

Leadership, Green Human Resource Management and Green Employee Engagement: Navigation of Sri Lanka Navy

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Abstract - Corporate and military settings are evolving to be more environmentally conscious. This study aims to bridge the identified empirical research gap through a quantitative study. The identified research gap is that there is no empirical evidence on the mediating effect of Green Human Resource Management (green HRM) on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement in the Sri Lanka military context and perhaps in the international military context. The research objectives are: to identify the impact of green HRM on green employee engagement; to identify the impact of leadership on green HRM; to identify the impact of leadership on green employee engagement; to identify the mediating effect of green HRM on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement. This cross-sectional research was carried out in a non-contrived environment under minimal researcher interference. The unit of analysis is individual that is Sri Lanka Navy officers. The sample size is 165. The sample population is 3200. The sampling technique is simple random. The study utilized the Partial Least Squares Regression (PLS) model with SMART PLS 4.0 software to assess the reliability, validity, and relationships among latent variables in both the measurement and structural models. The results reveal that there is a significant partial mediating effect of green HRM on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement.

Keywords: Leadership, Military Context, Green Employee Engagement, Green Human Resource Management

I. INTRODUCTION

The traditional main roles of military context are war fighting, constabulary, and diplomatic roles. Smit (2018) argues military professionals should be conversant on a variety of environmentally friendly programmes. During peacetime, there is a tendency of the military to concern more about eco-friendliness. This is true for the Sri Lanka Navy context as well. Sri Lanka Navy through their “Blue Green Project” is concerned more about Green Human Resource Management (green HRM) practices. Iddagoda et al., (2023) conducted research on the Sri Lanka Navy’s perception of the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between green positioning and employee work performance.

Wong et al., (2003) assert leadership remains inextricably knotted with the military at every level. Wong et al., (2003) further highlight it is important to distinguish between two distinct definitions of military leadership research. The first option is to concentrate on research using military illustrations to test theories that are applicable to a variety of organisations, and the second is to take into account the distinctive features of the military and concentrate on research that tries to understand the identity of leadership within that context. Paunonen et al., (2006) state knowing which individuals will be effective leaders of those in the lower strata of the military’s rigid multi-tiered leadership hierarchy is crucial. In times of war, military leaders are in charge of saving countless lives, and the suffering of people can be greatly impacted by a failure to recognise and remove potentially harmful leaders. Paunonen et al., (2006) further assert that there are probably numerous ways that good leaders differ from bad leaders. Such variations may be observed in temperamental factors or typical personality traits. Davidovitz et al., (2007) state attachment anxiety in leaders was linked to less effective task-oriented leadership and more self-serving leadership motivations. Fry et al., (2005) assert, by encouraging value resemblance across the strategic, empowered team, and individual levels, spiritual leadership results in the development of this sense of leader and follower spiritual survival, resulting in improved levels of company commitment, productivity, and employee happiness. Pearce et al., (2020) assert a leader’s ability to communicate their intentions clearly is necessary for attaining unity of effort. Silva (2016) highlights, it is likely that what is required are leaders with organisational abilities and the capacity to create an agreement. Oppermann et al., (2021) state the Navy needs more leaders who can transform rather than just transact in order to handle the numerous, complex issues of the twenty-first century. Military leadership is the reflection of personality and character to inspire confidence in subordinates that fosters initiative and the acceptance of risk and responsibility (MDSL, 2020).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the productive utilization of the most valued resource to accomplish the goals of an organization (Opatha, 2019). Therefore, HRM mainly includes all aspects of people management to accomplish desired organizational goals. It is learnt that the term HRM is well-versed with the Sri Lankan and

international community. Iddagoda et al., (2022) state green HRM has become a catchword in management circles due to the whole world moving toward green initiatives. Jabbour and Santos (2008) highlight the assistance of HRM in developing sustainable organisations and therefore the necessity to integrate sustainability with human resource systems. According to Opatha (2013) the term for the majority of Sri Lankans, even academics and HRM experts, ‘green human resource management’ is a fresh idea. Jayasekara et al., (2023) assert, by educating employees about green practices, organisations may increase their environmental engagement in a way that is more sustainable than ever. Green HRM elements are better tools for promoting environmental action among people. There are several definitions for green HRM. According to Arulrajah and Opatha (2016) green HRM is the environmental adaptation of all human resource functions of an organisation at all echelons. Green HRM is the integration of HRM practices within organisational goals of environmental sustainability (Iddagoda et al., 2020). According to Renwick et al., (2013), green HRM is the HRM aspect of environment management. Janadari and Ekanayake (2021) state that organizations are working harder than ever to be more environmentally friendly and they have started attempting to positively influence employees’ thoughts on the subject. Renwick et al., (2013) state, green HRM is a set of HR practices (green training and involvement, green hiring, and green performance and remuneration) aimed at improving environmental performance. Pham et al., (2019) present the green HRM bundle with recruitment, selection, training and development, job description, pay and reward schemes, management of performances, organizational culture, employee involvement and unions’ role in the environment.

Opatha (2019) asserts ‘green’ involves the nature or natural environment. The authors reflect ‘green’ and ‘greening’ as related to the natural environment or nature. The engagement of employees is a product of both behaviour and attitude (Iddagoda et al., 2016). Further Iddagoda et al., (2020) state, there is an evolving trend to safeguard the natural environment or perform duties in relation to greening by military employees. Sri Lanka military comprised of Army, Navy and Air Force is a very significant example of this. Green employee engagement represents the setting up of a responsive employer–employee affiliation by facilitating employees with power to energetically involve in environmental concerns within the organization (Haddock-Millar et al., 2016).

Researchers of the study identified there is an empirical research gap about the mediating effect of green HRM on the affiliation among leadership and green employee engagement in the Sri Lanka military setting and possibly in the international military setting.

1) *Research problem:*

Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) has initiated a ‘Blue and Green Concept (Neela Haritha Sangramaya)’ to address the concerns that the ocean and coastal resources are facing in Sri Lanka. Consequently, SLN has commenced implementing green HRM practices. Therefore, the research problem ‘Is there a mediating effect of green HRM on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement’.

2) *Research objectives:*

- i. To identify the impact of green HRM on green employee engagement.
- ii. To identify the impact of leadership on green HRM.
- iii. To identify the impact of leadership on green employee engagement.
- iv. To identify the mediating effect of green HRM on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study.

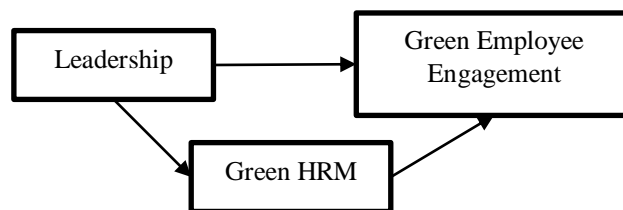


Figure 1. Conceptual framework
Source: Authors

Wright and Snell (1991) point out that General Systems Theory discusses inputs, process and outputs. Leadership is all about inspiring, guiding and persuading when it is needed. The ‘inspire’ component of the 10 C’s recorded by Seijts and Crim (2006) comprises connect, clarity, contribute, career, convey, congratulate, control, credibility, collaborate and confidence. Employees believe that working as a team with the trust and cooperation of their team members is more efficient than working as an individual or in a team with weak ties, according to Seijts and Crim (2006). As per Wright and Snell (1991) skills are inputs. Therefore, leadership becomes an input. Green recruitment, green induction and green selection are the Green Human Resource Management functions with processes in the view of Pham et al., (2019). In a process, there is a set of activities. Therefore, Green Human Resource Management becomes a process. Output is green employee engagement, which is a blend of green attitudes and behaviours.

3) *Hypotheses:*

H1_a: Green HRM has an impact on green employee engagement.

H2_a: Leadership has an impact on green HRM.

H3_a: Leadership has an impact on green employee engagement.

H4_a: Green HRM acts as a mediator between the relationship of leadership and green employee engagement.

II. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is constructed on testing hypotheses. This is a cross-sectional study. The degree of researcher's interference in the study is minimal. The scenario of the research is non-contrived.

The study utilized the Partial Least Squares Regression (PLS) model with SMART PLS 4.0 software to assess the reliability, validity, and relationships among latent variables in both the measurement and structural models. The measurement model ensured the reliability and validity of the observed variables, while the structural model examined the importance of the relationships among the latent variables.

Roscoe (1975), as quoted in Sekaran (2003), presents a rule that the sample sizes must be more than 30 respondents and fewer than 500 respondents. The sampling technique was simple random. Data was collected from a sample of 165 navy officers. The sample population was 3200. The measurement model was weighed for reliability using composite reliability, which evaluates the internal consistency of observed variables. Convergent validity was established by confirming that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.5. Discriminant validity was ensured by employing the Fornell-Larcker measure to compare the square root of AVE values with inter-construct correlations and by calculating Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios. The structural model was analyzed using bootstrapping to evaluate the significance of path coefficients.

III. RESULTS

Using the techniques suggested by Hair et al., (2019), the evaluation of both the outside (measurement) and inner (structural) models was done in two stages of the analysis. According to Sarstedt et al., (2014), the structural model focuses on the relationships between the latent variables and their observable indicators, while the outer model focuses on the relationships between the latent variables and their dependent and independent latent variables.

To validate the exterior model's reliability and validity, the measurement model was examined initially, encompassing the constructs and their dimensions. The measuring model was initially tested with all 37 indicators incorporated. The factor loadings for all indicators were found to be above 0.4, as indicated in Table 1. Hair et al., (2019) suggested removing factor loadings falling between 0.4 and 0.7 to enhance questionnaire reliability. However, in this study,

removing the remaining factor loadings would not improve reliability, leading to the retention of 28 questionnaire items.

Reliability was confirmed for all constructs, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores exceeding 0.7. Moreover, convergent validity was established, as the average variance extracted for all constructs surpassed 0.5, following the criteria established by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Subsequently, to ensure discriminant validity, the Fornell and Larcker measure and HTMT ratio were employed. Conferring to these requirements, the HTMT values should be below the 0.9 cutoff and the square root of the average variance retrieved for each construct should be bigger than its maximum correlation with other constructs correspondingly (Henseler et al., 2015). The findings were supported by cross-loading results, conclusively demonstrating discriminant validity.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability of Questionnaire

	GEE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
GEE10	0.715	0.843	0.847	0.881	0.514
GEE11	0.715				
GEE12	0.708				
GEE2	0.701				
GEE4	0.698				
GEE5	0.777				
GEE6	0.699				
GHRM1	0.756	0.934	0.934	0.944	0.588
GHRM10	0.772				
GHRM11	0.66				
GHRM12	0.506				
GHRM2	0.674				
GHRM3	0.813				
GHRM4	0.863				
GHRM5	0.871				
GHRM6	0.833				
GHRM7	0.793				
GHRM8	0.794				
GHRM9	0.789				
LED1	0.872	0.964	0.965	0.969	0.777
LED2	0.862				
LED3	0.905				
LED4	0.915				
LED5	0.864				
LED6	0.878				
LED7	0.896				
LED8	0.89				
LED9	0.849				

Table 2. Discriminant Validity- Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	GEE	GHRM	LED
GEE	0.717		
GHRM	0.442	0.767	
LED	0.525	0.554	0.881

Table 3. Discriminant Validity - HTMT Ratio

	Heterotrait- monotrait ratio (HTMT)
GHRM <-> GEE	0.465
LED <-> GEE	0.575
LED <-> GHRM	0.57

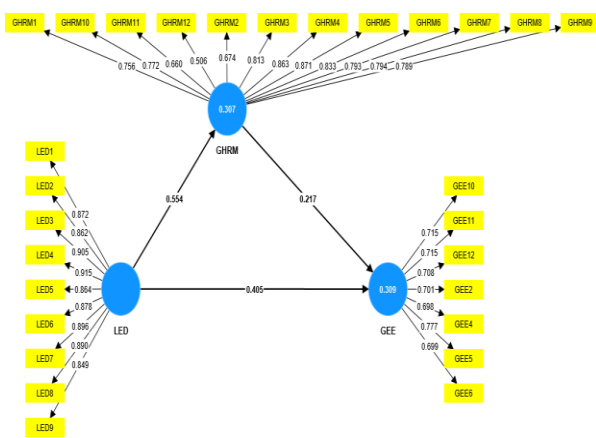


Figure 2. The Structural Model

The above figure illustrates the model. Initially, we evaluated the model with the Variance Inflation Factor to detect any potential multicollinearity. Hair et al., (2019) state in the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equations Modeling setting, Variance Inflation Factor values greater than or equal to 5 suggest the presence of collinearity issues. However, in our study, all constructs displayed Variance Inflation Factor values lower than 5 (refer to Table 4 - Structural Model Results), indicating the absence of multicollinearity.

Subsequently, we proceeded to estimate the path coefficients using the Bootstrap resampling method to assess the significance of direct paths and determine normal errors (Hair et al., 2011). The coefficient of determination (R2 value) for the direct consequence of leadership on green employee engagement was 0.309, while the coefficient of determination for the indirect effect of leadership on green employee engagement, mediated by green HRM, was 0.307. Both R2 values exceeded the 0.10 threshold, confirming the model's in-sample extrapolative power (Falk and Miller, 1992). Effect sizes were also examined to understand the contributions of predicting variables to the R2 value of endogenous variables. Leadership had a strong effect on green HRM and a

medium effect on Green Employee Engagement, while green HRM had an insignificant effect on green employee engagement. Moreover, green employee engagement predicted green HRM.

To evaluate the model's predictive power outside the sample, we analyzed the Model's Stone-Geisser Q2 value (Geisser, 2017; Stone, 1974). A Q2 value greater than zero for any endogenous latent variable in the structural model indicates that the path model aids in predicting the dependent construct. Our estimates of green HRM and green employee engagement yielded Q2 values > 0 (see Table 2, Panel A), confirming the predictive relevance of the exogenous constructs for the endogenous construct.

The findings of Hypotheses tests are presented in Figure 2 and Table 4, Panel B, which display the path coefficients for leadership, green HRM, and green employee engagement. Hypothesis 1 hypothesized that green HRM has an impact on green employee engagement. The results fully supported this hypothesis, as green HRM significantly enhanced green employee engagement ($\beta = 0.217$, $t = 2.208$, $p < .05$). Similarly, Hypothesis 2, predicting leadership has an impact on Green Human Resource Management, was also supported, with leadership significantly increasing Green Human Resource Management ($\beta = 0.554$, $t = 8.672$, $p < .001$). As for Hypothesis 3, which proposed that leadership has an impact on green employee engagement, it was fully supported, with leadership significantly improving green employee engagement ($\beta = 0.405$, $t = 3.727$, $p < .001$). For more detailed results, refer to Table 4, Panel B.

Table 4. Structural Model Results

	Predictive Ability		F Squared		Variance Inflation Factor	
			GEE	GHRM	GEE	GHRM
Panel A	R2	Q2				
Green Employee Engagement	0.309	0.249				
Green HRM	0.307	0.284	0.047		1.442	
Leadership			0.165	0.442	1.442	1
Panel B						
Path-Coefficients	β	t-statistic	P Value	95% Confidence interval		Support
GHRM -> GEE	0.217	2.208	0.027	0.017	0.402	Yes
LED -> GEE	0.405	3.727	0.000	0.196	0.615	Yes
LED -> GHRM	0.554	8.672	0.000	0.425	0.674	Yes

Hypothesis 4 has found support, indicating that green HRM acts as a mediator between the relationship of leadership and green employee engagement. Table 5 provides further evidence to back this hypothesis. The results demonstrate a noteworthy total effect of leadership on green employee engagement ($\beta = .525$, $t = 6.877$, $p < .001$). When introducing the mediator into the model, the direct effect showed a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.405$, $t = 3.727$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the indirect effect, considering the mediator in the analysis, was also found to be significant ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.215$, $p < .001$). Consequently, the findings advocate that green HRM performs a partial mediator role in the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

Table 5. Mediation Outcomes

	Coefficient	t-value	Lower	Upper	Mediation
Total Effect	0.525	6.877			
Direct Effect	0.405	3.727			
Indirect effect	0.12	2.215			
Percentile bootstrap 95% CI			0.01	0.226	
LED -> GHRM -> GEE					Yes

A. Discussion

According to Smit (2018), military personnel should be knowledgeable about a range of green initiatives. During times of peace, the military is increasingly emphasizing environmental responsibility. This also holds true in the context of the Sri Lankan Navy.

The results indicate that the measurement model achieved reliability, discriminant validity and convergent validity ensuring the soundness of the observed variables. These findings provide confidence in the quality of the data used in the subsequent analysis of the structural model. The bootstrapping analysis of the structural model's path coefficients allows for the examination of the significance of these relationships, providing insights into the hypothesized associations among latent variables.

The mediation results suggest that green HRM plays a substantial role in explaining the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement. These findings provide support for the hypothesized mediation model, indicating that the effect of leadership on green employee engagement is partially explained by the presence of green HRM. The mediation effect suggests a

plausible mechanism through which leadership influences green employee engagement, highlighting the importance of green HRM as an intermediate variable in the process.

B. Limitations and Further Studies

This will be a cross-sectional study and data will be gathered only on one occasion due to the time constraints of the officers in the Sri Lanka Navy. Green HRM is being practiced in tri forces in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lanka Army and Air Force can test this conceptual framework with green HRM.

IV. CONCLUSION

The identified empirical research gap, i.e. there is no empirical evidence on the mediating effect of green HRM on the relationship among leadership and green employee engagement in the Sri Lanka military setting perhaps in the international military context has been bridged. The military's continued environmental protection initiatives are readily apparent. In this empirical study, a significant partial mediation of green HRM on the relationship between leadership and green employee engagement was revealed. This study indicates when the organization is concerned more about leadership development, it increases green HRM and after that green employee engagement. This study indicates the Sri Lanka Navy should take more initiatives on leadership developmental programmes in order to enhance green HRM. This can be done by reviewing existing leadership development programmes with the identified perceived leadership needs. Thereby analyzing the gaps, suitable leadership development programmes can be designed and developed to achieve the Sri Lanka Navy's desired objectives.

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