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THE EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE GREEN BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) and employee green behavior (EGB) in the workplace within the context of the Republic of North Macedonia. Given the increasing emphasis on sustainable business practices, understanding the factors influencing employees' environmentally friendly behaviors is essential. This research explores whether higher levels of emotional intelligence among employees contribute to more proactive engagement in green behaviors, such as energy conservation, waste management and recycling at work. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence significantly influences employee green behavior, with implications for organizational strategies aimed at fostering sustainability. Additionally, the study investigates gender differences in the relationship between EQ and EGB. Results indicate that female employees are more likely to engage in green behaviors compared to their male counterparts, although emotional intelligence remains the more substantial predictor of EGB regardless of gender. These insights highlight the importance of developing EQ across all employees while considering gender dynamics to enhance organizational sustainability efforts.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Employee Green Behavior (EGB), sustainability, North Macedonia, workplace environmental practices.*

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the importance to adopt sustainable practices has affected all levels of society, including organizations (Tang *et al*., 2023). As businesses strive to reduce their environmental footprint, the role of individual employee behavior has come under study. Employee Green Behavior (EGB) refers to the voluntary or discretionary actions taken by employees that contribute to environmental sustainability within an organization. This behavior is essential for achieving organizational sustainability goals, yet it remains influenced by various factors, including emotional intelligence (EI).

Emotional intelligence, defined by Goleman (1995) as the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others, has been linked to numerous positive workplace outcomes, including improved teamwork, leadership and decision-making. This paper explores the impact of emotional intelligence on employee green behavior in the context of organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia. By

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understanding this relationship, organizations can better foster a culture of green beahaviour.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has achieved significant attention in both psychological and organizational research since its conceptualization by Mayer and Salovey (1997). EQ is defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, manage and influence emotions in oneself and others. Goleman (1995) expanded this concept by linking EQ to various dimensions of workplace performance, such as leadership effectiveness, team dynamics, employee performance (Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017a), change management (Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017b) and stress management. In organizational contexts, individuals with high EQ are often better equipped to navigate complex social environments, build stronger relationships and manage work-related stress, all of which contribute to enhanced performance and job satisfaction. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is crucial in the workplace.

Goleman (1995) popularized the concept by highlighting its impact on personal and professional success, arguing that EI is as important as, if not more than, cognitive intelligence (IQ) in determining workplace performance.

EQ is generally conceptualized as comprising several dimensions:

Self-awareness - Recognizing one's emotions and their effects.

Self-regulation - Managing one's emotions in a healthy way.

Motivation - Using emotions to drive forward towards goals.

Empathy - Understanding and considering others' emotions.

Social skills - Managing relationships to move people in desired directions.

Research has shown that individuals with high EQ are more likely to engage in positive workplace behaviors, such as teamwork, leadership and effective conflict (Bar-On, 2006; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). Moreover, EQ has been linked to psychological well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, suggesting that emotionally intelligent employees are more engaged and motivated to contribute to organizational goals (Carmeli, 2003).

Over the past 25 years, research has identified key factors related to workplace intelligence, using performance data from various organizations and industries, thus enriching the EQ knowledge base (Jorfi *et al*., 2010). Emotions provide essential insights that help managers and employees excel (Caruso & Wolfe, 2004). Jorfi highlights Goleman's analysis (1998) of studies from around 500 organizations worldwide, which underscores the importance of EQ in job excellence across virtually any role. Those with the highest EQ tend to rise to leadership positions. Star employees, who excel in EQ, often outperform others, with EQ being twice as important as technical or analytical skills. Different jobs require different types of EQ; for instance, success in sales depends on empathy and interpersonal skills, while roles like painting or professional tennis require self-discipline and motivation. EQ influences nearly all work activities, even in solitary settings where self-discipline and motivation are key (Goleman *et al*., 2008). Gender differences in acquiring EQ have shown that men and women are equally capable of improving their EQ. Goleman (1998) notes that men and women can enhance their emotional intelligence similarly. Stein's study (Murray, 1998) assessed EQ in 4,500 men and 3,200 women, finding that women excelled in empathy and social responsibility,

while men outperformed in stress tolerance and self-confidence. The conclusion is that men and women are equally emotionally intelligent, though they excel in different areas.

The application of EQ in promoting organizational sustainability is a relatively new but growing area of research. Scholars argue that EQ can play a crucial role in fostering pro-environmental behaviors among employees. For instance, individuals with high EQ are likely to exhibit greater empathy toward environmental issues, understanding the broader impact of their actions on the community and the planet. Furthermore, EQ enables employees to manage the emotional challenges associated with change, such as adopting new, environmentally friendly practices that may initially be perceived as inconvenient or costly.

2.2. Employee Green Behavior

Employee Green Behavior (EGB) refers to voluntary actions taken by employees to support the environmental sustainability goals of their organization (Kim *et al*., 2017). Ones and Dilchert (2012) define employee green behavior (EGB) as any measurable individual behavior that contributes to or detracts from environmental sustainability goals in the workplace. Alternatively, Norton et al. (2012) describe it as a workplace-specific form of pro-environmental behavior, categorized into required and voluntary employee green behavior. Required EGB involves actions within the scope of an employee's job duties, such as choosing sustainable alternatives, recycling, reducing waste and creating sustainable processes and products. Voluntary EGB, on the other hand, refers to green behavior driven by personal initiative, going beyond organization. These behaviors can range from small actions, such as turning off lights when not in use, to more significant contributions, such as participating in or leading sustainability initiatives within the organization. The concept of EGB is grounded in the broader framework of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which includes discretionary actions that are not directly recognized by the formal reward system but contribute to the effective functioning of the organization (Tian *et al*., 2020). According to Norton et al. (2015), EGB can be categorized into two types:

1. **Task-related Green Behavior** - Actions that employees take as part of their job role to reduce the environmental impact, such as minimizing energy use, recycling and reducing waste.
2. **Proactive Green Behavior** - Voluntary actions that go beyond the required job tasks, such as initiating or participating in environmental programs and advocating for sustainable practices.

EGB is influenced by a range of factors, including organizational culture, leadership styles and individual attitudes toward the environment. For instance, studies have shown that transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees towards achieving a collective vision, is positively associated with EGB (Robertson & Barling, 2013). Furthermore, organizational support for environmental initiatives and the establishment of a green organizational culture have been found to enhance EGB (Lamm *et al*., 2015).

The factors influencing EGB have been widely studied, with organizational culture, leadership style and individual values identified as key determinants. For example, a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes sustainability can encourage employees to engage in green behaviors. Leadership also plays a crucial role; leaders who demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability can inspire similar behaviors in their employees. However, there is a growing interest in understanding the role of

individual psychological factors, such as EI, in driving EGB. The premise is that employees who are emotionally intelligent may be more attuned to the environmental implications of their actions and more motivated to engage in behaviors that align with the organization's sustainability objectives.

2.3. Gender Differences in Emotional Intelligence and Employee Green Behavior

Gender differences in both EQ and EGB have been the subject of numerous studies. Research consistently shows that women tend to score higher on measures of EQ compared to men (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). This disparity is often attributed to socialization processes that encourage women to develop greater emotional awareness and interpersonal skills. In the workplace, higher EQ among women has been linked to more effective communication, conflict resolution and leadership styles that emphasize collaboration and empathy.

The relationship between gender and EGB is similarly well-documented. Studies have found that women are generally more concerned about environmental issues and more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors than men (Zelezny *et al*., 2000). This gender difference is often explained by the tendency for women to be more empathetic and nurturing, traits that are closely associated with environmental stewardship. Additionally, women may feel a stronger moral obligation to protect the environment for future generations, which drives their engagement in EGB.

The intersection of EQ and gender in influencing EGB is a complex but important area of study. Women's higher EQ may enhance their ability to perceive and respond to environmental issues, leading to greater participation in EGB. However, it is also important to consider how organizational contexts and cultural norms may shape these behaviors. For instance, in societies where gender roles are more rigidly defined, women's participation in EGB may be constrained by expectations related to their primary roles as caregivers or homemakers.

2.4. Context of North Macedonia

The Republic of North Macedonia presents a unique context for studying the relationship between EQ, gender and EGB. As a developing country, North Macedonia is in the process of integrating into the European Union, which has prompted significant reforms in environmental policy and governance. However, the success of these reforms depends not only on governmental initiatives but also on the active participation of citizens and organizations.

In the corporate sector, there is increasing recognition of the need to adopt sustainable practices, driven by both regulatory pressures and a growing awareness of the benefits of sustainability for long-term business success. However, the extent to which these practices are adopted at the employee level varies widely, influenced by factors such as organizational culture, leadership and individual attitudes. In this context, understanding how EQ influences EGB can provide valuable insights for policymakers and business leaders in North Macedonia. By promoting EQ development among employees, organizations can enhance their capacity to meet sustainability targets and contribute to the country's overall environmental goals. Additionally, considering gender dynamics in this relationship can help ensure that both male and female employees are equally empowered to participate in green behaviors.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study utilizes a quantitative research design, employing multiple regression analysis to explore the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) adopted from Jordan and Lawrence (2009) Gender and Employee Green Behavior (EGB) Zhang et al. (2021). The study's independent variables are EQ (measured through an EI Index) and Gender (coded as 1 for male and 0 for female), while the dependent variable is EGB.

3.2. Sample

The sample consists of 243 employees from various organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia. The gender distribution within the sample is 64.2% female and 35.8% male, reflecting a diverse representation of the workforce.

3.3. Measures

- **Emotional Intelligence (EI Index)**: EQ was measured using a standardized EQ Index, comprising 12 items.
- **Employee Green Behavior (EGB)**: EGB was measured through a set of behaviors that reflect the employees' engagement in sustainable practices at work with 5 items.
- **Gender**: Gender was coded as a binary variable, with males coded as 1 and females as 0.
- **The reliability scale** was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.887, indicating high internal consistency.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to employees. The responses were analyzed using multiple regression analysis, with significance levels set at $p < 0.05$.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the sample's composition and the key variables used in the analysis. The study's sample consisted of 243 employees from various organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia. The gender distribution in the sample was 64.2% female (156 participants) and 35.8% male (87 participants). This distribution indicates a higher representation of female employees, which aligns with broader trends in many workplaces where certain sectors may have a higher proportion of female workers. The equal participation of both genders in this study ensures that the findings reflect diverse perspectives and experiences.

Table 1. Gender Distribution of the Sample

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	156	64.2	64.2	64.2
	Male	87	35.8	35.8	100.0
	Total	243	100.0	100.0	

Additionally, the data collection process ensured that all responses were valid, with no missing data reported, as shown in the case processing summary. This 100% response rate supports the reliability of the analysis.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	243	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	243	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Figure 2. Case Processing Summary

4.2. Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Gender and Employee Green Behavior (EGB). The analysis aimed to determine the extent to which EQ and Gender predict EGB among employees in North Macedonia.

Model Summary:

The regression model showed an R-squared value of 0.238, indicating that 23.8% of the variance in Employee Green Behavior (EGB) could be explained by the independent variables—Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Gender. This suggests that while EQ and Gender are significant predictors of EGB, other factors not included in this model might also influence EGB.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.488[a]	.238	.232	.56881

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, EQIndex

The adjusted R-square value (0.232) closely matches the R-square value, indicating that the model is a good fit for the data, with minimal reduction in explanatory power when adjusting for the number of predictors in the model.

ANOVA:

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression model further confirms the model's statistical significance, with an F-value of 37.488 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This highly significant result implies that the combined effect of EQ and Gender on EGB is not due to chance and these variables collectively provide a meaningful explanation of the variance in EGB.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.258	2	12.129	37.488	<.001[b]
	Residual	77.650	240	.324		
	Total	101.908	242			

a. Dependent Variable: EGB

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, EQIndex

Coefficients:

The coefficients table provides detailed insights into the contributions of each predictor variable to the model.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.272	.362		3.511	<.001
	EQIndex	.685	.083	.465	8.232	<.001
	Gender	-.163	.076	-.121	-2.143	.033

a. Dependent Variable: EGB

Constant (B = 1.272, $p < 0.001$): The constant represents the expected value of EGB when both EQ and Gender are held at zero. Although this scenario is hypothetical (as Gender cannot be zero), the constant helps anchor the regression equation. The significant constant value indicates that there is a baseline level of EGB that is influenced by factors other than EQ and Gender.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ Index, B = 0.685, $p < 0.001$):

The coefficient for EQ is positive and highly significant, with a value of 0.685. This indicates that for each one-unit increase in the EQ Index, EGB increases by 0.685 units, holding Gender constant. This strong positive relationship suggests that employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in behaviors that support environmental sustainability in their workplace.

The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.465) further emphasizes the importance of EQ in predicting EGB. Among the variables considered, EQ has a substantial impact, indicating that emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy play a critical role in fostering pro-environmental behaviors among employees.

Gender (B = -0.163, $p = 0.033$):

The coefficient for Gender is negative and statistically significant, with a value of -0.163. This suggests that male employees (coded as 1) are associated with a decrease in

EGB by 0.163 units compared to female employees (coded as 0), holding EQ constant. This result aligns with existing research that often finds women to be more engaged in pro-environmental behaviors than men.

The standardized coefficient for Gender (Beta = -0.121) indicates that, while the impact of Gender on EGB is significant, it is less pronounced than the impact of EI. Nevertheless, the finding that Gender has a negative association with EGB highlights the need for targeted strategies to encourage male employees to participate more actively in environmental sustainability initiatives.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that emotional intelligence (EQ) significantly influences Employee Green Behavior (EGB) within the workplace, particularly in the context of the Republic of North Macedonia. The positive and significant relationship between EQ and EGB suggests that employees who possess higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly practices at work. This aligns with the broader literature that highlights the role of emotional competencies in promoting pro-environmental behavior. Specifically, employees with high EQ may be better equipped to recognize the importance of sustainability, manage the emotional challenges associated with adopting green behaviors and influence their peers to follow suit.

The study also reveals an interesting gender dynamic, where female employees are more likely to engage in EGB compared to their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests women tend to be more environmentally conscious and proactive in sustainability efforts. However, the relatively weaker influence of gender compared to EQ indicates that while gender plays a role, emotional intelligence is a more critical factor in driving green behavior among employees. These insights highlight the need for organizations to focus on developing EQ across all employees, regardless of gender, to foster a more inclusive and effective approach to sustainability.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of emotional intelligence as a key driver of Employee Green Behavior in the workplace. As organizations in North Macedonia and beyond strive to meet sustainability goals, fostering EQ among employees can serve as a valuable strategy for enhancing their engagement in environmentally friendly practices. The gender differences observed in EGB also suggest that tailored approaches may be necessary to encourage more equal participation across all employees. By investing in emotional intelligence training and development, organizations can not only improve workplace dynamics but also contribute to broader environmental sustainability efforts. The findings from this research provide a foundation for future studies to further explore the complex interplay between emotional intelligence, gender and sustainable behaviors in diverse organizational contexts.

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