

**THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON ENVIRONMENTALLY ORIENTED
CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL VALUES
EDUCATION AND LEARNING SOCIETY**

***O IMPACTO DA LIDERANÇA ÉTICA NO COMPORTAMENTO DE CIDADANIA
ORIENTADO AO MEIO AMBIENTE NA PERSPECTIVA DOS VALORES
CULTURAIS, DA EDUCAÇÃO E DA SOCIEDADE DA APRENDIZAGEM***

***EL IMPACTO DEL LIDERAZGO ÉTICO EN EL COMPORTAMIENTO DE
CIUDADANÍA ORIENTADO AL MEDIO AMBIENTE DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE
LOS VALORES CULTURALES, LA EDUCACIÓN Y LA SOCIEDAD DEL
APRENDIZAJE***



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ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes the impact of ethical leadership on the environmentally oriented behavior of organizations from the perspective of cultural values, education and learning in a society, aiming to clarify the mechanisms by which ethical and environmental cultural norms are formed, transmitted, and internalized within organizations. The study surveyed 680 employees in organizations outside the education sector, representing various professions. Data were analyzed using modern statistical techniques to test an integrated model between ethical leadership, cultural values education, a learning society, and environmentally oriented citizenship behavior. The results show that ethical leadership has a positive and significant impact on individuals' voluntary environmental behavior, with cultural values education and social learning mechanisms playing important mediating roles. The research contributes theoretically to interdisciplinary approaches between educational science, organizational sociology, and sustainable management, while also providing practical implications for developing leadership strategies based on cultural values education in the context of learning society.

KEYWORDS: Cultural values education. Learning society. Ethical leadership. Civic behavior. Environmental orientation.

RESUMO: *Este artigo analisa o impacto da liderança ética no comportamento orientado ao meio ambiente nas organizações, a partir da perspectiva dos valores culturais, da educação e da aprendizagem em uma sociedade, com o objetivo de esclarecer os mecanismos pelos quais normas culturais éticas e ambientais são formadas, transmitidas e internalizadas nas organizações. O estudo contou com a participação de 680 colaboradores de organizações fora do setor educacional, representando diversas profissões. Os dados foram analisados por meio de técnicas estatísticas modernas para testar um modelo integrado entre liderança ética, educação em valores culturais, sociedade da aprendizagem e comportamento de cidadania orientado ao meio ambiente. Os resultados indicam que a liderança ética exerce um impacto positivo e significativo sobre o comportamento ambiental voluntário dos indivíduos, sendo que a educação em valores culturais e os mecanismos de aprendizagem social desempenham papéis mediadores relevantes. A pesquisa contribui teoricamente para abordagens interdisciplinares entre a ciência da educação, a sociologia organizacional e a gestão sustentável, além de oferecer implicações práticas para o desenvolvimento de estratégias de liderança baseadas na educação em valores culturais no contexto da sociedade da aprendizagem.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação em valores culturais. Sociedade da aprendizagem. Liderança ética. Comportamento cívico. Orientação ambiental.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo analiza el impacto del liderazgo ético en el comportamiento orientado al medio ambiente en las organizaciones, desde la perspectiva de los valores culturales, la educación y el aprendizaje en una sociedad, con el objetivo de esclarecer los mecanismos mediante los cuales las normas culturales éticas y ambientales se forman, se transmiten y se internalizan dentro de las organizaciones. El estudio incluyó a 680 empleados de organizaciones fuera del sector educativo, representando diversas profesiones. Los datos fueron analizados mediante técnicas estadísticas modernas para probar un modelo integrado entre liderazgo ético, educación en valores culturales, sociedad del aprendizaje y comportamiento de ciudadanía orientado al medio ambiente. Los resultados muestran que el liderazgo ético tiene un impacto positivo y significativo en el comportamiento ambiental*

voluntario de los individuos, mientras que la educación en valores culturales y los mecanismos de aprendizaje social desempeñan importantes roles mediadores. La investigación contribuye teóricamente a enfoques interdisciplinarios entre la ciencia de la educación, la sociología organizacional y la gestión sostenible, y también proporciona implicaciones prácticas para el desarrollo de estrategias de liderazgo basadas en la educación en valores culturales en el contexto de la sociedad del aprendizaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación en valores culturales. Sociedad del aprendizaje. Liderazgo ético. Comportamiento cívico. Orientación ambiental.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of climate change, ecological degradation, and the growing crisis of environmental values, organizations not only face the demand for improved economic efficiency but also experience increasing pressure to fulfill their environmental and social responsibilities. In this process, environmentally oriented civic behavior is seen as a form of voluntary behavior, going beyond formal job requirements, reflecting the degree to which individuals internalize sustainable values within the organization.

Boiral's (2009) research showed that voluntary environmental behaviors of employees play a key role in "greening" organizations, as they not only improve environmental performance but also contribute to the formation of a sustainable organizational culture. However, the question is not just how to promote these behaviors, but more fundamentally, through what educational and social mechanisms are environmental values formed and maintained within the organization.

In contemporary research, ethical leadership emerges as a powerful factor influencing the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of employees. Khuntia and Suar (2004) assert that ethical leadership is not simply adherence to moral norms, but also a process of setting an example, guiding values, and establishing behavioral norms through daily interactions within the organization. From this perspective, ethical leadership has the nature of an educational agent, contributing to the formation of shared values and standardizing expected behaviors. Subsequent studies have demonstrated that ethical leadership is positively correlated with many important organizational outcomes, including engagement, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Related to the environmental field, recent studies show that ethical leadership has the potential to promote environmentally-oriented organizational citizenship behavior through various pathways. Ullah et al. (2021) indicate that ethical leadership influences employees' environmental behavior by enhancing self-efficacy and psychological ownership, thereby promoting individual initiative and responsibility for environmental issues. Similarly, Amrutha and Geetha (2024) highlight the role of green empowerment as a crucial mediating mechanism, enabling employees to translate leaders' ethical orientations into specific environmental behaviors. These results suggest that ethical leadership does not impact directly and mechanically, but rather through learning, internalization, and value reconstruction processes at the individual level.

However, most current research still approaches the relationship between ethical leadership and environmental behavior primarily through the lens of governance and organizational psychology, while the aspects of cultural values education and learning society have not been systematically explored. From an educational science perspective, organizations can be viewed as an informal educational space where values, norms, and beliefs are transmitted through observation, imitation, and social interaction. Agarwal et al. (2022) argue that ethical leadership shapes the social learning environment by establishing accepted and encouraged behavioral norms, thereby influencing how individuals learn, share, and adjust their behavior within the organization. This approach opens up the possibility of explaining organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment as the result of a continuous values education process, rather than merely a reaction to policies or regulations.

Furthermore, cultural values education plays a particularly important role in explaining the sustainability of environmental behaviors. Organizational culture not only reflects what is declared, but also manifests itself through behaviors that are repeated, reinforced, and acknowledged in practice. Boiral's (2009) research shows that environmentally oriented organizational citizenship behaviors are only truly sustainable when they are linked to the organization's core cultural values, rather than relying solely on administrative controls. In this context, ethical leadership acts as a "value teacher", setting an example and facilitating the learning, discussion, and internalization of environmental values through daily social interactions.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that a significant research gap lies in integrating governance, education, and sociological approaches in explaining the impact of ethical leadership on environmentally oriented organizational citizenship behavior. Although An (2023) suggested dual pathways through which ethical leadership promotes sustainable employee behavior, placing these pathways within a theoretical framework that emphasizes cultural values education and social learning remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to build and test an integrated model in which ethical leadership is considered a central educational agent, influencing environmentally-oriented organizational citizenship behavior through cultural values education and social learning mechanisms.

By connecting theories of ethical leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, and educational science, the study not only contributes to expanding the theoretical foundation of the field of environmental organizational behavior but also provides a new approach to value-based management. This approach is particularly significant in the context of a learning society

and sustainable development becoming strategic directions for many countries and organizations worldwide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, research on ethical leadership has flourished and become a crucial approach in explaining individual behavior within organizations. At its foundation, Khuntia and Suar (2004), in their work, “A scale to assess ethical leadership of Indian private and public sector managers”, laid the conceptual and measurable groundwork for ethical leadership, emphasizing elements such as integrity, fairness, exemplary conduct, and social responsibility.

Building upon this foundation, numerous subsequent studies have demonstrated the role of ethical leadership in shaping the ethical climate, behavioral norms, and work attitudes of employees. The works of Wimbush et al. (1997), “An empirical examination of the multi-dimensionality of ethical climate in organizations”, and Parboteeah and Kapp (2008), “Ethical climates and workplace safety behaviors”, show that ethical leadership contributes to shaping an organizational environment where ethical values are reinforced through daily practices, thereby influencing behavior that exceeds minimum standards.

Based on this foundation, research on organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment has expanded its scope of analysis from traditional organizational citizenship behaviors to behaviors associated with sustainable development. The groundbreaking work of Boiral (2009), “Greening the corporation through organizational citizenship behaviors”, affirmed that voluntary environmental behaviors of employees play a central role in improving environmental performance and building a green organizational culture. This study not only clarifies the voluntary nature of environmentally oriented citizenship behavior but also emphasizes that purely administrative mechanisms are unlikely to create sustainable change without a foundation of shared values and norms.

In recent years, the relationship between leadership and environmentally oriented citizenship behavior has been explored more deeply through mediating and regulating models. Ullah et al. (2021), “Leadership Styles and Organizational Citizenship Behavior for the Environment: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficiency and Psychological Ownership”, shows that leaders can promote environmental behavior by enhancing employees’ self-confidence and sense of ownership.

This approach is reinforced by Amrutha and Geetha (2024), “Green Employee Empowerment for Environmental Organization Citizenship Behavior”, which affirms the role of green empowerment as a mechanism for transforming leadership orientation into concrete environmental behavior. These results clarify that the impact of leadership is not a direct, linear effect but operates through the cognitive, motivational, and learning processes of individuals.

Similarly, another research direction focuses on the relationship between ethical leadership and psychosocial outcomes such as engagement and commitment, which are considered prerequisites for civic behavior. Habiba et al. (2019), “The relationship between ethical leadership and work engagement”, as well as Gwamanda and Mahembe (2023), “The influence of ethical leadership and climate on employee work engagement”, have shown that ethical leadership creates a positive psychological environment where employees feel respected and treated fairly, thereby increasing their level of participation and willingness to contribute beyond their formal roles. From this perspective, environmentally oriented civic behavior can be understood as a concrete manifestation of engagement and the internalization of organizational values.

However, most existing studies still approach the relationship between ethical leadership and environmental behavior primarily from the theoretical framework of organizational psychology and human resource management. An (2023), “The dual paths that ethical leadership drives employees’ sustainability behaviors”, proposed two parallel approaches to the impact of ethical leadership on employees’ sustainability behavior, but the focus of the analysis remained on individual psychological variables rather than the process of value education and social learning within the organization.

Meanwhile, studies on environmental activity management, such as Phan et al. (2018), “Environmental activity management: Its use and impact on environmental performance”, or Su et al. (2024), “The association between ethical leadership and environmental activity management”, mainly emphasize management systems and empowerment, without clarifying the cultural and educational dimensions of these processes.

Another prominent limitation of previous studies is the view of organizations as purely administrative units, rather than as a learning social space where values are transmitted, reproduced, and reinforced through interaction. Agarwal et al. (2022), “Knowledge hide and seek: Role of ethical leadership, self-enhancement, and job involvement”, suggested that ethical leadership influences how individuals learn and share knowledge within organizations, thus demonstrating the potential of approaching ethical leadership as an informal educational agent.

However, this implication has not been fully developed in studies on environmentally oriented citizenship behavior.

From the overall review of the above studies, it can be identified that the research gap lies in the lack of integrated models connecting ethical leadership with environmentally oriented citizenship behavior from the perspective of cultural values education and learning social interaction. Current research has demonstrated the positive impact of ethical leadership, but it has not fully explained how environmental values are educated, internalized, and sustainably maintained within organizational life. Therefore, the next research direction needs to move beyond individual psychological models and towards an organizational approach as a learning ecosystem, where ethical leadership plays a central role in educating cultural values and creating sustainable and widespread environmentally-oriented civic behaviors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Regarding quantitative methods: the study used a questionnaire survey with a large sample size of 680 employees working in organizations outside the education sector, across various industries and organizational types. The large sample size was chosen to increase statistical reliability, generalizability, and to allow testing of complex relationships within the integrated model.

A convenient stratified sampling method was applied to ensure diversity in gender, age, years of service, and job position. The scales were inherited and adapted from reliable and validated international studies, including scales for ethical leadership, organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment, cultural values education, and a learning society. Before the official survey, a pilot survey was conducted to check the clarity of the questions and adjust the language to suit the research context.

The survey used a 5-point Likert scale, with 1. Strongly disagree/not good – 5. Strongly agree/very good. Quantitative data were analyzed using a rigorous process, including descriptive statistics, reliability testing using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales. Based on this, a linear structural model was used to test the research hypotheses and assess the mediating role of cultural values, education and learning society in the relationship between ethical leadership and environmentally oriented civic behavior.

In addition, qualitative methods were implemented through semi-structured interviews with a group of 15 survey participants, including experts, learning society leaders, and cultural education educators, coded from CG01 to CG15, to deepen the quantitative results. Qualitative data focused on exploring the perceptions, experiences, and ways in which workers learn, receive, and internalize environmental values through the exemplary behavior and interactions of leaders. Combining the two methods allows for mutual reinforcement and comparison, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness, reliability, and scientific value of the research conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Ethical leadership as an educational agent in the creation and transmission of organizational cultural values

Classical and contemporary studies agree that ethical leadership is not only a management style but also a mechanism for transmitting and educating values within an organization. Khuntia and Suar (2004), “A scale to assess ethical leadership of Indian private and public sector managers”, emphasize the role of leadership in setting an example and fairness in shaping behavioral norms.

Wimbush et al. (1997), “An empirical examination of the multi-dimensionality of ethical climate in organizations”, and Wolmarans (2014), “The effect of core ethical values on ethical leadership”, show that ethical values are recreated through daily leadership practices. Recent studies, such as Serang et al. (2024), “The role of ethical leadership on employees’ behaviors and commitment to the organization”, further affirm that ethical leadership is the foundation of internalizing cultural values within the organization. Table 1 presents the survey results on the role of ethical leadership in educating cultural values, reflecting the level of awareness and evaluation of employees regarding how leaders guide, transmit, and reinforce cultural values associated with environmental responsibility within the organization.

Table 1.

Evaluation of the role of ethical leadership in educating cultural values (n = 680)

No	Survey findings	1	2	3	4	5	Average score
1	Leaders set an example of ethical standards	39	79	141	219	202	3.69
2	Leadership decisions reflect fairness	35	85	150	215	195	3.66
3	Environmental values are consistently emphasized	45	78	143	213	201	3.66
4	Leaders encourage proper behavior	30	70	160	230	190	3.71
5	Ethical values are consistent throughout the organization	51	78	141	211	199	3.63
Overall average		40.00	78.00	147.00	217.60	197.40	3.67

Note. Results of the survey by the authors (2025).

The survey results in Table 1 show that the 680 respondents rated the role of ethical leadership in guiding and educating values as fairly good, with an overall average score of 3.67. The distribution of choices also clearly leaned towards positive, with level 4 averaging 217.60 choices and level 5 averaging 197.40 choices, significantly higher than level 1 (40.00) and level 2 (78.00). This trend indicates that the majority of workers recognize the substantial influence of leadership in establishing norms, shaping fairness, and promoting correct behavior.

At the indicator level, the “Leadership Encourages Right Behavior” indicator scored highest at 3.71 with 30, 70, 160, 230, and 190 selections respectively from level 1 to level 5. This result suggests that leadership’s encouraging and reinforcing behaviors are clearly and directly perceived in daily experience. This aligns with CG03’s statement that “I see the strongest impact when leaders promptly acknowledge and remind employees of ethical standards in specific situations”, and CG11’s emphasis on “consistent encouragement leads employees to self-regulate their behavior without pressure”.

The “Leadership Sets an Example of Ethical Standards” indicator scored 3.69 with 39, 79, 141, 219, and 202 selections, reflecting the highly valued role of leadership and its relatively widespread impact. CG06 noted that “employees learn fastest by observing leaders handling small but principled tasks”. Meanwhile, the two items “Leadership decisions reflect fairness” and “Environmental values are frequently emphasized” both scored 3.66, with distributions of 35, 85, 150, 215, 195 and 45, 78, 143, 213, 201 respectively.

The relatively high scores indicate a predominance of positive sentiment, but the significant proportion of neutrality suggests that the expression of fairness and emphasis on environmental values may not be consistent across departments or management situations. CG09 offered a more cautious interpretation, stating that “fairness is often evident in the

process, but sometimes the results leave employees wondering”, while CG14 argued that “the environment is mentioned, but when work is urgent, the environmental message is easily overshadowed”.

The indicator with the lowest score is “Consistent Ethical Values in the Organization”, at 3.63, with 51, 78, 141, 211, and 199 selections respectively. While this is still considered fairly good, the fact that the highest number of selections at level 1 among the five indicators, specifically 51, suggests that a group still perceives consistency as insufficient. From a management perspective, this often indicates a gap between messaging and execution, or a lack of synchronization between management levels. CG14’s comments on time-sensitive prioritization and CG09’s comments on perceived outcomes further explain why consistency is a point that needs strengthening to improve the quality of values education in the organization from fairly good to excellent.

The relationship between ethical leadership and environmentally oriented organizational citizenship behavior

Research on environmentally oriented citizenship behavior is clearly defined by Boiral (2009), “Greening the corporation through organizational citizenship behaviors”, which affirms that voluntary environmental behaviors are a pillar of sustainable development. Ullah et al. (2021), “Leadership Styles and Organizational Citizenship Behavior for the Environment”, and Liu and Yu (2023), “Green transformational leadership and employee organizational citizenship behavior for the environment”, show that leadership plays a role in activating these behaviors through socialization and social information processing. Table 2 summarizes the survey results on the environmentally oriented citizenship behavior of employees, thereby reflecting the level of presence and intensity of practicing voluntary environmental behaviors in the organizational context.

Table 2.

Assessment of the relationship between ethical leadership and environmentally oriented organizational citizenship behavior (n = 680)

No	Survey Content	1	2	3	4	5	Average score
1	Actively conserve resources and use resources appropriately	46	74	149	216	195	3.65
2	Willingness to participate in environmental activities	51	80	140	209	200	3.63
3	Remind colleagues to protect the environment	55	85	144	200	196	3.58
4	Propose green initiatives and become an active member	59	91	148	197	185	3.53
5	Voluntary compliance with environmental standards	41	70	159	219	191	3.66
Overall average		50.40	80.00	148.00	208.20	193.40	3.61

Note. Results of the survey by the authors (2025).

The survey results in Table 2 show that the environmentally-oriented citizenship behavior of the 680 respondents was rated as fairly good, with an overall average score of 3.61. The distribution of choices shows a predominantly positive trend, with the number of people choosing levels 4 and 5 having average values of 208.20 and 193.40 respectively, significantly higher than level 1 (50.40) and level 2 (80.00). This reflects that voluntary environmental behaviors have been relatively stable within the organization, although the level of proactiveness and spread is not yet truly uniform.

At the indicator level, the “Voluntary Compliance with Environmental Standards” indicator achieved the highest average score of 3.66, with 41, 70, 159, 219, and 191 selections corresponding to levels 1 to 5, respectively. This result shows that fundamental behaviors with low personal risk have been relatively well internalized. CG02 commented that “basic environmental regulations have now become work habits; few people still view them as external requirements”. Similarly, CG10 stated that “when standards are familiar, people voluntarily comply without close supervision”.

The indicator “Proactive Resource Conservation and Use of Resources Appropriately” scored 3.65, with 46, 74, 149, 216, and 195 selections. This score reflects a positive shift from compliance to proactive behavior among a segment of the workforce. However, the proportion of neutral choices remains significant, indicating that this behavior has not yet become a common reflex. CG05 shared that “many people are willing to save resources, but the level of proactiveness depends on the work pressure at any given time”.

Socially interactive behaviors such as “Reminding colleagues to protect the environment” only scored an average of 3.58, with 55, 85, 144, 200, and 196 selections

respectively. This shows that psychological barriers to interfering with others' behavior still exist. CG07 explained that "not everyone is comfortable reminding colleagues for fear of causing misunderstandings or affecting relationships", reflecting limitations in the psychologically safe environment within the organization.

Notably, the indicator "Propose green initiatives and become an active member" had the lowest average score of 3.53, with 59, 91, 148, 197, and 185 selections respectively. This result suggests that behaviors requiring creativity, commitment, and personal risk-taking are not yet fully encouraged. CG12 noted that "green ideas often require more time and resources, so not everyone is willing to propose them without clear safeguards". CG14 added that "when leaders don't truly support them, many choose to fulfill their responsibilities rather than propose something new".

The mediating role of cultural values education in the relationship between ethical leadership and environmentally oriented behavior

Studies by Agarwal et al. (2022), "Knowledge hide and seek", and Rahmatullah et al. (2022), "Improving organizational performance with organizational culture", show that organizational culture is a continuous space for values education. An (2023), "The dual paths that ethical leadership drives employees' sustainability behaviors", suggests that values education is the most indirect but sustainable path to shaping environmental behavior. Table 3 presents the survey results on cultural values education in organizations, reflecting the level of formation, repetition, and internalization of environmental values through shared cultural norms and practices.

Table 3.

Assessment of the mediating role of cultural values education in the relationship between ethical leadership and environmentally oriented behavior (n = 680)

No	Survey Content	1	2	3	4	5	Average score
1	Environmental values are widely shared and positively embraced.	44	86	146	204	200	3.63
2	Culture encourages shared community responsibility.	39	79	151	215	196	3.66
3	Values are repeated through practice and the formation of good habits.	51	91	140	197	201	3.60
4	Clear environmental norms are established and shaped in daily communication.	34	75	155	226	190	3.68
5	Environmental values become norms in communication and become central values	56	85	145	206	188	3.57
Overall average		44.80	83.20	147.40	209.60	195.00	3.63

Note. Results of the survey by the authors (2025).

The survey results in Table 3 show that education on cultural values related to the environment within the organization is rated as fairly good, with an overall average score of 3.63. The distribution of choices reflects a predominantly positive trend, with average scores of 209.60 and 195.00 for levels 4 and 5, significantly higher than level 1 (44.80) and level 2 (83.20). This indicates that environmental values are relatively present in organizational life, although the level of infiltration and stability is not uniform.

At the indicator level, the indicator “Clear and defined environmental norms in daily communication” achieved the highest average score of 3.68, with 34, 75, 155, 226, and 190 selections corresponding to levels 1 to 5. This result shows that norms are most clearly perceived when associated with daily communication and interaction. CG04 commented that “when environmental norms are mentioned in daily communication, employees easily understand and follow them”. Similarly, CG11 stated that “the way leaders and colleagues talk about the environment creates a sense of self-evidence”.

The indicator “Culture that encourages shared responsibility for the community” scored 3.66, with 39, 79, 151, 215, and 196 selections, reflecting a relatively positive perception of collective responsibility. CG06 shared that “many people consider environmental protection a collective effort rather than a single individual responsibility”. However, the neutrality level remains significant, indicating that the spirit of shared responsibility has not been uniformly translated into concrete actions.

The indicator “Environmental values are widely shared and positively embraced” has an average score of 3.63, with 44, 86, 146, 204, and 200 selections respectively. This result

implies that value sharing has occurred, but the level of engagement depends on the context and working group. CG09 noted that “environmental values are discussed quite frequently, but the level of engagement varies among departments”.

Two indicators with lower scores are “Values are repeated through practice and the formation of good habits” at 3.60 and “Environmental values become norms in communication and become central values” at 3.57. With distributions of 51, 91, 140, 197, 201 and 56, 85, 145, 206, 188 respectively, these results show that a gap still exists between value statements and the internalization process. CG13 states that “unless repeated through concrete action, values are unlikely to become sustainable habits”, while CG15 emphasizes that “the environment is not necessarily a central value when organizations prioritize short-term goals”.

Approaching the organization as a social learning space in shaping environmentally oriented behavior

Social learning approaches show that sustainable behavior is formed through social interaction and learning. Luong, V. N., et al. (2022), “Papel educacional das redes sociais na comunicação de políticas no Vietnã”, Gwamanda and Mahembe (2023), “The influence of ethical leadership and climate on employee work engagement”, and Amrutha and Geetha (2024), “Green employee empowerment”, point out the role of the learning environment in maintaining environmentally conscious behavior. Table 4 presents the survey results on learning societies in organizations, showing the level of learning through observation, interaction, and sharing related to environmentally conscious behaviors.

Table 4.

Evaluation of the organization as a learning society space in shaping environmentally conscious behavior (n = 680)

No	Survey Content	1	2	3	4	5	Average score
1	Learning through observation and leadership behavior as well as environmental habits	39	75	155	221	190	3.66
2	Sharing experiences and disseminating environmental knowledge	51	85	145	204	195	3.60
3	Direct open feedback and discussion and forum creation	45	90	150	199	196	3.60
4	Learning from colleagues through behavior and habits	35	70	160	229	186	3.68
5	Organizing and encouraging green learning through practical activities	54	85	145	201	195	3.59
Overall average		44.80	81.00	151.00	210.80	192.40	3.63

Note. Results of the survey by the authors (2025).

The survey results in Table 4 show that the learning society within the organization, related to environmentally oriented behaviors, is rated as fairly good, with an overall average score of 3.63. The distribution of choices reflects a predominantly positive trend, with average values of 210.80 and 192.40 for levels 4 and 5, significantly higher than level 1 (44.80) and level 2 (81.00). This indicates that social learning processes have been relatively well-established, although their depth and systematic nature remain limited.

At the indicator level, the content “Learning from colleagues through behavior and habits” achieved the highest average score of 3.68, with 35, 70, 160, 229, and 186 choices corresponding to levels 1 to 5. This result emphasizes the central role of peer interaction in spreading environmentally oriented behaviors. CG04 noted that “we learn how to work in an environmentally friendly way primarily through observing colleagues rather than through instruction manuals”. Similarly, CG11 stated that “good habits spread fastest within a work group”.

The indicator “Learning through observation and leadership behavior as well as environmental habits” scored an average of 3.66, with 39, 75, 155, 221, and 190 selections, indicating that leadership remains a crucial role model in a learning society. CG02 shared that “how leaders use resources or prioritize the environment directly influences how employees act”. CG09 added that “observing leaders helps us understand what is truly valued in the organization”.

Conversely, structured learning indicators such as “Sharing experiences and disseminating environmental knowledge” and “Direct open feedback and discussion and forum

formation” both scored an average of 3.60, with distributions of 51, 85, 145, 204, 195 and 45, 90, 150, 199, 196 respectively. This indicates that sharing and reflection activities still exist but have not yet become regular practices. CG07 noted that “sharing environmental experiences is still spontaneous and lacks formal forums”, while CG13 stated that “open discussion about the environment is not strongly encouraged in the context of work pressure”.

The indicator with the lowest score was “Organizations encourage green learning through practical activities” with 3.59, corresponding to 54, 85, 145, 201, and 195 selections. This result shows that the mechanisms supporting green learning from the organization’s side are not truly synchronized. CG15 commented that “organizations do encourage it, but the activities are fragmented and lack continuity”.

DISCUSSION

The research results show that the integrated model placing ethical leadership in relation to environmentally-oriented civic behavior through cultural values education and a learning society has a clear and consistent empirical basis. The data from the four survey panels all averaged between 3.61 and 3.67, reflecting a state that is “fairly stable but not yet optimal”, thus allowing for further discussion of the mechanisms of impact and the necessary conditions to move from acceptance to internalization and proactive action.

First, the results in Table 1 with an overall average score of 3.67 show that ethical leadership is perceived by employees as a truly influential cultural value education agent. The highest score belongs to the indicator “Leadership encourages correct behavior” (3.71), implying that directly reinforcing and guiding behaviors have a clearer impact than abstract value statements.

This is consistent with the argument of Khuntia and Suar (2004), Vu (2021) and Hoduc, et al. (2022) that ethical leadership is most effective through exemplary behavior and concrete feedback in a practical context. The assertions in CG03, “the strongest impact is when leaders promptly acknowledge and reiterate the norm in a specific situation”, and CG11, “consistent encouragement leads employees to self-regulate their behavior”, show that the educational nature of ethical leadership lies in situational context and repetition, rather than in a single normative message.

However, the indicator “Ethical values are consistent in the organization” scored the lowest in the group (3.63), indicating that a gap still exists between leadership orientation and employee experience across different units. CG09’s comments, “fairness is clear in the process but the results still leave employees wondering”, and CG14’s comments, “when work is urgent, environmental messaging is easily pushed back”, show that the consistency of values education is strongly influenced by operational pressures and short-term priorities. This complements the analyses of Wimbush et al. (1997), Wolmarans (2014) and Vu (2021) on the ethical climate, which emphasize that asymmetry between leadership and implementation levels can weaken the educational impact of ethical leadership.

Referring to Table 2, environmentally oriented citizen behavior scored an average of 3.61, reflecting a relatively stable level of practice but leaning more towards compliance than innovation. Indicators such as “Voluntary compliance with environmental standards” (3.66) and “Proactive resource conservation” (3.65) were significantly higher than “Proposing green initiatives and becoming an active member” (3.53). This model is consistent with Boiral (2009), which suggests that voluntary environmental behaviors tend to develop in the order of compliance, participation, and initiative. The statements in CG02, “basic environmental standards have now become habitual” and CG12 “green ideas require more time and resources, so not everyone is willing to propose them” show that the barrier lies not in perceived value but in psychological and institutional support. This reinforces the argument of Ullah et al. (2021) and Amrutha and Geetha (2024) suggest that promoting environmental behavior at a higher level requires mediating mechanisms, particularly empowerment and psychological safety.

The mediating role of cultural values education is clarified in Table 3 with an overall average score of 3.63. Notably, the indicator “Clear and shaped environmental norms in daily communication” scored the highest (3.68), indicating that environmental values are most effectively internalized when integrated into daily interactions. The comments of CG04, “norms mentioned in daily communication make it easy for employees to follow” and CG11 “the way of speaking makes it feel obvious”, clearly illustrate the mechanism of value socialization through language and practice. This result is consistent with Agarwal et al. (2022) and Hong (2022), emphasize the role of ethical leadership in shaping social learning spaces and sharing norms.

Conversely, the indicators “Values are repeated through practice and form good habits” (3.60) and “Environmental values become central values” (3.57) show that the value education process has not yet reached a high level of sustainability. CG13 states that “if not repeated

through concrete actions, values are difficult to become habits”, while CG15 suggests that “the environment is not necessarily a central value when the organization prioritizes short-term goals”. This shows that cultural value education requires time, persistence, and consistency from leaders to move from the level of awareness to the level of habit, as An (2023) analyzed regarding the indirect but sustainable path of ethical leadership.

Table 4 confirms the role of the learning society with an average score of 3.63, in which “Learning from peers through behavior and habits” achieved the highest score (3.68). The statements of CG04 “we learn through observing peers rather than documents” and CG11 “good habits spread fastest within the group” show that informal learning is the main channel for forming environmental behavior. However, indicators related to structured learning such as forums and formal sharing only achieved 3.60, while “Organizations encourage green learning through practical activities” had the lowest score (3.59). CG07 and CG15 both emphasize the spontaneous and fragmented nature of green learning activities, reflecting limitations in systematic approach. This is consistent with Gwamanda and Mahembe (2023), who argue that climate and learning structure determine the degree of value transformation into behavior.

From the discussions above, it is evident that ethical leadership has a clear impact on environmentally oriented citizenship behavior, but this impact is amplified or weakened depending on the level of cultural values education and the quality of the learning society within the organization. When ethical leadership is practiced as a continuous educational process, supported by daily communication, social learning, and empowerment mechanisms, environmental behaviors tend to be more widespread and sustainable. Conversely, without consistency and structured learning, the impact of leadership is likely to remain at the level of compliance, failing to develop into proactive and innovative citizenship behavior.

Conclusion

This study has provided compelling empirical evidence on the impact of ethical leadership on environmentally oriented citizenship behavior when approached from the perspective of cultural values, education and a learning society. Based on a survey of 680 employees combined with semi-structured interviews, the results show that ethical leadership not only directly influences voluntary environmental behavior but also plays a crucial mediating role through the creation of cultural values and the promotion of social learning processes within the organization.

Firstly, the results confirm that ethical leadership is primarily an informal educational agent, capable of guiding, transmitting, and reinforcing cultural values associated with

environmental responsibility. Setting an example, ensuring fairness, and consistency in leadership behavior help environmental values transcend mere declarations, becoming shared norms of conduct within the organization.

Secondly, environmentally oriented citizenship behavior is recorded at a fairly stable level, but mainly focuses on basic compliance and participation behaviors, while proactive and innovative behaviors remain limited. This highlights the crucial role of a safe psychological environment and learning support mechanisms in encouraging individuals to overcome risks to act for the environment.

Thirdly, the research clarifies that cultural values education and a learning society are not merely contexts, but core mediating mechanisms explaining why and how ethical leadership can generate sustainable environmental behaviors. When organizations function as learning spaces where values are repeated through practice, reinforced through interaction, and collectively reflected upon, environmentally oriented citizenship behavior tends to be more pervasive and enduring.

Theoretically, the research contributes to expanding models of ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior by integrating educational and learning society approaches, thereby overcoming the limitations of previous studies that focused on individual psychology or governance tools. In practical terms, the findings suggest that organizations need to invest in developing leaders as “value educators”, while simultaneously building a supportive learning culture and structures, if they want to genuinely and sustainably promote environmentally sound behavior. These conclusions provide important groundwork for further research on sustainable governance based on values education within the context of a contemporary learning society.

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