

# Towards Sustainability in Organizations: The Influence of Environmentally specific Transformational Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards the Environment



## Introduction

The world today faces **increasing environmental problems** such as rapid global warming, air pollution etc.. Human behavior is a key factor here. Thus, the necessity to **promote pro-environmental behavior** arises. However, the **role of organizations** contributing to environmental benefit has been largely ignored (Mi et al., 2019). **Leaders** can influence employees' behavior in the workplace significantly. Consequently, the question **how leaders can encourage employees' pro-environmental behavior** arises.

In an organizational context, the framework of **organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment (OCB-E)** is considered an overarching concept of voluntary

pro-environmental behavior. A **research gap** regarding the **effect of environmentally specific transformational leadership (ETFL)** behavior on OCB-E exists. The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of the **relationship between ETFL and OCB-E**. In line with current research, the factors **trust in leader** (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 1990) and **autonomous motivation**, based on the well-known self-determination theory (e.g., Graves & Sarkis, 2018), are predicted to mediate the relation between ETFL and OCB-E. Furthermore, based on Rupert et al. (2017), possible moderating effects of **biospheric values** on motivational factors are included.

## Research Questions

- How does **environmentally specific transformational leadership (ETFL)** influence **environmental organizational citizenship behavior (OCB-E)** of employees?
- Do **trust** in the leader and **autonomous motivation** mediate the relationship between ETFL and OCB-E?

## Sample & Method

**N** = 112 (♀ = 58,8% | ♂ = 39,3% | ♀♂ = 0,9%)

**Age:** M = 38,7 (SD = 13,63; range: 20-66)

**Inclusion criteria:** Quality Items: ≥ 2 correct | ≥ 20 working hours/week | excluding top management executives/CEOs

**Working hours:** M = 36,9 h/week (SD = 10,6)

**Duration of employment:** M = 10,5 years (SD = 11,0)

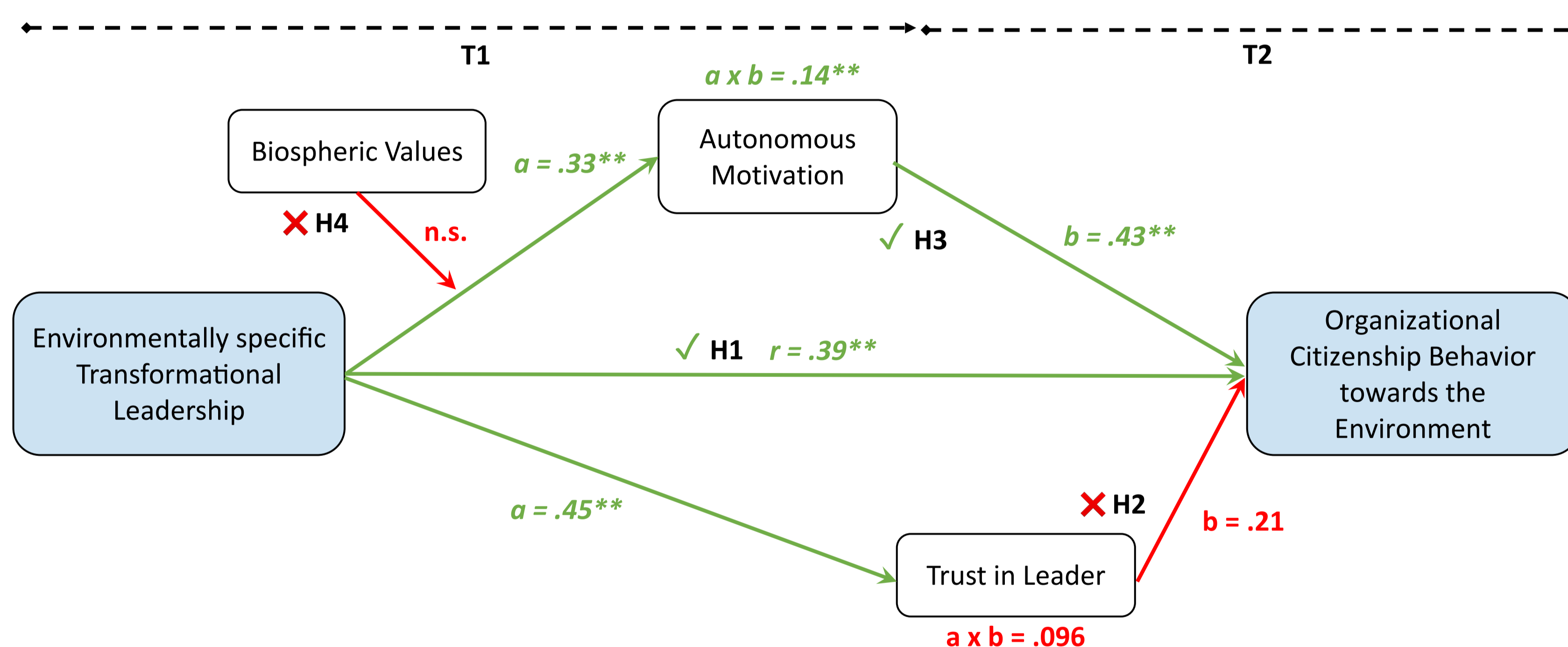
**Survey:** Two online questionnaires over two weeks in German | October 2021 – November 2021

**Methods:** Correlations | Mediation & Moderation in PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018)

Table 1: Instruments

Dimension	Source	Items	α	Example
<b>Environmentally specific Transformational Leadership (ETFL)</b>	Robertson, 2017	12 (5-point Likert scale)	0.96	“Meine Führungskraft ist ein Rollenvorbild bezüglich umweltbewussten Verhaltens.”
Personal values → Subscale: <b>Biospheric values</b>	short version of Schwartz (1992) conceived by Stern et al. (1998)	4 (7-point)	0.92	“Wie wichtig sind für Sie persönlich diese Werte? - Einheit mit der Natur: Sich in die Natur einfügen.”
Self-determined motivation towards pro-environmental behavior → Subscales: Identified, integrated & intrinsic = <b>Autonomous motivation</b>	Pelletier, 1998	12 (7-point)	0.91	“Ich mag das Gefühl, Dinge für die Umwelt zu tun.”
<b>Trust in Leader Scale</b>	Adams & Sartori, 2005	8 (7-point)	0.93	“Ich habe Vertrauen in die Absichten meiner Führungskraft.”
<b>Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards the Environment (OCB-E)</b>	Boiral & Paillé, 2012	10 (5-point)	0.96	“Ich ermutige meine Kolleg*innen zu einem umweltbewussteren Verhalten.”

## Hypotheses, Model & Results



Note. \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Figure 1: Correlation of environmentally specific transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment (H1). Mediation of trust in leader (H2) and autonomous motivation (H3) between environmentally specific transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment. Biospheric values as moderator (H4) of the relation between environmentally specific transformational leadership and autonomous motivation.

Table 2: Correlations of main variables

Dimension	n	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. ETFL	112	2.82	.93	1				
2. BioVal	112	5.32	1.24	.27**	1			
3. AutMot	112	5.50	0.88	.32**	.64**	1		
4. Trust	112	5.10	1.10	.45**	.05	.14	1	
5. OCB-E	110	3.20	0.91	.39**	.25**	.51**	.34**	1

Note. \*\*  $\alpha \leq 0.01$ , \*  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ . ETFL = Environmentally specific Transformational Leadership. BioVal = Biospheric values. AutMot = Autonomous motivation. OCB-E = Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards the Environment.

Consistent with our predictions, the main constructs correlate significantly positive, as shown in table 2. In accordance with the findings of the mediation analysis, trust correlates positively with ETFL. It can be followed that ETFL is relevant in establishing trust in leader. It should be noted that trust correlates positively with OCB-E. Even though no mediating effect has been found and trust cannot be assumed to be a mechanism of action, both trust and OCB-E are positively influenced by ETFL, therefore a positive correlation between trust and OCB-E can be expected.

## Discussion

- In line with previous findings, **environmentally specific transformational leadership is positively related to environmental behavior** (Boiral & Paillé, 2013; Robertson & Carlson, 2018). Therefore, an influence on voluntary and individual environmentally friendly behavior in the workplace can be detected.
- **Autonomous motivation significantly mediates** the relation between environmentally specific transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior towards the environment. The self-determination theory provides a powerful theoretical foundation (Pelletier & Aitken, 2014). In addition, (inspirational-) motivation is a key element of transformational leadership, proving to be a significantly influencing factor. However, in contrast to predictions, **trust does not display an indirect effect**. Even though trust can be viewed as important outcome of ETFL – shown by a significant positive correlation – it cannot be accounted as a contributing mechanism in the environmental context.
- In contrast to our expectations, **biospheric values do not affect** the relation of ETFL and autonomous motivation. Taking the right-skewed distribution of the results into account, a social desirability bias can be assumed.

## Implications

### Research

- Relationships between the main constructs have been demonstrated, however further research regarding **additional factors** is needed (e.g., leaders as role models, perceived organizational support).
- Future research should focus on the **influence of environmentally specific values**.

### Organizations

- Organizations are encouraged to **develop environmentally specific transformational leaders**.
- It has been shown that **autonomous motivation plays an important role** in promoting pro-environmental behavior. Therefore, leaders are encouraged to motivate employees to enact environmentally friendly behavior, especially **through inspirational motivation**.

### Selected references:

Boiral, O., & Paillé, P. (2013). Pro-environmental behavior at work: Construct validity and determinants. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 36(3), 118–128.; Graves, L. M., Sarkis, J., & Zhu, Q. (2013). How Transformational Leadership and employee motivation combine to predict employee proenvironmental behaviors in China. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 35, 81–91.; Mi, L., Gan, X., Xu, T., Long, R., Qiao, L., & Zhu, H. (2019). A new perspective to promote Organizational Citizenship Behaviour for the Environment: The role of Transformational Leadership. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 239, 1–11; Pelletier, L. G., & Aitken, N. (2014). *Encouraging environmental actions in employees and in the working environment: A Self-Determination Theory perspective*. In M. Gagné (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of work engagement, motivation, and Self-Determination Theory* (pp. 314–334). Oxford University Press.; Podsakoff, P., MacKenzie, S., Moorman, R., & Fetter, R. (1990). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. *Leadership Quarterly*, 1(2), 107–142.; Robertson, J. L. & Carleton, E. (2018). Uncovering how and when environmental leadership affects employees' voluntary pro-environmental behavior. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 25(2), 197–210; Rupert, A., et al (2017). Environmental considerations in the organizational context: A pathway to pro-environmental behaviour at work. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 17, 59–70.

