

Managerial green leadership behavior a case study in Iraqi Ministry of Environment

Assis. Prof. Dr. Alaulddin B. Jawad¹
alaulddin.jawad@coadec.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Assis. Lec. Nora Ghalib Ali ²
noraghalib@mtu.edu.iq

Assis. Lec. Ola Basim Hashim³
ola.b.396@conursing.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Abstract:

This research aims to help identify one of the modern issues in public management, which is that of green leadership behavior, looking into its conceptual roots in governmental organizations. We investigate green leadership as a contemporary managerial strategy to drive environmental sustainability. In order to accomplish the research aims, the research took analytic-theoretical approach, which is a general method of conducting conceptual and philosophical study. The study drew on academic literature, international reports, and prior empirical studies related to green leadership and environmental management. A number of findings of the study were drawn, but the first and foremost of these was that limited green leadership studies in Arab literature that compare to foreign studies exist, despite the increasing environmental challenges facing public organizations in Iraq. Therefore, the study suggests the necessity to carry out more explicit theoretical and applied research into managerial green leadership and the integration of environmental values into leadership development programs in governmental institutions.

Keywords: Managerial green leadership, Environmental leadership, Sustainability, Public organizations, Ministry of Environment

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

¹ Assist. Prof., Alaulddin B. Jawad. College of administration and Economics. University of Baghdad, Iraq

² Assistance Lec., Nora Ghalib Ali, Department of Business Administration technologies, Middle Technical University, Technical college of management/Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

³ Assistance Lect , Ola Basim Hashim. Collage of nursing/ University of Baghdad

Green leadership has gained significant attention recently, as many organizations have become aware of its importance and the need for it in their operations. This type of leadership encourages managers to implement and adopt it, as it contributes to rationalizing consumption and reducing waste. Green leaders influence and help subordinates adopt such policies. Research indicates that strong green leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the organization's culture and paying more attention to environmentally conscious employees. This is because increasing environmental concerns globally are causing organizations to face growing pressure from stakeholders, such as customers, investors, and government agencies, to achieve a balance between sustainability and business prosperity (Fan& Chung, 2023:2).

This adoption has become required and noticeable in many sectors. For example, the oil and gas sector has adopted a low-carbon policy as a result of government requirements, competent organizations, and citizens' demands (Abedin, et al,2024:4).

The growing awareness of environmental risks is contributing to organizations integrating sustainable management into their strategic priorities. Management responsibilities are increasing to include aspects that go beyond routine work, and they have become protectors of the environment. Their role is to build an organizational culture that promotes environmentally friendly practices such as recycling, rationalizing energy consumption, and reducing waste and emissions. Many studies have confirmed the close relationship between leadership styles such as transformational leadership and employee engagement. Leaders who care about environmental issues are able to effectively motivate their subordinates to adopt sustainable environmental behaviors. (Saleh, et al, 2024: 385).

For example, in Iraq, environmental problems such as pollution and resource depletion are a serious indicator, making green leadership crucial and necessary. The Ministry of Environment assumes this responsibility, working to formulate policies that protect the environment and natural resources and enhance sustainable development.

Therefore, exploring how green leadership works is essential for organizations seeking to improve their environmental role and serve their communities. This research focuses on the Iraqi Ministry of Environment, exploring the role of current leadership, identifying the obstacles leaders face in cultivating an environmentally friendly culture, and offering suggestions for effectively implementing green strategies.

1.2. Importance of Managerial Green Leadership

Given the increasing environmental challenges, green leadership in management represents an important approach for an organization to adopt sustainable practices. When leaders create an environment that encourages environmentally friendly

behaviors, employees see themselves as leaders of this culture as well, so they work to learn it, which motivates them to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors as well. This does not mean that this leadership should only implement environmental laws, but it extends to include their actual participation in these behaviors, which leads to increased efficiency and improved reputation. For example, Abdeen and others indicate that leaders who adopt sustainability work to push managers to comply with the requirements related to environmental responsibility, which have increased significantly in recent times. (Abedin et al., 2024:6). In a similar vein, they serve as stewards of sustainability. In particular, this is critical in industries for which companies have to strike a good balance between low-carbon ambitions and operational efficiency are the oil and gas companies. Robust green leaders are the ones who inspire sustainability vision of a company by demonstrating commitment to achieve environmental targets. This will help the workers achieve a common goal (Saleh, et al, 2024: 391). Transformational leadership styles inspire workers to go above and beyond in their environmental efforts thus fostering corporate commitment to creating a new sustainability-focused workforce. This line of the association between managerial green leadership and employee behavior is clear. Leaders who lead with an eco-awareness constantly, such as Al-Swidi (2021), who consistently provide this sort of behavior, have the ability to encourage their subordinates to do the same. An increasing number of employees are becoming more environmentally conscious and are adopting greener practices, which has a trickle-down effect. As the importance of sustainability is growing worldwide, companies with effective green leadership are more able to address the market demand for green practices (Fan & Chung, 2023: 2). What is meant here are leaders who allow and encourage dialogue related to green business and create a culture that promotes a sense of environmental sustainability, since integrating environmental values into organizational strategies ultimately leads to long-term success in environmentally friendly business (Barani, et al, 2025: 47). Therefore, green management leadership represents a crucial turning point in achieving sustainable change by setting a good example and supporting innovation efforts; they influence both personal effort and environmental performance.

1.3. Context of Iraqi Ministry of Environment

Given Iraq's heavy reliance on oil, the need to find and implement sustainable working methods remains paramount. Therefore, the Ministry must adopt sustainable practices that meet these aspirations. The National Strategy for Environmental Protection and Improvement (2024-2030) serves as a positive benchmark, having been developed in collaboration with local stakeholders and

civil society organizations. This strategy aims to address environmental threats and promote sustainable development across various sectors. It aligns with the State's commitment to integrating environmental considerations into business and other activities. A key pillar of this strategy is building and maintaining strong international relationships, such as those with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which provide technical and financial assistance to encourage the adoption of sustainable solutions. (UNDP, 2024). Furthermore, this leadership helps educate employees about environmentally friendly practices, thereby improving the ministry's efficiency. Training employees to adopt sustainability practices is seen as evidence that high-quality green leadership requires expertise, cooperation, and commitment at all levels. Moreover, the Iraqi Ministry of Environment contributes to promoting sustainability in light of the numerous environmental challenges stemming from the excessive use of fossil fuels. Therefore, this approach focuses on developing green administrative leadership that supports environmental solutions and enhances resilience, with the aim of restoring a sustainable environment and maintaining its ability to withstand these challenges (Abedin, et al., 2024:6).

2. Research Problem

In recent years, many organizations have incorporated environmental issues into their strategies, but the Iraqi Ministry of Environment faces a fundamental problem: the absence of effective green leadership from the management perspective. This makes it difficult to achieve success in the field of sustainability. This problem requires special attention because providing environmental services in the ministry is essential, but due to the difficulties represented by the weak awareness among citizens, and despite this, studies indicate that there is a somewhat limited understanding of how green leadership affects employees' commitment to sustainability. Therefore, the challenges facing Iraqi organizations require further study, especially with regard to the specific local challenges that Iraq faces. In light of this, the need has emerged for educational programs aimed at raising awareness and involving employees more in these practices. However, the ministry lacks sufficient knowledge regarding promoting environmental training for sustainability (Jasim & Altaee, 2023: 1-5). This leads to a key question: What obstacles prevent effective environmental leadership? And can leaders overcome these obstacles? Answering these questions will lead to the development of better ways to engage employees, for example in the oil and gas sector (Abedin, et al, 2024:6). This concern may be due to the increasing environmental difficulties over economic risks, especially in weak laws, or due to conflicts of interest (Maghddid, et al., 2025, 369). Understanding this strategy is important, especially with regard to managers'

awareness of environmental goals and the ministry's ability to implement them. It is possible that charismatic leadership can be beneficial in small and medium-sized Iraqi companies, as some studies have proven the success of combining transformational leadership with sustainable employment (Jasim & Altaee, 2023: 6). Based on the above, the relationship between green administrative leadership and sustainable performance in the Iraqi environmental sector must be evaluated by focusing on studying green administrative leadership. This relationship and its impact on sustainable performance in environmental work is important through training and education at all management levels. Therefore, this research seeks to determine the extent of the importance of the theoretical and practical aspects of green administrative leadership behavior in public organizations, and in particular the Iraqi Ministry of Environment. Despite the increasing environmental problems and the strategic importance of the ministry, the adoption of green leadership practices in administrative leadership is not clearly defined. The main research question is: To what extent does green administrative leadership behavior contribute to promoting environmental sustainability within the Iraqi Ministry of Environment?

3.1 Research Objectives

This research aims to explore green leadership behaviors within the Iraqi Ministry of Environment in light of numerous environmental challenges. It seeks to contribute to addressing research gaps related to leadership practices and sustainability in governmental organizations. Furthermore, the current research examines the impact of green leadership on sustainable performance within the ministry and explores the relationship between green leadership practices and improved environmental sustainability outcomes (Rashid & Saeed, 2025: 1-5). Therefore, the sub-objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To define the conceptual and theoretical framework of green leadership.
2. To demonstrate the role of green leadership in achieving sustainable environmental practices.
3. To highlight the importance of green leadership for public governmental institutions.

3.2 Importance of the Research

The importance of the current research lies in the following:

1. The research's practical significance is highlighted by its adoption of the green leadership model as a contemporary leadership model that reflects leadership role and environmental responsibility.

2. The study's importance stems from the scarcity of Arab studies in general, and Iraqi studies in particular, that have addressed the concept of green leadership in governmental institutions.
3. It assists decision-makers in the Iraqi Ministry of Environment by providing a conceptual framework to facilitate the adoption of green leadership practices.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Theoretical Framework on Green Leadership

Green leadership focuses on sustainability not viewing employees as negative influences on environmental policies, but rather working to involve them in achieving sustainability goals, because green leadership works to improve the interactive relationship between leaders and subordinates (Boxall & Purcell, 2016: 63). Green leadership is an important trend in leadership styles as it integrates environmental management with the planning process. It shows leaders balancing economic and environmental goals. This concept is clearly evident in green transformational leadership, which motivates employees to align their personal values with the organization's overall goals, i.e., instilling environmentally friendly behaviors in their hearts and minds. For example, a study by Musa et al. showed that green transformational leadership positively affects green human resource management, as the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors increases. As a result, this leads to improved performance for organizations more committed to environmental issues. Green leadership is about acting as a green leader, setting an example in environmental behaviors, and simultaneously promoting a culture of sustainability in the organization as a whole (Saleh, et al, 2024: 392). Leaders' commitment to formulating environmentally supportive policies leads to improved resource efficiency and reduced environmental impact of organizational operations. This is reflected in social responsibility and environmental management. Van and Chung demonstrated that effective environmental leadership, whether in terms of organizational culture or strategies supporting sustainability, is essential and indispensable (Fan& Chung, 2023: 5). These methods not only improve environmental performance but also provide a competitive advantage in the conscious market, as empirical evidence has shown that green human resource management practices are a link between green transformational leadership and environmentally friendly employee behaviors (Cahyadi, C., et al, 2022: 64). Creating a green identity within an organization helps in finding creative solutions and ultimately leads to alignment with sustainability goals, as this ultimately leads to environmental sustainability without affecting economic responsibility.

4.2. Previous Studies and Gap Analysis

Existing empirical studies have found strong evidence of the positive impact of green leadership on improving organizational sustainability. Saleh et al. (2024) showed that green transformational leadership dramatically enhances the environmental behavior and creativity of managers, especially when such leadership efforts are complemented by structured green education initiatives. Their results indicate that leadership development interventions are capable of effective change of staff attitudes for sustainability. Similarly, Al-Swidi et al. (2021) highlighted the critical role of interplay of green leadership, green human resource management and organizational culture in employees' behavior and environmental performance related to green management. It also shows that leadership is only effective if accompanied with coherent and policy-aligned human resources. Jasim and Altaee (2023) emphasized a lack of awareness among public sector employees regarding the strategic benefits of green training programmes in the Iraqi context. For research in the Ministry of Environment, it was discovered that sustainable performance is enhanced when managers are involved in the environmental training and development. Moreover, Issa et al. (2022) underscored the role of green intellectual capital for increasing sustainability in Iraqi healthcare institutions. While the health sector is the subject of their study's focus, the findings are applicable to public organizations more generally, as they demonstrate the significance of support from the leadership in nurturing green knowledges, capabilities, and organizational systems. Despite the importance of these contributions, studies still indicate a clear gap in previous studies regarding the study of green administrative leadership behavior in Iraqi government institutions, if the studies focused either on the private sector or on sustainability from a technical perspective rather than a human one. This gap underscores the importance of this research paper, which aims to provide a robust contextual and theoretical analysis of green leadership in the Iraqi Ministry of Environment. Recent leadership literature suggests that green leadership should be framed within a normative and values-based framework (rather than a purely utilitarian administrative construct). Robertson and Barling (2017) emphasize that leaders who understand the values inherent in environmental concerns are more likely to integrate sustainability issues into daily management decisions, thereby influencing employees practically rather than through formalizing regulations. This view supports the claim that green leadership is a function of long-term ethical responsibility and social accountability. Behaviorally, Norton et al. (2015) argue that leaders are pivotal in influencing the environmental identity of employees within organizations. When managers

regularly support green initiatives, employees begin to view pro-environmental behavior as an integral part of their jobs. Green leadership directly contributes to improved organizational performance by fostering green innovation and environmentally friendly operations (Chen and Zhang, 2013). In the same context, Osborne (2010) points out that public administration must adopt a sustainable leadership style to address environmental problems. He indicated that applying this thinking to environmental institutions is not an administrative luxury, but has become an essential necessity to achieve sound governance in a country facing many environmental risks, such as Iraq.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Research Design

For the purpose of analyzing green leadership management practices in the Iraqi Ministry of Environment, the current research is based on a mixed research methodology between the quantitative and qualitative approach due to the complex nature of green leadership. This mix also helps in collecting quantitative and qualitative information. The research started with questionnaires that were distributed to a random sample of 338 ministry employees, based on scales to evaluate green leadership attributes, as well as measuring employees' commitment to sustainability efforts and their vision of the organization's performance. Statistical programs such as SPSS or AMOS were used to analyze the results (Jabbar, et al, 2025: 530). The current research also included a set of semi-structured interviews with ministry officials. These interviews aimed to identify real visions and experiences of green leadership. The interview questions were derived from studies on green transformational leadership. These interviews also helped in selecting a purposeful sample of participants in order to ensure that opinions were heard from different levels of the organization and from different administrative levels. Through these two different tools, it is possible to understand how administrative green leadership affects employee participation in sustainability practices and to bridge the previously indicated research gap (Abbas & Al-Naimi, 2025: 1-5) and (Saleh et al, 2024: 397), In particular, studies related to charismatic leadership applied to small and medium-sized Iraqi companies, as well as studies of the relationship between transformational leadership and recruitment methods in sectors such as oil and gas, and through the application of the mixed approach, the current research seeks to address these gaps and provide scientific and practical recommendations in order to improve green leadership practices in the Iraqi environment.

5.2. Data Collection Methods

In order to collect data for the current research on green leadership behavior, qualitative and quantitative methods will be used. At the qualitative level, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with officials and employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Environment, including experts and consultants in the environment. This approach helps to identify the respondents' experiences, attitudes, and opinions regarding green leadership performance. The questions will be based on previous studies on green leadership, including questions about leadership style and the challenges faced in implementing green policies. The interviews will last from 15 to 30 minutes, and the research sample was selected purposively for the interviews to ensure the participation of administrative levels in answering. As for the quantitative aspect of the research, questionnaires were distributed to 338 employees in the ministry who were randomly selected. This aspect was also based on approved measures from previous studies (Fan & Chung, 2023). If the five-point Likert scale is used to assess how green leadership practices are perceived by the research sample, as well as how employees' behavior towards the environment is viewed in a sustainable way, this approach will ultimately lead to identifying patterns and setting measurement indicators that link management style and employees' commitment to green initiatives. Finally, a pilot test with a small sample will be held for the questionnaire to ensure reliability, before going through full rollout. We will use statistical software (e.g. SPSS or AMOS) for analysis of collected data (Abbas & Al-Naimi, 2025: 1-5). Descriptive statistics can show general trends, and inferential tests can take apart relationships or differences among demographic groups. Combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches that this study does creates a firm foundation to study managerial green leadership behavior. This dual approach aids the triangulation and increases credibility by validating findings along multiple data sources.

5.3. METHODOLOGY AND KEY FINDINGS:

This research presents and analyzes the results of the research paper mainly from the checklist. The checklist is the main tool for analyzing data collected from the in Iraqi Ministry of Environment. Table (1) shows the main results of the checklist analyses.

Table (1) the main results

N		Frequency	Weight	Result	Mean	Ratio of Matching	Gap Size
1	Managerial green leadership behavior	0	6	0	3.6	54%	49%

The entrance to Managerial green leadership behavior: In Table No. (1) We see that the entrance to Managerial green leadership behavior in Ministry under study amounted to (3.6) with an average weight of (6) with a gap size of (49) percent. This slightly indicates that there is not enough adoption and consideration in the Ministry under consideration.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The current study demonstrates the relevance of managerial green leadership on sustainability in the Iraqi Ministry of Environment. It has been proven that strong leadership impacts organizational environmental behavior and culture. This power is even stronger when underpinned by a robust green culture and linking leadership qualities to employees' dedication to sustainability. Therefore, leaders shall cultivate transformational and charismatic skills in order to motivate the teams to take eco-friendly actions. Specialized training programs to enhance managerial green leadership should be adopted by the Ministry. Therefore, these programs should include environmental management, promote sustainable behaviors, and direct knowledge towards addressing environmental challenges. These measures should bridge knowledge gaps and increase employee participation in green initiatives. Furthermore, policies for integrating green human resource management into daily operations should be considered. Hiring and continuously training individuals committed to sustainability, and demonstrating the importance of environmental responsibility, is essential to motivating employees towards sustainable performance. Future research could include comparing Iraqi oil companies with oil companies in other countries to identify best practices and weaknesses in Iraqi oil management. Sustainability is an issue requiring solutions at all levels of management through active employee engagement and sound green human resource management programs. This is essential for the Ministry to achieve its objectives, which align with social welfare goals. Based on the above, the study recommends the following:

1. Adopting green leadership practices in the Ministry of Environment's management training programs.
2. Motivating and encouraging officials within the Ministry of Environment to serve as role models for employees by practicing environmentally responsible green behaviors.
3. Increasing future research focusing on the impact of green leadership on institutional performance in Iraqi public institutions.

9. Future Research Directions

Here we can suggest three areas of future research on green administrative leadership that would help increase awareness of this concept. It is necessary to compare Iraqi officials with their counterparts in other oil-producing countries, as

these studies can reveal cultural differences and sustainability strategies that contribute to strengthening global efforts. Moreover, the participation of stakeholders in general also requires more attention and study. Therefore, future research should include engaging social researchers and non-governmental organizations with government agencies to obtain more opinions that would lead to more balanced and effective green leadership decisions. In addition, another priority should be addressing the challenges related to green marketing in developing countries, including Iraq, which may contribute to the empirical analysis of these obstacles with the aim of formulating appropriate policies. There is a need for such studies because green human resource management is slow to have an impact, so the research should be extended to include other sectors besides the oil and gas sector. Looking more closely at this interplay between new leadership styles, creates a different avenue for green management behaviors. Last, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data will add depth and reliability to findings through mixed-method research. It decreases biases stemming from one method and fills a comprehensive picture of managerial green leadership. Through these avenues for cross-cultural studies, stakeholder participation, longitudinal designs, new forms of leadership, and integrative methods, future research should take green leadership awareness and practice to a new level.

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سلوك القيادة الخضراء الإدارية: دراسة حالة في وزارة البيئة العراقية

م . م . علا باسم هاشم³ م . م . نورا غالب علي² أ . م . د . علاء الدين برع جواد¹
alaulddin.jawad@coadec.uobaghdad.edu.iq noraghalib@mtu.edu.iq ola.b.396@conursing.uobaghdad.edu.iq

المستخلص: يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد إحدى القضايا المعاصرة في الإدارة العامة، ألا وهي سلوك القيادة الخضراء، وذلك من خلال دراسة جذورها المفاهيمية في المؤسسات الحكومية. نتناول في هذا البحث القيادة الخضراء كاستراتيجية إدارية معاصرة لتحقيق الاستدامة البيئية. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث، اعتمدنا المنهج التحليلي النظري، وهو أسلوب عام لإجراء الدراسات المفاهيمية والفلسفية. استندت الدراسة إلى الأدبيات الأكاديمية والتقارير الدولية والدراسات التجريبية السابقة المتعلقة بالقيادة الخضراء والإدارة البيئية. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من النتائج، أبرزها محدودية الدراسات المتعلقة بالقيادة الخضراء في الأدبيات العربية مقارنة بالدراسات الأجنبية، على الرغم من التحديات البيئية المتزايدة التي تواجه المؤسسات العامة في العراق. لذا، تقترح الدراسة ضرورة إجراء المزيد من البحوث النظرية والتطبيقية المتعمقة في مجال القيادة الخضراء الإدارية، ودمج القيم البيئية في برامج تطوير القيادة في المؤسسات الحكومية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيادة الخضراء الإدارية، القيادة البيئية، الاستدامة، المنظمات العامة . وزارة البيئة

¹الاستاذ المساعد الدكتور : علاء الدين برع جواد – قسم ادارة الاعمال – جامعة بغداد – كلية الادارة والاقتصاد – بغداد – العراق

²المدرس المساعد: نورا غالب علي – قسم تقنيات ادارة الاعمال – الجامعة التقنية الوسطى – الكلية التقنية الادارية /بغداد – بغداد – العراق

³المدرس المساعد : علاء باسم هاشم - كلية التمريض . جامعة بغداد