Investigating the influence of factors inhibiting environmental behavior and their relationship to workplace health

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Background: A wealth of research has explored household pro-environmental behavior (PEB), however very little research has explored PEB in the workplace. This constitutes a considerable gap in the literature and in practice. Workplaces provide substantial opportunities for the implementation of behavioral interventions and policies. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a guiding framework, this study sought to identify the predictive validity of perceived behavioral control, environmental attitudes and norms on work-related PEB. Understanding the predictors of this rational behavior has implications for improving both environmental and health outcomes within the workplace. Method: Staff and students (N=198) from James Cook University, Townsville were recruited to participate in an online questionnaire that explored the attitudinal, normative and control factors associated with workplace PEB. Findings: The importance of attitudinal, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control factors varied depending on the type of PEB targeted. For example, subjective norms were particularly important for workplace recycling behaviors. Discussion: The TPB is useful in explaining some PEB due to the intentional and rational nature of environmental behavior. The findings further suggest that workplaces could act as a medium by which to enhance PEB through policy implementation at a micro level. Moreover, due to the nature of some PEB, this policy implementation may have spillover effects for individual health outcomes. The importance of encouraging PEB may also have positive effects for workplace environmental behavior.

Method

Staff and students were recruited from James Cook University, Townsville campus (N=198) and were invited to complete an online survey.

Results

Predicting work environmental behavior using the TPB model

- Two stage hierarchical regression analysis for total work environmental behavior
  - Block 1: Age, gender, university position (staff or student)
  - Block 2: TPB model components
  - Total range M (SD) Male Female Total
    - 17 - 66 26.9 (11.2) 47 150 198

Breaking down the model components

- Table below illustrates the significant correlations between all variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Work environmental behavior</th>
<th>Subjective norms</th>
<th>Work subjective norms</th>
<th>Home subjective norms</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Perceived control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<td>-0.167</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-0.16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Significant p<.05

R²=.087*

Implications for employee health and wellbeing

Policy interventions should focus on:
- Home environmental behaviors
- Influencing home subjective norms

Implementing micro level behavioral interventions will allow workplaces to achieve macro level goals and therefore create a harmonious workplace environment, positively affecting employee health

This may reduce:
- Environmental behavior and attitude dissonance
- Employee workplace environmental policy resistance

References


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