

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPECIFIC SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEES' PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR IN HOSPITALITY FIRMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: Leaders can influence the prosocial behaviour of employees through their behaviour and action. The study investigated the effect of environmentally specific servant leadership (ESSL) on employees' voluntary pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) in hospitality firms. In addition, the study examined the mediating role of harmonious environmental passion (HEP) in the relationship between ESSL and PEB. The study adopted the quantitative research design and the cross-sectional survey method was adopted for data collection. The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS SEM) with Smart-PLS 3.2.8 software was used for data analysis. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between ESSL and employees' PEB. The mediating effect of HEP is significant. Theoretical, empirical and managerial implications are discussed.

Key words: environmentally specific servant leadership, employees, voluntary, pro-environmental behaviour, harmonious environmental passion, hospitality

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges such as global warming, pollution, loss of biodiversity, natural resource depletion, ozone layer depletion, deforestation and waste disposal have become globally recognised problems (Robertson and Barling, 2013; Ferreira and Barbi, 2016). Climate change is one of the existential threats faced by the world and the first three top global risks by likelihood are extreme weather, climate action failure and human environmental damage (World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report, 2021). Business and human activities are central to the debate on global environmental challenges (Singh and Singh, 2017). Although, environmental problems such as climate change can be caused by natural variation or human activity, the conclusion of scientists is that climate change is mainly anthropogenic ((Robertson and Barling, 2013). There is now a 100% consensus among scientists on anthropogenic global warming and human activities have contributed a significant part of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (Powell, 2019). The hospitality industry is a major economic sector in most countries with significant contribution to employment and economic growth (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020). However, the hospitality industry also negatively affects the environment through over consumption of natural resources, pollution and solid and liquid waste (Rosa and Silva, 2017; Alipour et al., 2019). Despite the fact that businesses contribute significantly to environmental degradation, they can also enhance environmental preservation through their activities (Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Robertson and Barling, 2017). Positive changes in individual human behaviour towards pro-environmental actions and behaviour are highly necessary to manage environmental challenges and achieve sustainable tourism (Williamson et al., 2018; Balunde et al., 2019). According to Steg and Vlek (2009), pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) refers to actions performed in private or public domains with the aim of avoiding harm or safeguarding the environment. In the context of employees, PEB refers to the behaviour engaged by employees that is aligned to environmental sustainability (Wu et al., 2019). Employees are a major actor in the hospitality industry and their involvement is important to environmentally sustainable processes and operations (Ones and Dilchert, 2012; Robertson and Carleton, 2017; Jahanshahi et al., 2021).

Businesses that intend to improve their environmental performance must encourage employees to engage in PEB and this engagement can be voluntary (organizational citizenship behaviours for the environment (OCBE)) and/or involuntary (work-task-related PEB (Jiang et al., 2019). Involuntary PEB is formally mandated by organisations to enable employees perform their work task in an environmentally friendly way (Wu et al., 2019). Voluntary PEB is the extent to which employees engage in environmentally friendly behaviours beyond the realm of their required work tasks. Voluntary PEB is discretionary and done beyond the formal reward and performance-evaluation system of the organisation (Robertson and Barling, 2017; Alzaidi and Iyanna, 2021). The effectiveness of an organisation's sustainability practices depends on the support and contribution of employees especially the discretionary or voluntary behaviour that is beyond the formal performance evaluation system (Robertson and Carleton, 2017; Xiao et al., 2020; Jahanshahi et al., 2021).

Zientara and Zamojska (2018) remark that involuntary PEB, although important is not enough to reduce environmental footprint. Corporate greening stems from the extra role and the personal sense of PEB of employees. It is difficult for an organisation to mandate volunteerism and impossible to obtain genuine commitment of employees to the environment by bureaucratic fiat (Jiang et al., 2019). Therefore, this study focuses on employees' voluntary PEB.

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Leadership has a major role in promotion employees' PEB. Leaders are role models and can influence the prosocial behaviour of employees through their behaviour and action (Ture and Ganesh, 2018; Han et al., 2019). Servant leadership (SL) is a leadership style that emphasises ethics and moral values in order to develop followers (Eva et al., 2019). Traditionally, researchers have examined the effect of different leadership styles (i.e. transformational and servant leadership) across different contexts. However, the new paradigm is the use of target specific leadership styles to predict specific outcomes (Li et al., 2020). The integration of servant leadership with the environment is termed environmentally specific servant leadership (ESSL). Based on the view that the motivation of a servant leader is to serve stakeholders, the motivation for ESSL is the development of environmental values in employees in order to sustain the community and environment (Afsar et al., 2018; Siddiquei et al., 2021). In addition, research on the mechanisms through which environmentally specific leadership can affect employees' voluntary PEB is sparse (Robertson and Carleton, 2013). In building a model linking ESSL to employees' voluntary PEB, this study draws on environmental passion. Theoretical arguments suggest that employees tend to be passionate about issues that they consider socially and environmentally important and servant leaders can invoke emotion and spark passion in followers (Robertson and Barling, 2013; Afsar et al., 2016). Passion can be categorised into two: obsessive and harmonious. While obsessive passion is often associated with undesired outcomes, harmonious passion motivates and contributes positively to individual and organisational outcomes (Ng et al., 2019). This study will focus on the effect of harmonious environmental passion (HEP). Afsar et al. (2016) and Saleem et al. (2021) remark that employees with HEP tend to engage in environmental protection because of their preference and not because of external pressures or results-oriented rewards.

The theorisation of this study is based on the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978), which argues that leaders develop strong bonds with employees and make employees feel like partners in an organisation. Employees identify themselves as belonging to a group in an organisation and are likely to engage in behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation (Tajfel, 1978). The study has two objectives (1) to examine the effect of ESSL on employees' voluntary PEB (2) to investigate the mediating effect of HEP in the relationship between ESSP and PEB. Therefore, this study will develop and test of model that incorporates HEP as a mediator in the relationship between ESSP and PEB. The study will be significant in the following ways. First, research on PEB has often focused on the organisation with scant attention paid to employee behaviour (Xiao et al., 2020). Second, theoretical studies on the mediating effect of HEP in the relationship between ESSL and PEB are scarce (Ng et al., 2019). Studies such as Li et al. (2020) and Peng et al. (2020) have linked passion to environmentally specific transformational leadership. However, while transformational leadership focuses on inspiring followers to work towards the achievement of a common goal, a servant leader focuses on supporting and developing individuals within an organisation (Allen et al., 2016). This study will contribute to the research on the role of ESSL in promoting employees' voluntary PEB with the goal of reducing the negative environmental footprint of hospitality firms and ensuring sustainable tourism. The study is structured as follows. Section two will review the literature and develop hypotheses. Sections three, four, five and six will focus on the research methodology, results, discussion and conclusion respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

1. Environmentally specific servant leadership (ESSL)

Servant leadership (SL) is a community-oriented leadership style that focuses on ethics and moral values aimed at elevating followers so that they can better themselves in their everyday lives (Sendjaya and Cooper, 2011; Zhang et al., 2021). Greenleaf (1977: 14) remarks that the process of SL starts with "a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first". The features of servant leadership include empowering, emotional healing, putting subordinates first, helping subordinates to succeed, behaving ethically, conceptual skills and creating value for the community (Liden et al., 2008). While the motivation for servant leadership is community service, the integration of servant leadership with the environment is termed ESSL. The focus of ESSL is on socially responsible behaviour, community stewardship and environmental protection. ESSL refers to the leadership provided to employees with the goal of serving green-related interests (Tuan, 2020; Siddiquei et al., 2021).

2. Pro environmental behaviour (PEB)

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002: 240) define PEB as "behaviours that consciously seeks to minimise the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world". PEB refers to the behaviour that an individual undertakes to reduce negative environmental impact with a clear purpose of changing the environment (Li et al., 2019). PEB can be voluntary (organizational citizenship behaviours for the environment (OCBE)) and/or involuntary (work-task-related pro-environmental behaviour). While involuntary PEB is formally mandated by organisations, voluntary PEB is discretionary (Wu et al., 2019).

3. Harmonious environmental passion (HEP)

Passion is a strong inclination of an individual to invest effort, time and money in an activity that he or she views as important or loves (Vallerand, 2012). The dualistic model of passion differentiates between obsessive and harmonious passion. Obsessive passion describes a situation in which an individual is compelled to engage in certain activity because of certain contingencies such as to gain social acceptance and this often leads to psychological distress. Harmonious passion is associated with positive effect and psychological wellbeing because it is the outcome of an autonomous internalisation activity into an individual's identity (Vallerand, 2012). Harmonious passion is associated with the freedom of an individual to perform an activity rather than been forced (Ng et al., 2019; Peng et al., 2020). Robertson and Barling (2013) linked harmonious passion to the environment and this is termed as harmonious passion for the environment or harmonious environmental passion (HEP). Robertson and Barling, 2013: 180) define HEP as "a positive emotion that results in an individual wanting to engage in PEB"

4. Theoretical framework

Eva et al. (2019) point out that the theoretical frameworks for empirical studies on servant leadership mainly draw from social-based theories. The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) follows the norm of reciprocity in which servant leaders focus on the development of followers and followers reciprocate the positive behaviour of the leader with positive behaviours of their own. Based on the argument by Greenleaf (1991) that servant leaders tend to transform followers into servant leaders themselves, researchers have examined the transforming effects of servant leaders on changing the mindsets and behaviours of followers. Therefore, servant leadership can be linked to the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) that followers emulate the behaviour of leaders because they see the leader as a credible role model. In addition, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978) is related to servant leadership in organisations on the basis that servant leaders develop strong bonds with employees and make employees feel like partners in the organisation. Employees identify themselves as belonging to a group in an organisation and are likely to engage in behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation. The SIT has often been used as the theoretical foundation for studies on ESSL and employee behaviour (Tuan, 2019; Sidequel et al., 2021). The SIT provides a strong link between environmental leadership and PEB because the higher an individual's identification with a pro-environmental group, the higher the readiness to participate in pro-environmental action. Because an environmental specific servant leader leads with the intention and motivation to develop followers to achieve environmental goals, employees are likely to identify themselves with a servant leader and consider him/her a member of a team. Thus, an environmental specific servant leader will be able to shape employees' green self-identity and subsequent PEB (Schulte et al., 2020; Sidequel et al., 2021)

5. ESSL and employees' voluntary PEB

Sidequel et al. (2021) point out that a servant leader focuses on social contribution and society welfare and environmentally specific servant leaders display developmental and altruistic values that are useful in sustainable organisations. The study by Sidequel et al. (2021) investigate the effect of team ESSL on individual PEB.

Data was collected from forty-two project based sustainable organisations in China. The results indicate that team ESSL positively impacts on the PEB of team members. Tuan (2019) examines the relationship between ESSL and employees' voluntary PEB. The study focused on employees working in resort hotels in Vietnam and the results show that ESSL has a significant positive relationship with PEB. Ying et al. (2020) investigate the effect of servant leadership on employees' voluntary green behaviour in power sector firms in Pakistan. Data was collected from 315 subordinates and supervisors and the results indicate a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and employees voluntary green behaviour. Tuan (2019) remarks that employees are likely to develop positive affective responses toward environmental conservation if they perceive and observe the green behaviour of environmentally specific servant leaders. Consequently, it is hypothesised:

Hypothesis one: There is a significant positive relationship between ESSL and employees' voluntary PEB

6. ESSL and HEP

Environmentally specific leadership can stimulate employees' harmonious passion for the environment when leaders provide a vision about the importance of environmental sustainability in the workplace (Ng et al., 2019). Robertson and Barling (2013) find a significant positive relationship between environmental specific transformational leadership and employees' HEP. Leaders can inspire HEP in employees by inspiring employees to put the collective good above their own needs and motivating them to behave in an environmentally friendly way (Afsar et al., 2016). It is hypothesised that

Hypothesis two: There is a significant positive relationship between ESSL and employees' HEP

7. HEP and PEB

Afsar et al. (2016) remark that HEP is a moral behaviour that gives the inspiration to make a difference by contributing to environmental protection and is an experience that is filled with energy. Robertson and Barling (2013) and Afsar et al. (2016) find that employee's HEP positively affects their PEB. HEP is linked to positive emotions such as happiness, joy, satisfaction and spiritual wellbeing and such factors positively affect the willingness to engage in PEB (Afsar et al., 2016). It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis three: There is a significant positive relationship between HEP and employees' voluntary PEB

8. Mediating effect of HEP in the relationship between ESSL and PEB

Li et al. (2021) show that HEP is a mechanism through with environmentally specific transformational leadership can affect PEB. Ng et al. (2019) find that HEP partially mediates the relationship between green work climate and PEB. An individual that is passionate about the environment will want to be involved in practices that will lead to environmental protection (Robertson and Barling, 2013). Therefore, HEP can be a mechanism through which ESSL can affect employees' PEB. It is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis four: HEP mediates the relationship between ESSL and employees' voluntary PEB

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilised the quantitative research design. The cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data from the respondents. The survey focused on hotel employees. The sample population was all employees working for all hotels in South Africa. The participating hotels were developed by the researcher from the websites of the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa. The simple random sampling method was used to select hotels graded as three, four and five star by the the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa. Upscale hotels are more likely to be engaged in environmental practices

compared to small hotels. The survey was conducted in Pretoria and Johannesburg in the Gauteng Province and Polokwane, Polokwane and Bela- Bela in the Limpopo Province. The Gauteng Province is the economic hub of South Africa and many hotels are located in the Province. The two towns in Limpopo province have a sizeable number of hotels. The management of selected hotel were contacted through phone calls and emails to solicit their participation.

After, the questionnaire depicting the purpose of the study and a covering letter were sent to the manager of the hotels that agreed to participate in the survey. Three trained field agent assisted in the collection and the self-administered questionnaire method was used for data collection from the employees of participating hotels. The emails and phone numbers of the participants were obtained during questionnaire distribution and reminders were sent weekly to request for the completion of questionnaire. If a questionnaire is not completed after two months, it is regarded as non-response. The questionnaire contained a cover letter that explained the aim of the study and anonymity and confidentiality. Two experts in the field of sustainability and strategy also assisted to validate the questionnaire and a pilot study was conducted to improve the face and content validity. The survey was conducted between July 2020 and February 2021. The questionnaire was divided into four sections demographic variables, ESSL, PEB and HEP. The study employed the Partial Least Square Structural Equation modelling for analysis. The Cronbach’s alpha was used as a measure of reliability.

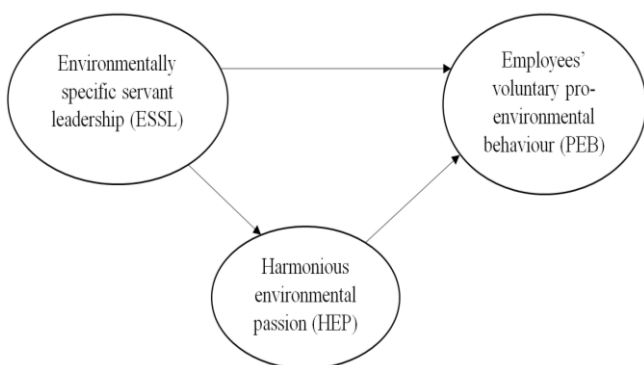


Figure 1. Depicts the conceptual model for the study

Table 1. Biographical details of the respondents

Biographical details of the respondents	Frequency (N=382)
Gender of the respondents	
Male	167
Female	215
Age of the respondents	
21-30 years	148
31-40 years	175
41-50 years	50
51-60 years	9
Level of qualification of the respondents	
Matric	158
Post Matric	224
Experience of the respondents in the hospitality industry	
Less than five years	142
More than five years	240

Measures:

ESSL: Twelve questions adapted from the servant leadership questionnaire by Liden et al. (2008) were used to measure employees’ perception of the ESSL of owner/manager. All the questions were anchored on the five point Likert scale with “1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree”. **PEB:** Ten questions adapted from Robertson and Barling (2017) was used to measure employees’ PEB. All the questions were anchored on the five point Likert scale with “1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree”. **HEP:** Ten questions adopted from environmental passion scale by Robertson and Barling (2013) were used to measure HEP. All the questions were anchored on the five point Likert scale with “1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Response rate and biographical characteristics

Sixty hotels were contacted by the researcher and forty-two agreed to participate in the survey. Twenty questionnaires were distributed per hotel. The total number of employees working in the forty-two hotels were one thousand six hundred and eighty according to the contacted managers. The researcher decided to sample half of the number of employees through the convenience sampling method because of cost and time constraints. Therefore, eight hundred and forty questionnaires were sent out to the participants and 382 questionnaires were returned and found usable. Some questionnaires were not usable because the respondents did not complete all the important parts. The “rule of ten” was used to determine the appropriate minimum sample size to test the model. According to Hair et al. (2011), when using PLS SEM to test a model, the minimum sample size should be ten times the highest number of structural paths directed at the latent construct at a time. In this study, there are 32 question items (appendix one) and so a minimum of 320 respondents will be needed. The biographical details of survey participants are presented in Table 1. The data analysis shows that the respondents are mostly females, in the 31-40 age group with Matric qualification and with more than five years of experience in the hospitality industry.

2. Evaluation of PLS SEM

The evaluation of PLS SEM includes the measurement and structural models.

2.1 Measurement model

Hair et al. (2019) point out that the evaluation of the measurement model should include the examination of factor loadings (>0.708), composite reliability (>0.790), Cronbach’s alpha (> 0.700) and the AVE (>0.500). Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model. The values of the Cronbach’s alphas are greater than 0.700, the values of composite reliability range from 0.936 to 0.952 and the values of AVE from 0.626 to 0.646. This implies an acceptable level of construct validity. The AVEs ranged between 0.626 and 0.646 suggesting a good convergent validity of the scales. The

discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell and Larcker criteria (Hair et al., 2019). The results as depicted by table 3 showed that the square roots of AVEs are depicted on the diagonals are greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients within the constructs. It can be concluded that the measurement model is satisfactory.

Table 2. The measurement model

Construct	Measurement items	Mean and standard deviation	Item loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Environmentally specific servant leadership (ESSL)		3.55 1.04		0.812	0.952	0.626
My leader emphasises the importance of contributing to the environmental improvement.	ESSL1		0.804			
I am encouraged by my leader to get involved and volunteer for environmental activities	ESSL2		0.744			
My manager cares about my eco-initiatives	ESSL3		0.801			
My manager cares about the environment	ESSL4		0.825			
My manager emphasises the importance of protecting the environment	ESSL5		0.742			
My manager is always interested in initiatives that help to protect the environment	ESSL6		0.781			
My manager has a thorough understanding of the environmental challenges faced by the world	ESSL7		0.788			
My manager gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about how to manage environmental challenges	ESSL8		0.747			
My manager is interested in making sure that our firm's environmental goals are achieved	ESSL9		0.805			
Manager provides information on the way to manage environmental challenges	ESSL10		0.777			
My manager holds high environmental standards	ESSL11		0.849			
My manager will not sacrifice environmental interests in order to achieve financial success	ESSL12		0.822			
Employees pro-environmental behaviour (PEB)		3.86 1.01		0.788	0.947	0.639
I recycle at work when it is possible.	PEB1		0.828			
At work, I provide help to my co-workers to be environmentally friendly	PEB2		0.801			
At work, I make sure that I conserve the amount of materials that I use.	PEB3		0.769			
At work, I encourage my co-workers to turn off work-related equipment when they are not in use.	PEB4		0.817			
At work, I promote environmentally friendly behaviours amongst my colleagues.	PEB5		0.829			
I persuade my manager to purchase environmentally friendly products for work purposes.	PEB6		0.808			
I always make sure that I reduce the amount of energy that I use at work	PEB7		0.826			
At work, I discuss with my manager how my organisation can become more environmentally friendly.	PEB8		0.768			
I encourage my organization to support an environmental charity. (deleted)	PEB9		0.308			
I always encourage my organization to reduce its environmental impact.	PEB10		0.802			
Harmonious environmental passion (HEP)		4.08 1.07				
I am passionate about the environment	HEP1		0.882	0.808	0.936	0.646
I enjoy practicing environmentally friendly behaviours.	HEP2		0.862			
I enjoy engaging in environmentally friendly behaviours	HEP3		0.791			
I take pride in helping the environment	HEP4		0.801			
I enthusiastically discuss environmental issues with others.	HEP5		0.740			
I get pleasure from taking care of the environment.	HEP6		0.808			
I passionately encourage others to be more environmentally responsible.	HEP7		0.758			
I am a volunteered member of an environmental group. (deleted)	HEP8		0.336			
I have voluntarily donated time or money to help the environment in some way (deleted)	HEP9		0.360			
I feel strongly about my environmental values.	HEP10		0.775			

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Construct	ESSL	PEB	HEP
ESSL	0.791		
PEB	0.588	0.799	
HEP	0.614	0.577	0.803

Diagonals in bold signify the square root of the AVE while the other figures depict the correlations

Table 4. Path coefficient and T-statistics (*P<0.01)

Hypothesised path	Path coefficient	T-statistics	Decision
H1 ESSL→PEB	0.752	9.802 *	Supported
H2 EL→HEP	0.661	7.408*	Supported
H3 HEO-PEB	0.700	8.140*	Supported
H4 ESSL→HEP→PEB	0.471	7.512*	Supported

2.2. Structural model

To assess the structural model, the common method bias, the goodness of fit, the R^2 , the Q^2 and the effect size were evaluated in line with the requirements of Hair et al. (2019). The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to test the existence of common method bias (CMB). The VIFs for the three constructs in the models are 1.48, 1.68 and 2.15 (all below 3.3) which is suggestive of the absence of CMD. The coefficient of determination R^2 value of 0.51 can be considered as moderate. Henseler et al. (2016) point out that when using PLS SEM, R^2 value of 0.75 is regarded as substantial, value of 0.50 moderate and 0.26 weak. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the goodness of fit value (GOF) ranges from 0 to 1. The GOF value of 0.516 suggests that the model has a strong predictive power.

The Q^2 was used to measure the predictive relevance of the model and the value of 0.408 (>0) suggests that the model has sufficient predictive power. The effect size variables are 0.328, 0.341 and 0.300 are indicative of a moderate effect of the exogenous latent constructs. The Standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.03 suggests a good model fit. The summary of the results of the path coefficients and T-statistics are presented in Table 4. The results (β 0.752, T 9.802, $p < 0.01$) show a significant positive relationship between ESSL and employees' PEB. Hypothesis one of the study is supported. The results (β 0.661, T 7.408, $p < 0.01$) depict a significant positive relationship between ESL and HEP. Hypothesis two is supported. The results (β 0.700, T 8.140, $p < 0.01$) show a significant positive relationship between HEP and employees' PEB. Hypothesis three of the study is supported. The results of the mediation (β 0.471, T 7.512, $p < 0.01$) show that HEP mediates the relationship between ESSL and PEB. Hypothesis four of the study is supported.

The study investigated the effect of ESSL on employees' PEB. In addition, the study examined the mediating effect of HEP in the relationship between ESSL and PEB. Four hypotheses were developed. The results indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between ESSL and PEB. Hypothesis one of the study is supported. The results suggest that employees are likely to develop positive affective responses toward environmental conservation if they perceive and observe the green behaviour of environmentally specific servant leaders. The results are consistent with the findings of previous empirical studies. Sidequel et al. (2021) investigate the effect of team ESSL on individual PEB in project based sustainable organisations in China. The results of indicate that team ESSL positively impacts on the PEB of team members. Taan (2019) examine the relationship between ESSL and employees voluntary PEB in Vietnam.

The results show that ESSL has a significant positive relationship with PEB. Ying et al. (2020) also finds a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and employees voluntary green behaviour. The findings of the study indicate a significant positive relationship between ESSL and HEP. Hypothesis two of the study is supported. The findings suggests that environmentally specific servant leaders by inspiring employees to put the collective good above their own needs can inspire harmonious passion for the environment. Robertson and Barling (2013) also find that environmental specific transformational leadership predict employees' harmonious passion for the environment.

The findings of the study indicate a significant positive relationship between HEP and PEB. Hypothesis three of the study is supported. The results suggest that HEP is a moral behaviour that gives the inspiration to make a difference by contributing to environmental protection HEP is linked to positive emotions such as happiness, joy, satisfaction and spiritual wellbeing and such factors positively affect the willingness to engage in PEB. Li et al. (2020) find that subordinates' HEP harmonious environmental passion will influence their workplace PEB. The findings indicate that HEP mediates the relationship between ESSL and PEB. Hypothesis four of the study is supported. The findings suggest that HEP is a mechanism through which ESSL can affect PEB. An individual that is passionate about the environment will want to be involved in practices that will lead to environmental protection. Li et al. (2021) find that HEP that mediates the relationship between environmentally specific transformational leadership and employees' PEB. Ng et al. (2019) find that HEP mediates the relationship between green work climate and PEB.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally, researchers have examined the effect of different leadership styles across different contexts, however, the new paradigm is the use of target specific leadership style to predict specific outcomes. The study developed and tested of model that introduces HEP as a mediator in the relationship between ESSP and PEB. The findings indicated that ESSL has a significant positive effect on employees PEB. In addition, the findings showed that ESSL positively impacts on HEP. Furthermore, HEP positively affects PEB and mediates the relationship between ESSL and PEB. The findings can be linked to the Social Identity Theory. Environmentally specific servant leaders influence employees self-identity through their role based identities and encourage employees to display pro-environmental behaviour.

Theoretically, the study shows that HEP is a mechanism through which ESSL can affect PEB. Other studies that have focused on the mediating effect of HEP have linked transformational leadership to PEB. Empirically, the study contributes to the literature on the effect of specific leadership styles on employees' PEB. The findings have some managerial implications. First, the study confirms the importance of ESSL as a driver of PEB. Therefore, it is important for the managers/owners of hospitality firms to use ESSL approach to develop employees' PEB.

Thus, the provision of training, development workshops and succession planning on ESSL by the management of hospitality are important. Some universities in South Africa has developed sustainability units. There is the need for such universities to collaborate with hospitality firms to train them on sustainability-oriented leadership. Organisations that support the hospitality business in South Africa such as the Federated Hospital Association of South Africa and government agencies that support the environment in South Africa (i.e. Department of Environmental Affairs) can also help to develop awareness campaign on how to promote pro-environmental behaviour in the hospitality business.

The study finds that HEP is a mechanism through which ESSL can affect PEB. Management must foster an environment that support the HEP of employees. This can be done through engagement with employees so that they understand that financial, social and environmental issues are important to the organisation. Employees can also build sustainability into their personal lives through their use of energy and water at home and work and by choosing to carpool to work. The study has some limitations and proposes some areas for further study. First, the study did not use the more objective peer or supervisor rating but respondents' self-reported view of their PEB. This can lead to social desirability bias. Therefore, other studies can adopt the more objective or peer rating of employees' PEB. Second, the survey was cross-sectional in nature. Therefore, to improve causality, a longitudinal survey can be used.

Third, the ESSL scale was developed from the general servant leadership scale. Other studies can develop and validate an ESSL scale that can be used in studies of environmentally specific leadership research. Fourth the survey was done on firms in one industry and one country. To improve the generalisability of the findings, further studies can include other industries in other countries. Fifth, the model tested in this study did not include moderating variables. Further research can examine the moderating effect of gender and age of the respondents. In addition, the effect of ESSL on the sustainable performance of hospital firms can be examined by other studies.

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