

**Research Article**

## **Exploring the Contribution of Green Innovative Work Behavior to Organizational Sustainability**

**Olivia Winda Ony Panjaitan**

Universitas Palangkaraya, Indonesia

corresponding author: [windaony84@gmail.com](mailto:windaony84@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

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Green Innovative Work Behavior (GIWB) has emerged as a critical behavioral dimension that supports the intersection between individual creativity and environmental sustainability within organizational contexts. This study explores how employees proactive and voluntary engagement in green innovation contributes to broader organizational sustainability goals. Employing a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 employees from diverse industries in Indonesia. Thematic analysis revealed three core themes: personal environmental values as intrinsic drivers, the enabling role of organizational support and leadership, and the manifestation of GIWB through various workplace initiatives. Employees often initiated green behaviors not as part of formal responsibilities, but from internal motivations aligned with ecological values. Moreover, a supportive organizational climate characterized by leadership role-modeling and green human resource practices, was found to reinforce the emergence and consistency of GIWB. These behaviors included reducing material waste, optimizing processes to save energy, and digitalizing work systems to minimize environmental impact. The findings suggest that GIWB not only enhances organizational innovation but also embeds sustainability into everyday work practices. This research contributes to the growing literature on sustainable work behavior by providing empirical evidence on the antecedents and expressions of GIWB in developing country contexts. Practical implications include the need for organizations to nurture a green-supportive culture and provide structural mechanisms that encourage eco-innovation. In doing so, organizations can leverage employees' creativity to achieve long-term environmental and operational performance. Further studies are recommended to investigate GIWB across various sectors and its longitudinal effects on corporate sustainability.

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### **Introduction**

The growing urgency of global environmental challenges has compelled organizations to incorporate sustainability into their innovation strategies. Traditionally, innovative work behavior (IWB) has been defined as the generation, promotion, and

implementation of novel ideas by employees within their roles (de Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Green Innovative Work Behavior (GIWB) extends this concept by embedding ecological awareness into innovative efforts. GIWB entails proactive and voluntary employee actions aimed at developing and

applying innovative solutions that contribute to environmental preservation (Chen & Zhang, 2024).

GIWB has gained prominence as a key enabler of corporate environmental innovation and organizational sustainability. For example, GIWB is seen as a critical driver of green innovation in firms (Chen & Zhang, 2024), enhancing both individual engagement and broader organizational outcomes. Yan et al. (2024) highlight that GIWB significantly contributes to employee involvement, competitive advantage, and long-term sustainable performance.

Organizational support mechanisms, particularly those embedded within Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices, play a pivotal role in fostering Green Innovative Work Behavior (GIWB) across various sectors. GHRM serves as a strategic tool through which organizations can institutionalize environmental values and translate them into daily operations and employee practices. Empirical studies have consistently shown that GHRM strategies—such as environmentally conscious recruitment, green training programs, performance appraisals aligned with sustainability goals, and eco-incentive reward systems—positively influence employees' inclination to engage in GIWB (Khan et al., 2025; Jackson et al., 2011; Jabbour, 2013). These practices not only raise awareness of environmental issues but also embed sustainability expectations into the very fabric of employee roles and responsibilities.

The role of leadership is no less critical in shaping and sustaining GIWB. Leadership styles such as green leadership and servant leadership have been recognized for their ability to nurture an environment where employees feel psychologically safe to express their ideas, take initiative, and challenge the status quo in pursuit of environmental innovation (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Such leaders often lead by example, engaging directly in sustainability initiatives and signaling organizational commitment to environmental goals. This leadership modeling enhances employees' environmental commitment, strengthens their creative self-efficacy, and fosters a shared sense of purpose related to ecological responsibility. In this context, leadership does not merely guide behavior, but actively shapes the cognitive and emotional foundations that support GIWB, making it an integral component of a green organizational culture.

GHRM and supportive leadership create a synergistic effect, amplifying the potential of employees to contribute to organizational sustainability through innovation. As the pressures of climate change and environmental accountability increase, investing in these organizational mechanisms

becomes not just beneficial, but essential for long-term competitiveness and legitimacy.

Dibattista et al. (2024) argue that the presence of green norms and a positive person-environment fit further strengthens GIWB. At the individual level, intrinsic motivations, personal values, and environmental passion serve as internal catalysts (Norton et al., 2015; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Meanwhile, organizational citizenship behaviors for the environment (OCB-E) often mediate the relationship between environmental policies and GIWB (Paillé & Raineri, 2016; Ramus & Steger, 2000).

Despite the increasing recognition of GIWB, its theoretical development and contextual variations remain underexplored. Mukapit et al. (2024) recommend integrating innovation and sustainability in both research and practice to strengthen the relevance of GIWB. Madan et al. (2025) further propose that green organizational culture, when aligned with employee values and green ambidexterity, significantly enhances the occurrence and impact of GIWB.

GIWB represents a vital behavioral construct that bridges environmental sustainability and workplace innovation. It is influenced by a complex interplay of individual traits, leadership behaviors, and organizational systems. Future research should examine GIWB across various cultural and industrial contexts, using longitudinal designs to assess its lasting impact on sustainability outcomes. For practitioners, fostering a culture that values ecological responsibility and supports employee-driven green innovation is imperative to achieving strategic environmental goals.

## Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the nature of Green Innovative Work Behavior (GIWB) among employees within organizational settings. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 key informants working in the manufacturing and service sectors in Indonesia. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria including demonstrated engagement in environmentally oriented innovative activities and a minimum of three years of work experience.

The interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online, guided by a structured interview protocol developed based on the conceptual frameworks of GIWB as outlined by de Jong and Den

Hartog (2010) and Chen and Zhang (2024). Data collection took place over a two-month period

(January–February 2025). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

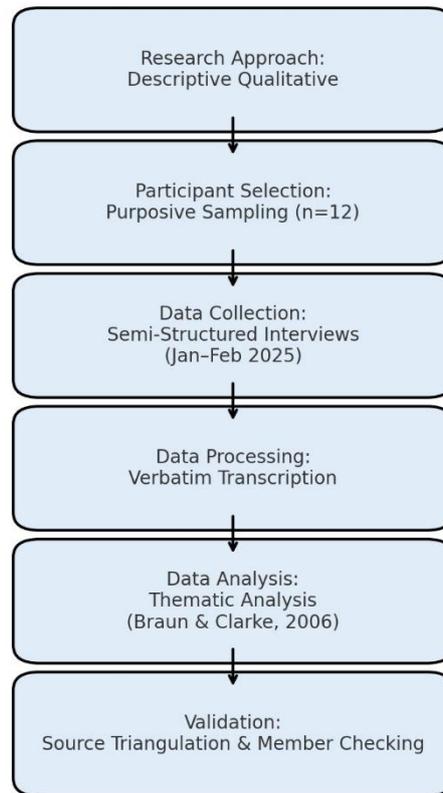


Figure 1 Flowchart of the Research Methodology

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase procedure developed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) identification of themes, (4) review of themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) report writing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and member checking. The interview findings were subsequently compared with relevant theoretical frameworks to assess alignment and identify novel contributions.

## Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of interviews conducted with 12 informants from the manufacturing and service sectors in Indonesia yielded three salient themes that characterize the manifestation of Green Innovative Work Behavior (GIWB) in organizational contexts. These themes reflect the multidimensional nature of GIWB and its embeddedness in both personal and structural domains of the workplace. Individual-level motivations, particularly environmental values and personal responsibility, were found to be foundational

drivers of GIWB. Informants consistently expressed that their green initiatives were rooted in intrinsic ecological concern, often shaped by prior education or lived experience with environmental issues.

Organizational-level enablers including formal policies, informal support systems, and leadership behaviors emerged as critical factors that either fostered or hindered GIWB. The presence of a supportive organizational climate, coupled with leaders who modeled sustainable practices, was reported to significantly enhance employees' willingness to propose and implement eco-innovations. This underscores the importance of psychological safety and perceived organizational encouragement in enabling proactive environmental behavior.

The analysis uncovered a wide range of GIWB manifestations in daily work routines, from simple behavioral adjustments such as reducing paper and energy usage, to more complex innovations involving workflow redesign, process efficiency, and digital transformation aimed at sustainability. These findings collectively demonstrate that GIWB is not a one-size-

fits-all phenomenon; rather, it is shaped by a dynamic interplay between individual agency and institutional context.

By highlighting these three interconnected themes; personal values, organizational support, and practical expressions of GIWB, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how environmental innovation emerges and is sustained within diverse workplace settings. The results not only reaffirm

existing theoretical frameworks on GIWB but also offer new insights specific to emerging economies and sectoral variation.

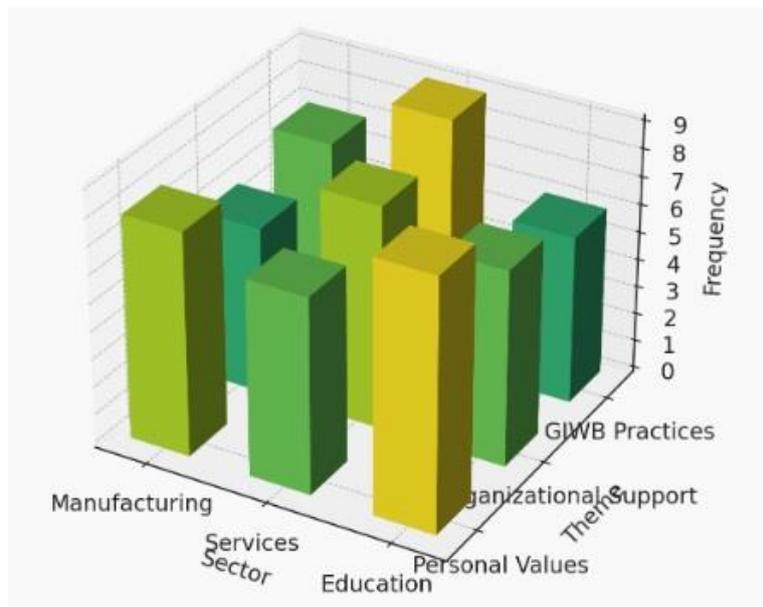


Figure 2 Visualization of GIWB Themes by Sector

Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of the three identified GIWB themes *Personal Values*, *Organizational Support*, and *GIWB Practices* across three sectors: manufacturing, services, and education. The visualization demonstrates a relatively high intensity of GIWB practices in the manufacturing and education sectors, indicating contextual differences in how green behavior is fostered and manifested.

These themes include: (1) individual drivers and personal environmental values, (2) organizational support and leadership roles, and (3) tangible manifestations of GIWB in daily work activities.

### 1. Individual Drivers and Personal Environmental Values

A predominant pattern among informants was the strong influence of personal environmental awareness on their engagement in environmentally oriented innovation. Many participants described how intrinsic values such as energy conservation, waste reduction,

and resource reuse served as key motivations behind their green initiatives. One operational staff member remarked:

“I don’t just want to work for the sake of working, I feel responsible for the environment around me. That’s why I’ve tried to redesign work processes that reduce plastic waste.”

These internal values were often reinforced by past education or experiences related to sustainability. Such findings align with Chen and Zhang (2024), who emphasized that environmental commitment and personal values are powerful predictors of GIWB. These intrinsic drivers are considered essential in initiating bottom-up innovation that aligns with ecological objectives.

### 2. Organizational Support and Leadership Roles

Another consistent theme that emerged was the crucial role of organizational climate and leadership in

facilitating GIWB. Informants highlighted both formal and informal support systems ranging from structured green innovation training to simple recognition by supervisors as enablers of their environmentally innovative behaviors. Several informants also pointed out that their leaders demonstrated exemplary behavior by engaging directly in environmental programs and promoting sustainability in practice. As one HR staff member stated:

“Our leaders often get directly involved in go-green programs. That really motivates us to innovate, even in small ways.”

These experiences resonate with findings from Dibattista et al. (2024), who assert that *green leadership* can significantly enhance GIWB by cultivating environmental norms and psychological safety within the organization. The alignment between leadership actions and environmental values helps foster a shared vision of sustainability across hierarchical levels.

### 3. Forms of Green Innovative Work Behavior

The interviews revealed diverse forms of GIWB exhibited by employees, ranging from simple suggestions for reducing paper and electricity usage to more complex innovations in workflow design. A technician described his experience:

“I modified the assembly sequence to minimize leftover materials. It all started from my curiosity about reducing waste.”

Other employees reported developing digital solutions to reduce physical resource consumption, such as shifting from printed reports to digital reporting systems. Overall, GIWB emerged as a convergence of creativity, environmental concern, and self-efficacy where employees voluntarily contribute ideas and take initiative to implement them. This supports the theoretical perspective of de Jong and Den Hartog (2010), who conceptualize GIWB as a specific subset of innovative behavior that incorporates environmental consciousness as a central motive.

GIWB was not limited to specific job roles or levels but appeared across functions and hierarchies. This suggests that, when enabled by the right conditions, all employees possess the capacity to contribute meaningfully to green innovation.

The findings affirm that GIWB not only creates organizational value by advancing sustainability efforts but also strengthens employee engagement and job satisfaction, thus contributing to broader organizational development.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that *Green Innovative Work Behavior* (GIWB) among employees is shaped through the dynamic interplay of personal environmental values, organizational support systems, and inspirational leadership. The findings suggest that GIWB is largely driven by intrinsic motivations that align with an individual’s ecological awareness, yet it is further reinforced by a workplace environment that nurtures and supports green-oriented innovative thinking.

Leadership emerged as a critical factor in promoting GIWB, particularly when leaders actively model sustainable practices and create space for employees to explore and implement their ideas. The manifestations of GIWB identified in this study were diverse—ranging from modest actions such as reducing the use of materials, to more complex process modifications that significantly enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability outcomes. These behaviors not only reflect environmental consciousness but also demonstrate employees’ willingness to go beyond formal job descriptions in contributing to organizational goals.

The practical implications of these findings are threefold. First, organizations should integrate environmental values into their corporate culture and human resource management systems, ensuring that sustainability becomes a shared responsibility rather than an isolated initiative. Second, the promotion of *green leadership* at all managerial levels is essential to foster a climate of trust, innovation, and environmental accountability. Third, establishing recognition systems that reward sustainability-driven innovation can reinforce GIWB and embed it more deeply into everyday organizational behavior.

This research strengthens the conceptualization of GIWB not merely as an extra-role behavior but as a strategic capability that organizations can leverage in their transition toward sustainability. As environmental demands continue to reshape the business landscape, GIWB should be recognized as a valuable asset in driving eco-innovation and resilience. Future research is encouraged to further investigate the influence of organizational structures, team dynamics, and sectoral contexts in supporting and scaling GIWB across industries.

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