growth within the digital economy development." Project registration number: [reg. No.: 1/0448/24]

business activities on the environment, so they try to change how they do business to mitigate the damage. However, it is always a question of whether companies adopt social responsibility measures with the motive to act proactively for image reasons or just to comply with the regulations imposed by law (Stojanović et al., 2016; Ranaweera, 2022). External stakeholders insist that companies should apply environmental standards in their operations. Enterprises are expected to take responsibility for current activities and not compromise the needs of future generations. Porter and Linde (1995) suggest that, in a broader sense, environmental CSR activities can stimulate innovation, reduce costs, conserve resources, and thus create competitive advantage and loyal consumers. In this way, social responsibility benefits society and the organizations themselves, primarily in the form of their long-term sustainability in the marketplace. In today's highly competitive market, an organization's added value may be precisely what it seeks to be different in some positive way to maintain its position.

2. Theoretical background

Social responsibility can also be defined in terms of ethical obligations that enterprises must fulfill towards their employees, customers, and the general community (Šupeková & Krchová, 2021). In this regard, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of customers as a pivotal component of society. It is equally crucial to recognize the expectation among customers that organizations prioritize climate and environmental concerns in a manner that is on par with the significance of their business practices (Mahajan, 2024). Some studies explain the positive relationship between employee education through environmental training and green human resource management practices (Bazrkar & Moshiripour, 2021). Other studies confirm that green learning is an important tool to improve employees' awareness and commitment to environmental issues, which could lead to innovative and pro-environmental behaviors in organizations. (Carbalo-Penela et al., 2023; Noor et al., 2023; Mensah et al., 2023 Yang & Li, 2023).

Research has examined the influence of green human resource management (green HRM) on employee ecological behavior (EEB). This research draws on Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory. The findings indicate that green HRM exerts a positive influence on green culture and green satisfaction. Moreover, the findings reveal a positive relationship between green satisfaction and EEB, with green satisfaction fully mediating the association between green HRM and EEB (Noor Faezah et al., 2024a). Another study offers guidelines to decision makers for enhancing employee ecological behavior (EEB) and environmental commitment in the workplace. (Noor Faezah et al., 2024b). A subsequent study offers significant implications for practitioners, educational policymakers, and leaders to promote Green Transition Mechanism (GTM) and employee engagement for sustainable environmental performance. The promotion of green skill development, the engagement of employees with green initiatives, and the promotion of employees with green skills have the potential to assist organizations, particularly higher education institutions (HEIs), in enhancing their sustainable environmental performance and attaining a competitive advantage. The findings of several researchers suggest the following: Firstly, the quality of employees is positively associated with the reporting of corporate environmental sustainability. Secondly, companies with more educated employees are more likely to provide environmental and sustainable information with high standards and quality. Thirdly, companies with more educated employees are more likely to release environmental and sustainable information in solo reports as a reflection of the corporate attention on and initiative in environmental sustainability (Umair et al., 2024).

Furthermore, researchers found that higher education-level employees have a stronger impact on corporate environmental sustainability (Cabagnols et al., 2022; Fang & Li, 2024). Additionally, evidence suggests a significant and positive relationship between environmental self-identity and employee green workplace behavior (Xing & Mohamed Zainal, 2024). The findings of several studies indicate that enhancing employee engagement and organizational commitment can be achieved through increased investment in green supply chain management (GSCM) practice drivers of social and operating performance. These include environmental education, green marketing, and green warehousing and distribution. A review of the extant literature reveals a positive correlation between GHRM practices and pro-environment promotion behavior among university employees, particularly when supported by GHRM training and education programs (Ciptomulyono et al., 2024).

The authors have set out to address this research gap by investigating the relationship between green employee training, a component of green human resource management practices, and the level of employee engagement.

3. Research objective and methodology

Training is one of the human resources activities that has the potential to influence the pro-environmental behavior of employees. The present study employs a quantitative research methodology, with the objective of investigating proactive environmental aspects and their impact on employee engagement. Guided by the primary objective of the research, the following research question was formulated: What is the relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee training and employee engagement? To that end, we have formulated two research hypotheses:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between green employee learning and the level of employee engagement.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee training and the size of the organization.

In accordance with Jaskova's (2021) assertion, the empirical data was collected from the respondents during the phase of acquiring the empirical material. The questionnaire was disseminated electronically, employing Google Forms as the digital platform. The designated timeframe for data collection was one month, commencing on 1.3.2024 and concluding on 31.3.2024. The research population comprised 150 respondents from various organizations within the Trenčín Region, with 31% belonging to medium-sized organizations and 69% to large organizations. This approach aligns with the perspective outlined by Adams and Zutshi (2004). The hypotheses were tested using Statistica.cz, a statistical program, which enabled the analysis of contingency tables and correspondence analysis. This methodology allowed for the examination of the relationships between categories of the tables. The results of the correspondence analysis can be interpreted with a chi-square test. The result of the test is expressed using the chi-squared value, which is then compared with the critical value from the chi-squared distribution. It is imperative to note that the degrees of freedom (df) play a pivotal role in the interpretation of the results obtained from the chi-squared test. These degrees of freedom are instrumental in determining the critical value of the chi-squared distribution, which serves as the benchmark against which the calculated chi-squared value from the test is assessed. The critical values, which are presented in tables for the chi-square distribution, are contingent on the degrees of freedom and the designated significance level, most commonly 0.05 or 0.01. In this study, a significant level of 0.05 was employed.

4. Results

As illustrated in Table 1, the questionnaire delved into the investigation of two primary factors. Firstly, the inquiry focused on whether newly recruited employees had undergone initial training that placed a particular emphasis on environmental issues. Secondly, it examined the extent to which this training had influenced their job engagement and, conversely, whether their level of engagement at work had any bearing on the company's environmental impact. Additionally, the survey sought to shed light on the relationship between the size of the organization and the incorporation of environmental considerations in the training it provided.

Table 1. Results of statistical investigation

Factor	p-value	Hypothesis Acceptance/rejection
Green learning and employee engagement	0,2282	H1 ×
Environmental aspects in training and the size of the organization	0,0058	H2 ✓

Source: calculations by the authors

Note: H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between green employee learning and the level of employee engagement (denied).

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee training and the size of the organization (verified).

The results of the correspondence analysis indicate that the χ^2 test value is 10.5561 at degrees of freedom $df=8$ with a significance level of $p<0.2282$, which is below the established $\alpha=5\%$. This finding suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between initial green learning and employee engagement. A similar outcome was observed in a subsequent correspondence analysis, which yielded a χ^2 test value of 11.6050 at degrees of freedom $df=8$ and a significance level of $p<0.1698$, again falling below the established $\alpha=5\%$. This finding suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between regular green learning activities and employee engagement.

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that the survey inquired about the potential impact of organization size on the provision of both initial and regular green learning activities.

Table 2. Initial environmental training vs. organization size

Organization	Organizing the initial training on the environment	Initial training on the environment - respondent unable to comment	The initial training on the environment has never been organized	Total
Medium-sized organization	10,67 %	2,67%	17,33%	30,67%
Large organization	34 %	14,67%	20,67%	69,33%
Total	44,67%	17,33%	38%	100%

Source: calculations by the authors (questionnaire survey 03/2024)

The correspondence analysis yielded a χ^2 test value of 10.2965 at degrees of freedom $df=2$, with a significance level of $p<0.0058$, which is above the selected $\alpha=5\%$. This finding indicates a statistically significant relationship between the size of the organization and the initial green learning of employees. As illustrated in Table 2, it is evident that nearly half of the employees (44.67%) have undergone initial pro-environmental learning, while 17% of the respondents did not respond to this question and 38% of the respondents did not receive any initial training on the environment. A higher proportion of respondents from large organizations (34%) had received initial training on the environment, compared to respondents working in medium organizations (10.67%). Despite a hypothesis about the relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee training and the size of the organization is verified, another notable finding is that a significant proportion of employees in large organizations do not recall or are unaware of their initial green learning, a proportion that is substantially lower than that observed among employees in medium organizations.

Table 3. Regular environmental learning vs. organization size

Organization	Organizing the initial training on the environment	Initial training on the environment - respondent unable to comment	The initial training on the environment has never been organized.	Total
Medium-sized organization	5,33 %	1,33%	24%	30,67%
Large organization	29,33%	4%	36%	69,33%
Total	34,67%	5,33%	60%	100%

Source: calculations by the authors (questionnaire survey 03/2024)

The value of the chi-squared test was determined to be 9.51971 at degrees of freedom $df=2$, with a significance level of $p<0.0086$, which is above the selected $\alpha=5\%$. This finding indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the size of the organization and the regular green learning of employees. As illustrated in Table 3, it is evident that more than half of the respondents (60%) do not undergo regular environmental training. A mere 34.67% of the respondents reported undergoing regular pro-environmental training, while the remaining 5.33% did not provide a response regarding the existence of such training programs within their respective organizations. Further analysis reveals a significant disparity in the frequency of pro-environmental training among medium and large organizations, with the former conducting such training approximately five times less frequently than the latter. Large organizations are more likely to provide regular green-learning activities to employees.

Commencing with the primary objective of the research study, the following research question was formulated: What is the relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee education and employee engagement? The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between initial green learning and employee engagement, nor was there a statistically significant difference between regular green learning and employee engagement.

5. Discussion

The results of the study (Alqudah & Yusnita, 2024) demonstrated a positive correlation between green training and development and two variables: academic citizenship behavior and organization environmental performance. Additionally, the findings suggested a favorable correlation between green recruitment and selection and two variables: academic citizenship behavior and organization environmental performance. Additionally, a relationship was identified between academic citizenship behavior and organization environmental performance. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated mediating effects of academic citizenship behavior in the relationship between green training and development and organization environmental performance, as well as between green recruitment and selection and organization environmental performance. Other findings indicate that green training, green commitment, and green knowledge management play pivotal roles in promoting sustainable practices in the hotel industry. Investing in employee training to cultivate knowledge and skills, demonstrating robust management commitment to sustainability, and implementing effective knowledge management are foundational to cultivating a work environment that fosters sustainability and environmental responsibility. The managerial implications of these findings suggest that hotels should focus on developing policies and programs that encourage sustainable practices. This entails enhancing educational and training initiatives, fortifying organizational commitment, and embracing effective knowledge management methodologies. By implementing these strategies, hotels can enhance their sustainability performance, thereby strengthening their reputation and competitiveness in an increasingly eco-conscious market (Lubis et al., 2024). The economic recovery of the tourism industry following the pandemic is accompanied by the adoption of modern and efficient trends to increase profitability. These trends include comprehensive accommodation approaches towards resilience and environmental sustainability. The objective of the study was to examine the implementation of environmental management elements and measures across all categories of accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic ($n1 = 1,016$). The findings suggest that the number of environmental measures implemented by monitored hotels and guesthouses remained relatively consistent. Conversely, the star rating of accommodation facilities emerged as a non-instrumental parameter in the environmental impact assessment. The most prevalent environmental measures included the installation of devices aimed at reducing electricity consumption (94% of hotels and guesthouses), implementing waste separation protocols (88% of hotels and 89% of guesthouses), and decreasing water consumption (85% of hotels and 86% of guesthouses). Conversely, measures aimed at curbing chemical consumption (23% of hotels and 22% of guesthouses), along with the communication and environmental education of employees and guests (32% of hotels and 18% of guesthouses), were found to be the least implemented (Vrabcová et al., 2024).

The significant proportion of negative responses regarding regular environmental learning may suggest a lack of opportunities for employees to expand their knowledge in this area, as environmental learning is not a prevalent component in the organization's curriculum. Conversely, the involvement of managerial staff in training programs focused on environmental issues has been shown to yield positive outcomes, as evidenced by the findings of Noor et al. (2023). These results suggest that the integration of managerial personnel in training initiatives pertaining to environmental concerns can effectively enhance employees' environmental promotion awareness and behavior. The integration of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and sustainability theory, which served as the foundation for the development of the concept of sustainable leadership, facilitates the comprehension of how the role of a leader can influence the level of sustainable engagement and performance and generate a healthier and more motivating work environment to achieve sustainable goals (Winarno et al. 2025). Additionally, heightened environmental awareness among executives and higher educational qualifications among employees serve to strengthen the relationship between corporate ESG behaviors and employee satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2024).

In essence, employees' pro-environmental behaviors within their professional settings have the potential to contribute to a reduction in organizations' environmental impacts by integrating environmental practices into their daily routines. This study examined the role of a green climate at the organizational and co-worker levels, as well as supervisor support, in predicting employees' voluntary green behaviors, particularly with regard to waste separation. The mediating role of organizational identification in these relationships was also examined. The findings indicate a substantial positive association between employees' perceptions of a green organizational climate and their reported pro-environmental behaviors. However, organizational identification does not mediate the relationship between green climate and pro-environmental behaviors. Additionally, the impact of supervisor support on pro-environmental behaviors was found to be only marginally significant. These findings underscore the significance of organizational-level initiatives in promoting green behaviors within workplaces. However, further exploration is necessary to gain a more profound understanding of the mechanisms that generate these relationships. Practical implications of this study include the necessity for increased investment in initiatives that prioritize integrating environmental concerns into the daily procedures and routines of organizations (Leitão et al., 2024).

Conclusions

A survey of respondents employed in large and medium-sized enterprises across various sectors in Slovakia revealed that green training programs are implemented in less than half of the enterprises. Our quantitative research revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between initial or regular green training and employee engagement (the first hypothesis has been denied). The authors consider this finding to be novel and innovative, and it represents a practical contribution to green human resource management. However, a notable distinction emerged concerning the correlation between the size of the organization and the implementation of initial and regular employee environmental training. The hypothesis about the statistically significant relationship between the application of environmental aspects in employee training and the size of the organization in our study has been verified.

The prevalence of unfavorable responses regarding initial and regular training on the environment may signify a lack of opportunities for employees to develop their environmental knowledge, as such training is not widely available within their respective organizations. The findings of numerous studies underscore the imperative for managerial engagement in green learning activities, a factor that has been demonstrated to foster an enhancement in employees' pro-environmental awareness and behavior. This recommendation by the study's authors underscores the significance of incorporating environmental training into the professional development of employees. We investigated the extent to which green human resource management is implemented in Slovakia, but the results indicate that just under half of businesses have green human resource management in place. This is a limitation of our research. The issue necessitates a systematic investigation, with a focus on systemic solutions that organizations can implement to enhance environment promotion awareness and behavior among employees, drawing upon exemplary practices.

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Funding: The research was funded by the Slovak Ministry of Education's grant agency - Slovak Research and Development Agency: "Application of circular economy principles to the creation of circular business models in manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors in Slovakia and creation of new performance metrics to identify and quantify circular economy effects". Project registration number: [Reg. No.: APVV-23-0562].

The research was funded by the Slovak Ministry of Education's scientific grant agency - Vega: "Research on key determinants of human capital and economic growth within the digital economy development." Project registration number: [reg. No.: 1/0448/24]

Author Contributions: Conceptualization: *Tatiana Masárová*; methodology: *Tatiana Masárová*; data analysis: *Tatiana Masárová*; writing—original draft preparation: *Tatiana Masárová*, *Marcel Kordoš*.; writing; review and editing: *Marcel Kordoš*; visualization: *Marcel Kordoš*. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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