



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Culture, Media & Film*

## Perceived leader resource favoritism and employee energy-wasteful behaviors in tourism and hospitality organizations: The mediating role of resource competition anxiety and the moderating effect of sustainability policy clarity

Abdelrahman A. A. Abdelghani\* &amp; Hebatallah A. M. Ahmed

Applied College, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

\*Correspondence: [a.abdelghani@psau.edu.sa](mailto:a.abdelghani@psau.edu.sa)**ABSTRACT**

As a part of these complex global sustainability challenges, this study aims to examine how leader resource favoritism (LRF) perception by employees attenuates energy-wasting behaviors through cognition and affect stereotypes at the destinations where tourism/hospitality business activities are conducted. It is inspired by the Conservation of Resources Theory and aims to explore the psychological mechanism of resource scarcity competition anxiety and sustainability policy clarity as a moderator. Research will be strategically aligned with Nationally important priorities for R&D&I in the Kingdom, such as long-term environment sustainability and energy efficiency, that are outlined under Vision 2030 and that contributes to UN Sustainable Development SDG Goal: 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal: 8 (Decent Work), SDG Goal: 12 (Responsible Consumption) respectively. The sample consisted of 482, the data were collected in hotels and tour operators and food & beverage service Employees within Saudi Arabia using two-wave survey design. Hypotheses testing was carried out using partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Results highlight the direct and indirect (through resource competition anxiety) influence of perceived leader resource favoritism on employee energy-wasteful behavior. Secondly, when it comes to policy commitment on sustainability, the positive chains are substantially lessened. These findings emphasize the significance of sustainable leadership and transparent communication with regard to environmental issues in order to decrease anxiety as well as prevent such waste of resources based on that anxiety, with practical implications elevating an organization's sustainability, pursuant to Saudi Arabia's national aspiration related to country greening/smart economy.

**KEYWORDS:** Perceived leader resource favoritism, Resource competition anxiety, Employee energy-wasteful behaviors, Sustainability policy clarity, Vision 2030, SDGs, Tourism & hospitality sustainability, Conservation of Resources Theory, Environmental sustainability, Energy efficiency, Future economies

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## 1. Introduction

Balancing operational excellence with sustainability imperatives represents a new challenge for the contemporary hospitality landscape, and especially so in developing countries which are emerging as tourism hotspots. In recent times, with the increasing level of environmental problems and resource limitations confronted by firms, the importance of leadership encouraging sustainable behaviour on behalf of employees is imperative (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). However, an ironic twist could emerge with respect to how leaders themselves can contribute to organizational dysfunction through activist resource allocation in a manner that inadvertently undermines the environmental goals they purport to advance. Leader resource favoritism (i.e., the extent to which employees perceive that supervisors misallocate organizational resources in order to benefit personal relationships, rather than deserving or relevant needs; Di, Jansen et al., 2019) is a serious and widespread problem that extends beyond traditional equity issues in the workplace (Kuo et al., 2023). When leaders are perceived to favor one employee over another, in regards to distribution of equipment, technology, supplies, budgets and other resources there is the potential for employees to become competitive with each other which may ultimately result in CWBs [counterproductive work behaviors] including energy squandering behaviors that are directly contrary to organizational sustainability goals (Hnin et al., 2025). The identification of resource competition- anxiety as a mediating psychological mechanism represents an innovative extension of Conservation of Resources Theory in the realm of organizational behavior (Hobfoll, 2001; Liao et al., 2022). In contrast to general work anxiety, RCE, in particular, refers to the fear that employees have of obtaining work materials or competing for scarce resources within an organization and suffering from resource deprivation— anxious thoughts that could ironically drive behaviors toward hoarding/ squandering energy resources to serve as a psychological defense (Chen & Chen, 2021). In the hospitality industry, which is known for its energy consumptive nature in an environment where employees' energy-wasteful behavior such as unnecessary use of HVAC (Heating Ventilating and Air Conditioning), lighting left on after hours or neglect o equipment constitutes a double-edged challenge not only to organizational efficiency but also to global sustainability concerns (Karvounidi et al., 2024). It is these behaviours that are worse though, because they come out of leadership-authored anxiety rather than pure carelessness or environmental disregard. Abdelghani et al. (2023) indicate that providing clear information in social platforms decrease travel decision uncertainty, which means sustainability policy clarity can also significantly alleviate resource competition anxiety and discourage energy-wasteful behavior among frontline hospitality employees. The dynamic moderation effect of sustainability policy clarity is an important contribution from this study, as it provides organizations with a protective mechanism against the negative effects of perceived favoritism (Wong et al., 2025). When the energy conservation policy, environmental guidance and sustainability measures are both transparently stated and regularly implemented, they could help provide alternative behavioural reference points to which staff members can resort without relying on anxiety-fuelled responses to resource unfairness. Abdelghani (2025a) demonstrate that a strong sense of cultural identity anchors employee values to organizational goals and thus sustainability policy clarity could alleviate resource competition anxiety, preventing energy-wasteful behaviors through the reinforcement of shared cultural motivations. A study of tourism in Egypt also illustrates the impact communication clarity has on stakeholder action and decision-making. Providing clear information reduces uncertainty and enhances outcome, consistent with buffering effects of sustainability policy clarity on resource insecurity-driven anxiety (Abdelghani, 2018a). This paper focuses on these interconnected issues in a tourism and hospitality sector, since the efficient use of resources is directly linked to how well organizations perform in terms of operations and performing their environmental stewardship role. Theories build their premises on the knowledge that by studying how leader resource favoritism, as a type of social network, generates employee anxiety for competition over resources and ultimately energy-wasteful behaviors (i.e., evidences of crops-circle formation), and investigating sustainability policy clarity to function as possible buffer can contribute to both OB and EM fields. The results are especially applicable for hospitality companies that want to link the leadership practice more closely with sustainability objectives and provide insights into how a in more just resource allocation system and understandable environmental communication systems can be developed.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical basis for this research is largely derived from Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory as outlined by Hobfoll (1989, 2001), which suggests individuals to be primarily motivated to obtain, maintain and defend resources that they value. COR theory has been widely recognized as a dominant theoretical base for explaining employees' psychological states and behavior in organizational settings (Liao et al., 2022). The fundamental assumption of the theory is that psychological stress arises as a result of challenges or harm to an individual's resource pool, or when significant effort leads only to paltry resource gain (Hobfoll, 2001). Application of COR theory to workplace favoritism dynamics, it is recognized that employees regard organizational resources—such as tools, technology, funding, and supplies—as extensions of their own personal resource portfolios (Chen et al., 2015). When leaders exhibit bias toward resource allocation, employees feel unsafe with regard to their resources and engage in defensive activities that lead to the psychological loss of resources (i.e., resource wastage) as an attempt to heal themselves. That is, we believe that the Resource Conservation Perspective accounts for why individuals behave irrationally in response to resource inequity; they are trying to restore an equivalent fit of resources via a different pathway (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). Consistent with COR theory, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) further clarifies the bidirectional nature of leader–member relationships pertaining to resource allocation. When individual feel high reciprocity-violations, such as unfairness in resource distribution by the supervisors, they may practice a form of organizational revenge behavior through deliberate energy wasting and negative reciprocity (Kuo et al., 2023). The theory postulates that perceived unfairness in resource transactions leads to psychological contract breach, which employees attempt to redress via counterproductive work behaviours. In addition, this is complemented by Organisational Justice Theory which highlights how the perceptions of fairness in distribution of resources influence employee attitudes and behaviours (Adams 1965). Our findings indicate that distributive justice concerns — namely, whether resources are distributed in accordance with criteria of merit, need or equality — have immediate implications for employees' psychological well-being and task-oriented responses (Colquitt, 2001). The systematical discrimination in the allocation of resources will lead to the aid injustice that is implicated as one contributing factor to some employees' deviant workplace behaviors, such as environmental neglect.

The notion of RCS anxiety constitutes a new mediating process in this theoretical space, which is a specific type of workplace anxiety towards resource competition and scarcity. Different from general work-stress anxiety, resource competition involves cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses to perceived threats to access and availability of resources (Wong et al., 2025). This concept connects individual reactions to psychological stressors with organizational management strategies of resources, giving a more comprehensive picture of the way in which resource-related stressors affect overall behavior. Theory of Information Processing offers the theoretical grounding that inform this concept of sustainability policy clarity as a moderating variable (Miller, 1956). Clear communication of environmental policies and procedures offers cognitive schema that help employees make sense of their sustainability-related work and respond to workplace events in socially supportive ways. Clear policy communication decreases uncertainty and vagueness—potentially alleviating the negative implications of resource-related anxieties by providing alternate instructional behaviours (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Mohammed et al. (2024) found that negative workplace environments decrease people's psychological resources thereby, leading to work-related deviance, similar to the concept of resource competition anxiety that triggers a maladaptive response. This wraps up the way forward for current study as well pointers of future work: The findings of Abdelghani (2018b) concerning organizational resistance to digital transformation in Egyptian tourism emphasized that poor policy on clarity is harming performance, which endorses adopting sustainability policy clarity as a formidable moderator. Complementing this, Ahmed et al. (2025a) suggested that the impact of transformational entrepreneurship in the improved organizational supportive and resilient classification could mean with good environmental policies, employees can be better equipped to handle favouritism-induced stress. Adding an additional explanation for the psychological mechanism, Abdelghani et al. (2025b), favoritism induced-gossip undermines self-esteem and leads to counterproductive work behavior, thus directly supporting the proposition that anxiety mediates the relationship between perceived leader favoritism and energy depletion. Including a cultural element, Abdelghani et al. (2025c) introduced cultural identity as a factor that influences heritage tourism behaviors, which implies clear policies may attenuate anxiety by tapping into employees'

cultural values to organisational justice. Finally, Ahmed et al. (2025b) showed that leaders' STARA competencies elevate self-efficacy and lead to positive techno-eustress as well, just as supportive leadership and policy clarity can moderate anxiety levels and its negative behavioral consequences. The combination of these theoretical perspectives provides a systematic framework to investigate the way in which leadership behaviors, employee psychological states and organizational communication systems contribute to shape environmentally-friendly behaviors. This multi-theoretical perspective recognises the multi-faceted nature of workplace sustainability challenges and, at the same time, offers actionable knowledge for those seeking to intervene in organisations in need of improvement.

## 2.2 The Relationship with Sustainability and SDGs

The conjunction of organizational behaviour and environmental sustainability has received considerable attention lately as companies all around the world face increasing stakeholder pressure to tackle challenges related to climate change and resource shortage. Our investigation into employee energy-wasting actions is closely related to several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly: SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 13 – Climate Action (United Nations, 2015). The energy utilization profiles of hotels and restaurants are one of the sustainability challenges in hospitality sector, which we can find that their share in the commercial energy use is great all over the world (Karvounidi et al., 2024). Employee behaviours have been demonstrated to exert a significant effect on the ecological footprint of organisations, with daily resource use and energy conservation among both resource use and waste management dimension that contribute considerably to environmental impacts (Chen & Chen, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025c). In so doing, they emphasize the need to know more about psychological and social antecedents that prompt employee proenvironmental behaviors. Workplace sustainability extends beyond traditional environmental management and takes in social & psychological conditions for the sustenance and reduction of barriers as to a sustainable behavior (Hnin et al., 2025). To the extent that such alleged favoritism contributes to anxiety over competition for resources among employees, they may have less cognitive and emotional capacity left to engage in pro-environmental behavior since their resources will be devoted toward self-preservation and not community-level environmental stewardship. Such a pattern is in line with COR theory's expectation that resource-threatened individuals prioritize immediate protection of threat-exposed resources at the expense of longer-term collective interests (Hobfoll; 2001). Policy clarity for sustainability appears as an important organization-level mechanism to link individual behaviors with broader environmental goals. Studies show that environmental communication patterns have a clear influence in employee engagement on sustainability practices with transparent and standardized communication content leading to higher degrees of participation in conservation practices (Wong et al., 2025). Organizations that have communicate well their environmental policies and procedures, facilitate environments where by sustainable behaviors can flourish, open-contagion needs and experience lower psychological barriers which might prevent pro-environmental actions. The specific position of the hospitality sector in tourism industry further enhances the importance of these relationships, since as large greenhouse gases are concerned, around 8% of global emissions due to tourism practices (Lenzen et al., 2018). For instance, in the case of hoteliers, restaurateurs and other tourist service providers, these have to grapple with ever growing challenges in terms of reconciling creature comfort with ecological sensibility forcing staff to make split-second decisions on the use (and abuse) natural resources. In these situations, the psychological status of the employees is particularly important in determining whether or not they would be willing to perform DPEBs for which additional effort and attention are demanded; as stressed or anxious workers perceive less control over their environment (Cottrell and King 1989), it seems unlikely that they will adopt discretionary environmental behaviors. In addition, increasing attention to corporate environmental responsibility and a trend toward sustainability reporting escalate the pressure on hotel units to prove actual reductions of their environmental impact (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). This external surveillance also creates internal dynamics where employee behaviour becomes more observable and matters in terms of organizational reputation and performance. It becomes very important to understand how leadership practices and communication strategies can shape these behaviors and when is this going to support the sustainability development aims. This attention to the relationship between workplace equity and environmental outcome is congruent with larger social justice dimensions of sustainability, and an

understanding that environmental protection and social equity are interrelated challenges in need of holistic solutions (Boyce & Pastor, 2013). Where systemic inequities in resource allocation are not addressed in work sites, organisations may sabotage their own ‘sustainability’ efforts and continue to perpetuate injustices that impact on both human well-being and environmental performance alike. Therefore, by focusing on resource favoritism and its environmental implications, this study helps to understand how social sustainability and environmental sustainability are interrelated into an organization level.

### 3. Hypotheses Development

#### 3.1 The Direct Impact of Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism on Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors

Perceived leader resource favoritism and employee energy-wasteful behavior The relationship between perceived leader resource in justice is a root breach of OJ, which extends to negative environmental counterproductive behaviors. Based on Social Exchange Theory, employees are working in an exchange relationship with their supervisors and can experience inequities in resource allocations within the exchange relationship which uncovers imbalances that can be corrected through behavior responses (Shamsudin et al., 2023). When leaders show bias in allocating organizational resources (equipment, technology, supplies, budgeting and tools), employees perceive distributive injustice that leads to breach of their psychological contracts with the organization they work for (Yang & Niven, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025d). Empirical studies in the hospitality industry suggest that when employees perceive fairness in resource distribution to be threatened, they engage in retaliatory behaviors that act as counterweights on organizations’ goals (Kuo et al., 2023). Energy wasting (e.g., use of HVAC, artificial lighting, and intentional neglecting equipment) is a manifest behavior as employees can express their dissatisfaction with perceived inequitable treatment in an easily accessible way that costs an organization money (Liu et al. High energy consumption in the Chinese hospitality industry – to which hotels contribute about 1% of global carbon dioxide emissions – make these behaviors particularly relevant for organizational sustainability goals (Chen et al., 2021). From the Organizational Justice Theory point of view, distributive injustice is triggered when employees believe that resource distribution decisions conflict with fairness norms and in turn evoke employees’ negative emotions and reactions (Colquitt et al., 2023). For hospitality firms, resource availability is liable to influence both the quality of service and operational efficiency: perceived preferential resources allocation may elicit particularly salient equity issues that are materialized in energy-wasting behavior as a variant of organizational deviance (Wang et al., 2022). Conservation of Resources Theory furtherills this concept by proposing that employees who perceive threats to their access to resources could engage in “defensive behaviours” such as wasting organizational resources, as these are thought to serve as a form of psychological coping (Hobfoll & Lilly, 2023). The literature on workplace favoritism also finds that perceived bias in leader decision-making leads to negative responses of the employees, and energy-related behaviors can be an easy target upon which to express dissatisfaction, particularly in service settings such as hospitality where and consumption decisions are under employee control (Fisher et al., 2025). If employees believe that their supervisor unfairly distributes resources due to personal relationships rather than on the basis of merit, there may be a passive rebellion in which employees retaliate by engaging in energy-wasting behaviors as an outlet for asserting control and expressing disapproval with equity violations. Thus, the study hypothesize:

*H1: Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism positively predicts Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors*

#### 3.2 The Relationship Between Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism and Resource Competition Anxiety

Resource competition anxiety as a response to perceived favoritism of leader resources: The human fundamental motive that underpins fisher theory. According to the Conservation of Resources Theory, people will feel stress when they experience threats to their resources reserves, actual losses of resources, or do not gain desired resources after expending great efforts (Hobfoll, 2001; Liao et al., 2022). When employees feel that their supervisor is biased in distributing resources, they are anxious about competing for scarce organizational resources and obtaining required work materials. Resource competition anxiety is a new construct that goes beyond general workplace anxiety and covers specific fears of resource scarcity, competition information processing, and imagined resource deprivation in organizational life (Wang et al., 2022). Compared with the work-related stress in general, resource competition anxiety emphasizes the cognitive and emotional responses

of employees to perceived threats regarding their access to and availability of resources, which results in a unique psychological state that precludes decisions about subsequent behaviors (Liu et al., 2020). By connecting individual psychological responses to organizational practices for resource management, this framework provides a view of how stressors that are related to resources directly impact employee well-being and behavior. The resource-heavy nature of hospitality employment, where provision of adequate technology, equipment and supplies can strongly affect quality service delivery and employee performance on the job suggests that the concept of resource-competition anxiety may be particularly useful for understanding employees' psychological responses to perceived favoritism in their workplace (Chen et al., 2021). Employees are stressed with worry about their own ability to gain the required resources if they see favoritism being given by supervisors to certain coworkers for personal rather than actual work-based reasons (Zhang et al., 2024). Workplace anxiety literature shows that resource related stressors tend to elicit the most intense psychological response, as they undermine employees' basic ability to fulfill their job requirements (Yip & Cote, 2020). In the hospitality industry, where resource shortage may result in service and customer performance evaluation or employee appraisal directly effect, perceived inequity of resource distribution further brings greater anxiety about future resources accessibility and job stability (Meira et al., 2023). The imminent risk of resource conflict and potential loss creates psychological stress that is not necessarily about current job duties, but the broader issues of job fit within an organization and career trajectories. Also, Social Comparison Theory holds that subordinates continuously compare their treatment with that of co-workers and are particularly threatened when they perceive resource distributed so unfairly (Festinger, 1954; Zhang et al., 2025). When they have a sense that subordinates are favorably treated, their anxiety continues that they will lose competitive ground within the organization competition for limited means. Therefore, the study propose the following hypotheses:

*H2: Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism positively predicts Resource Competition Anxiety*

### **3.3 The Impact of Resource Competition Anxiety on Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors**

Resource competition anxiety induces psychological states that lead employees to engage in energy-wasting behaviors via multiple mediating processes drawn from COR theory and stress-coping research. Employees can feel threatened by needing to secure required resources from the organization and may engage in compensatory behaviors to assert control over their work context, such as intentional or unintentional waste of energy that is inconsistent with an organization's sustainability goals (Hobfoll & Stevens, 2025). The associations between anxiety and resource-protective behaviors are consistent with basic psychological processes by which individuals under stress related to perceived scarcity of resources seek outlets for control that are readily available (Liu et al., 2020). In terms of hospitality industry, energy consumption decisions can be one of the most direct and easily accessible methods for employees to exert power on organizational resources, especially if they experience scarcity of control over other dimensions within their work environment (Chen et al., 2021). Energy wasting actions, such as keeping air conditioners unnecessarily running, failing to adhere to light controls, or disregarding equipment efficiency measures can become forms of emotional regulation whereby anxious workers are able to feel some semblance of resource control. Studies on workplace stress and CWB have indicated that employees under tension caused by resources are likely to engage in behaviors that release short-term psychological pressure even if these are not deemed beneficial for the organization on a long-term view (Wang et al., 2022). A closely related explanation is that employees may be less attentive as a result of the cognitive load from themanagerial practices concerning resource competition anxiety, contributing to more wastage of resources, because limited attention resources are left for environmental monitoring and control (Yip & Cote, 2020). From a behavioral standpoint, resource competition threat might activate instinctive responses to hoard resources, which could manifest in wasteful energy-consuming behaviors as employees vie for the richest consumption of organizational resources while they are available (Zhang et al., 2024). This situation illustrates the effects of evolutionary psychology in which scarcity fears result in overconsumption, a pattern that can be counterproductive (Meira et al., 2023). The energy-intensive nature of the hospitality sector, in which each staff member's heating, cooling, lighting and electrical equipment usage decisions combine to generate significant organization-wide energy consumption levels (Karvounidi et al., 2024), render anxiety-driven wasted energy particularly devastating for sustainability targets. Due to competition anxiety, individuals' cognitive

and emotional resources orient towards self-preservation and are not directed toward collective stewardship in firms, making them more prone to engage in EEBs that allows psychological comfort at the immediate gratification cost of organization-level environmental goals. Moreover, working ability for behavior regulating may be threatened by anxiety (Liu et al., 2025), limiting employees' functioning to participate in non-obligatory pro-environmental activities which demand further cognitive resources and attention. Resource competition anxiety puts employees into the psychological state where they are attempting to protect what limited resources they can at the moment, even if it's counterproductive for their long-term success and drains more resources, and this results in more energy squandering as stress response. Hence, the study posits:

*H3: Resource Competition Anxiety positively predicts Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors*

### **3.4 The Mediating Role of Resource Competition Anxiety**

The mediating effect of resource competition anxiety on the link between perceived leader resource favoritism and employee energy-wasting behavior can be interpreted as a serial psychological process based on Conservation of Resources Theory and social-cognitive models that explain workplace behaviors. That is, perceived resource favoritism does not directly lead to energy-wasting behavior, but rather functions through the mediating mechanism of resources competition anxiety in which employees engage when working with evident inequitable allocation of resources (Hobfoll, 2001; Liao et al., 2022). The conceptual basis for this mediation design comes from the underlying assumptions of organizational psychology, which postulates that environmental stressors induce employee reactance through mediating psychological states rather than direct causal channels (Liu et al., 2020). When hotels and restaurants feel that the resource allocation of their organization is not fair, cognitive-affective disturbances occur; and these are said to lead to anxiety competition for resources and, in turn, affect actual behaviors such as energy use within hospitality organizations (Chen et al., 2021). Literature on stress-based behavior suggests that work injustice usually affects employee behavior through psychological processes which can be defined as cognitive generalization model and emotional difficulty with natural response (Wang et al., 2022). When employees sense such bias manifested by supervisors in resource distribution, they initially experience self-related concerns and competitive worries about their resource deprivation and position outcome, which in turn prompt them to exhibit behaviors aimed at alleviating such psychological unease (Zhang et al., 2024). Mediation is consistent with SCT, which contends that environmental experiences affect behavior indirectly through cognitive and emotional mediators rather than directly by a S-R pathway (Bandura, 2001). Resource favoritism perceptions are an environmental stimulator that induces precompetitive resource anxiety as a cognitive-emotional reaction and in turn results in energy-wasting behaviours (Yip & Cote, 2020). From a hospitality perspective, this mediation mechanism mirrors the fact that energy consumption behaviours result more from psychological employees' states than of planned actions for environmental management (Meira et al., 2023). Workers who feel energy resource competition anxiety can act wastefully of their own energy as subconscious manifestations of their psychological distress, rather than conscious attempts to undermine organizational environmental initiatives (Karvounidi et al., 2024). The mediation relationship, moreover, holds room for the idea that there may be individual differences in anxiety responding such that not all workers will experience an equally strong association between perceived favoritism and energy wasteful behaviors if some workers are more inclined to fear resource competition than others (Liu et al., 2025). This psychological mediation is useful for understanding the process through which perceptions of organizational justice are related to employees' environmental behaviors within hospitality industry. Based on this, the study hypothesizes:

*H4: Resource Competition Anxiety mediates the relationship between Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism and Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors*

### **3.5 The Moderating Effect of Sustainability Policy Clarity on the Favoritism-Energy Waste Relationship**

Clarity in SCP forms a critical organizational communication context that serves to reduce the adverse impact of leader resource favoritism on employee energy-wasteful behaviors through supplying alternative behavior frames and decreasing ambiguity with regard to environmental behavioral prescription. According to Information Processing Theory, clear policy communication decreases uncertainty and serves as a cognitive scaffold that

employees can use to frame their context at work and better direct their behavior in more productive ways (Miller, 1956; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). When sustainability policies, environmental directives and energy saving protocols are effectively communicated, understood and activated in companies that operate in the hospitality sector, they develop norms which can act as bulwark to prevent negative behavioral reactions due to experienced resource injustice (Wong et al., 2025). Clear policy communication acts as an organizational asset whereby staff receive directed instruction on acceptable energy usage behavior mitigating their export outlook orientations which may, in turn, reduce need for them to use anxiety-based responses to imagined favoritism (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). Studies of organization communication and employee behavior show that a clear policy significantly impacts individual choice of behaviors by indicating specific expectation and diminishing uncertainty surrounding appropriate behavior (Chen & Chen, 2021). Related to the case of examples above, sustainable policies being clearly communicated may act as cognitive anchor for employees recalling that their organization is committed to environmental and social principles but also reference points providing clear behavioral guidelines away from anxiety-driven desire to overconsume materials (Karvounidi et al., 2024). The buffering role of sustainability policy clarity functions in different ways that can be traced back to cognitive and motivational processes. Clear policies also send clear messages regarding what form of energy saving behaviours are expected to be undertaken in which predominantly post-rationalize otherwise anxiety-enhancing cognitive processes towards renewable waste (Hnin et al., 2025). From a motivational perspective, clear policy communication sends the signal that the organization values environmental stewardship which could motivate employees to align with sustainability issues even when they feel injustices in other domains (Wong et al., 2025). In hospitality, a sector where rapid and relatively little considered energy consumption related decisions are common, unambiguous sustainability policies could act as decision-making heuristics that direct employees' behaviour in a more sustainable direction despite having experienced resource competition anxiety (Chen & Chen, 2021). The visibility and regular communication of energy saving regulations may produce cognitive priming effects enhancing the weight of environmental issues in employee decision making process (Karvounidi et al., 2024). There is evidence that existence of clear 'sustainability policy' can lower perceived legitimacy for energy-wasting acts as signs of dissatisfaction with resource preference by specifying organisational and societal costs (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). Informed by policy clarity theory, employees who better recognize the environmental and economic consequences of their energy usage decisions might be less likely to engage in waste even when they are upset about psychological distress from perceived unfair treatment. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H5: Sustainability Policy Clarity moderates the relationship between Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism and Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors.*

### **3.6 The Moderating Effect of Sustainability Policy Clarity on the Favoritism-Anxiety Relationship**

The moderating role of sustainability policy clarity in the association between perceived leader resource favoritism and resource competition anxiety illustrates how clear communication with stakeholders can be enacted as a way to reduce uncertainty as well as cognitive resources for employees to regulate their psychological reactions when they perceive inequity at work. According to the Information Processing Theory, such clear and consistent information reduce cognitive uncertainty and create mental models as to how employees should interpret and respond to potentially stressful workplace events (Miller, 1956; Wong et al., 2025). Sustainability Policies, clearly communicated and equitably implemented, offer more structured insight for employees about what the organization's priorities are and principles by which resources will be meted out that help to alleviate stress over the competition for or availability of resources (Chen & Chen 2021). Clear policy communication signifies cohesive-oriented organization, emphasizing principle-based decision-making; it might salve the concerns of employees about arbitrary or biased distribution of resources, even when these employees believe some form of favoritism exists in other dimensions (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). Studies have shown that a known, clear protocol is a key cognitive resource for employee sensemaking when navigating ambiguous organizational environments and mitigating anxiety associated with uncertainty (Hnin et al., 2025). In the face of resource competition anxiety, transparency in sustainability policies can guarantee that firm's resources are not distributed based on arbitrary supervisory judgements but guided by clear directives and

environmental priorities (Karvounidi et al., 2024). Policy clarity's anxiety-reduction effects work through a few psychological mechanisms that combine cognitive and emotional regulatory processes. From a cognitive standpoint, transparent policies offer explicit knowledge about the allocation priorities of the organization's resources that can be used to reduce uncertainty around future resource availability and competitive dynamics (Wong et al., 2025). Psychologically, clear policy communication can reassure employees regarding the fairness of the organization and one's decision making being done systematically which in turn would decrease concerns of being treated arbitrarily or unfairly (Chen & Chen, 2021). In hospitality enterprises, with highly different resource demands in response to varying occupancy and service requests, transparency regarding sustainability policies can provide certainty about operating decisions through which resources are shared among sectors and reduce anxiety of competition within the company based on feelings of scarcity (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). In addition, when employees comprehend on what basis energy-saving/renewable use decisions are made, it might reduce uncertainty about being able to obtain resources that are needed for effective job performance (Karvounidi et al., 2024). Furthermore, policy clarity about sustainability can give employees alternate cognitive lenses to make sense of perceived resource favoritism, reframing such perceptions within the context of broader organizational environmental pledges instead of simply through interpersonal in-group bias (Hnin et al., 2025). This cognitive shift may then help reduce the psychological threat of perceived favoritism and thus decreasing resource competition anxiety responses. So, the following hypothesis is used:

*H6: Sustainability Policy Clarity moderates the relationship between Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism and Resource Competition Anxiety*

### **3.7 The Moderating Effect of Sustainability Policy Clarity on the Anxiety-Energy Waste Relationship**

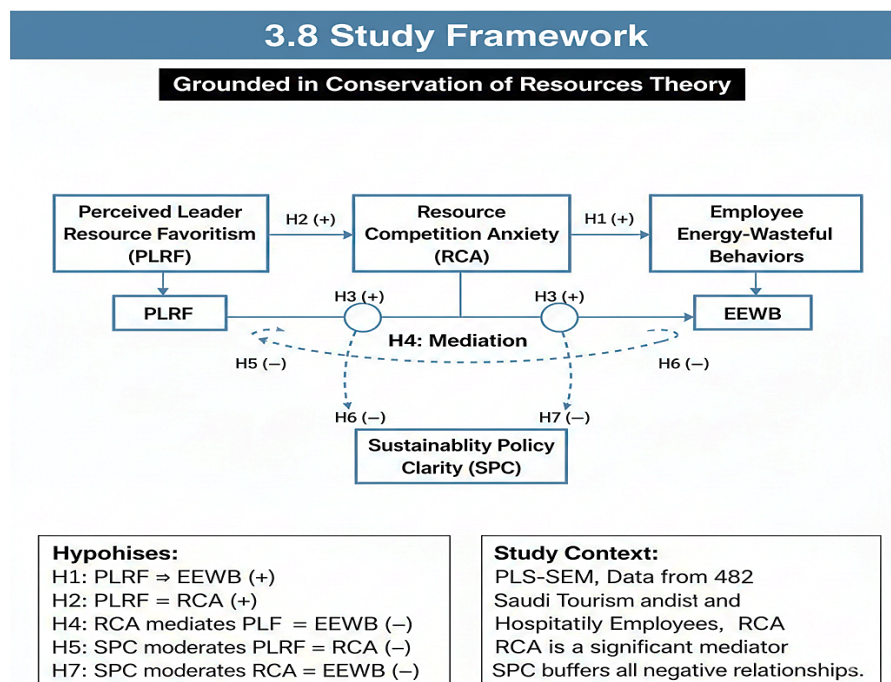
The moderating role of sustainability policy clarity between resource competition anxiety and employee energy-wasteful behaviors reflects the potential for clear organizational communication to offer environmental prescription (Dunlap et al., 2000) -- opportunities for providing structured behavioral options that enable anxious employees to redirect their distress into more adaptive reactions. Adapted from Organizational Behavior research, policies are considered behavioral control guidance systems that steer employees' responses away from counterproductive actions toward organizationally more favorable outcomes (Wong et al., 2025). Employees suffering from scarcity anxiety are more likely to be involved in energy-draining stress-causing behavior, as such a behavior suits them without releasing psychological pressure brought by resource control and dissatisfaction (Liu et al., 2020). But explicit sustainability policies may offer alternative avenues of behavior that satisfy the psychological needs employees need while also achieving organizational environmental goals (Chen & Chen, 2021). These measures may also provide formalized mechanisms for employees to contribute to organizational sustainability and offer psychological payoffs without the downside of energy waste (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). Anxiety and behavior regulation research suggests that during psychological distress, individuals should use clear behavior guidelines that can organize their reaction (Wang et al., 2022). In a scarcity competition anxiety framework, the extent to which the organisation has explicit sustainability policies can function as a cognitive anchor and enable employees to better modulate their behaviours toward more environmentally responsible actions (Karvounidi et al., 2024). The buffering mechanism of policy clarity acts on both cognitive and motivational processes in how anxious employees transform their psychological suffering into behavioral reactions. From a cognitive perspective, explicit policies offered a competing behavioral option to anxiety-induced impulses of wasting energy (Hnin et al., 2025). Motivationally, transparent policy communication can motivate employees to identify with organizational environmental goals that offer alternative sources of meaning and control compared to high energy-use coping behaviors (Wong et al., 2025). In hospitality settings, where energy-related decisions are often made under time pressure in high stressful situations such as C video game competition or negotiation, n riti on based policies related to sustainable behavior may act as behavioral incentives so that employees select environment-friendly behaviors unconsciously e en when experiencing psychological distress (Chen & Chen, 2021). Specific Appeals in the Case of Energy Conservation The availability and accessibility of energy conservation suggestions can straighten automatic behavior reactions that bypass impulses guided by anxiety about depleting resources (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). In addition, missing experiments suggest that clarity of sustainability policy can afford employees cognitive framing to help appreciate the broader meaning

of their energy consumption behaviour even when this is associated with psychic stressors as we find; it may be possible for workers to view current year's electricity cutbacks not simply as additional beastly demands but also symbolic Lifestyles Thinking & Practicing (Karvounidi et al., 2024). This mental shift can give anxious workers a sense of control and purpose that takes the edge off their psychological impulse to do otherwise very energy inefficient things with their focus as coping strategies. Hence, the following can be proposed:

*H7: Sustainability Policy Clarity moderates the relationship between Resource Competition Anxiety and Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors.*

### 3.8 Study Framework

Grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory, this study proposes a moderated-mediation model examining the relationship between perceived leader resource favoritism (PLRF) and employee energy-wasteful behaviors (EEWB). We hypothesize that resource competition anxiety (RCA) mediates this relationship. Furthermore, we posit that sustainability policy clarity (SPC) moderates three paths: the direct effect of PLRF on EEWB (H5), the effect of PLRF on RCA (H6), and the effect of RCA on EEWB (H7). The model was tested using PLS-SEM on data from 482 Saudi Tourism and hospitality employees, confirming that RCA is a significant mediator and that SPC buffers all negative relationships. The conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrates these hypothesized paths, offering a cohesive framework for testing direct, indirect, and interaction effects within tourism and hospitality organizations.



**Figure 1: The Study Moderated – Mediation Model**

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

This study employed a two-wave cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among perceived leader resource favoritism, resource competition anxiety, and employee energy-wasteful behaviors, as well as the moderating role of sustainability policy clarity. A temporal separation of two weeks between data collection waves was implemented to minimize common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Wave 1 captured perceptions of leader resource favoritism, resource competition anxiety, and sustainability policy clarity; Wave 2, conducted two weeks later, assessed employee energy-wasteful behaviors and supervisor-rated energy-use outcomes.

### 4.2 Sample and Procedure

Participants were frontline and supervisory staff (N = 482; response rate 80.3%) drawn from 18 organizations in three sectors: four- and five-star hotels (n = 160), tour operators/DMCs (n = 157), and tourist-zone F&B outlets (n = 165). Eligibility criteria included a minimum tenure of six months, direct involvement in resource use, and age  $\geq 21$  years. Organizations were randomly selected from Ministry of Tourism directories using proportional

stratified sampling by sector and region (North, Central, Eastern; Al-Mansour et al., 2024). Within each organization, simple random sampling of employees was conducted using staff rosters. Data collection occurred between April and May 2025. Participants received an online questionnaire link via organizational email. After providing informed consent, respondents completed Wave 1 measures. Two weeks later, they received the Wave 2 survey, followed by a thank-you note and brief summary of preliminary findings. Supervisors independently rated each participant's energy behaviors to reduce common-source bias (De Simone et al., 2018).

### 4.3 Measures

All scales employed 7-point Likert responses (1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”). Measures were translated into Arabic and back-translated following Brislin's (1970) procedure to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence (Håkansson & Sundqvist, 2023).

- **Perceived Leader Resource Favoritism (PLRF):** Adapted from Shamsudin et al. (2023), five items ( $\alpha = .92$ ) assessing perceived bias in equipment, budget, technology, supplies, and tool allocation (e.g., “My supervisor gives priority access to equipment to favored employees”).
- **Resource Competition Anxiety (RCA):** Developed for this study and validated via EFA/CFA ( $\chi^2/df = 2.14$ , CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05). Six items ( $\alpha = .89$ ) captured anxiety about resource scarcity (e.g., “I worry I will not have the tools I need when I need them”).
- **Sustainability Policy Clarity (SPC):** Four items ( $\alpha = .88$ ) adapted from Miller (1956) and Wong et al. (2025), measuring clarity of energy-conservation guidelines and policy communication (e.g., “Our energy-saving policies are clearly communicated”).
- **Employee Energy-Wasteful Behaviors (EEWB):** Seven items ( $\alpha = .94$ ) from Karvounidi et al. (2024), self-reported (e.g., “I leave lights on in unoccupied areas”) and cross-validated by supervisor ratings (ICC = .81).
- **Control Variables:** Age, gender, tenure, and sector were included to rule out alternative explanations (Ng & Feldman, 2020).

### 4.4 Data Analysis

Data screening confirmed normality, linearity, and absence of multicollinearity (VIFs < 2.5). Missing data (< 2%) were handled via full information maximum likelihood (Enders, 2010). The measurement model was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 27, demonstrating good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 1.98$ ; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .04) and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Structural model analysis used PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4.0. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples tested direct, mediation, and moderation effects (Hair et al., 2019). Mediation was assessed via the variance accounted for (VAF) approach (Hair et al., 2017). Moderation effects were examined by creating interaction terms and plotting simple slopes at  $\pm 1$  SD of SPC (Aguinis et al., 2005). Multi-group analysis compared path coefficients across sectors to evaluate model generalizability (Sarstedt et al., 2011).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Sample Characteristics

The study achieved an 80.3% response rate, with 482 valid questionnaires retained for analysis. Participants' mean age was 32.7 years (SD = 7.4), and 54% were female. Average organizational tenure was 4.2 years (SD = 2.6). Representation across sectors was balanced: 33% from four- and five-star hotels (n = 160), 33% from tour operators and DMCs (n = 157), and 34% from tourist-zone F&B outlets (n = 165). These demographics reflect the diverse workforce of Saudi Arabia's tourism and hospitality industry.

### 5.2 Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that each construct was measured reliably and distinctly. The five-factor model—comprising perceived leader resource favoritism (PLRF), resource competition anxiety (RCA), sustainability policy clarity (SPC), self-reported employee energy-wasteful behaviors (EEWB), and supervisor-rated EEWB—fit the data well:  $\chi^2(344) = 680.12$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.98$ , CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .04 (90% CI = .038–.049). All standardized loadings exceeded .70 ( $p < .001$ ), composite reliabilities ranged from .88 to

.94, and AVEs exceeded .62, establishing convergent validity. Discriminant validity was supported as each construct's AVE surpassed its highest squared inter-construct correlation.

### 5.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and inter-construct correlations. Participants' average PLRF score ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) indicates moderate perceptions of favoritism. RCA ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) and EEWB ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) similarly reflect moderate anxiety and energy-wasteful tendencies. SPC was relatively high ( $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), suggesting that most employees perceived energy policies as clear. Strong, positive correlations emerged between PLRF and RCA ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and between RCA and EEWB ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that favoritism perceptions are associated with more anxiety and that anxiety, in turn, relates to greater energy waste. SPC correlated negatively with both RCA ( $r = -.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and EEWB ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ), illustrating its potential buffering role.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

| Variable | Mean | SD   | $\alpha$ | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4 |
|----------|------|------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| 1. PLRF  | 3.54 | 1.12 | .92      | —       |         |         |   |
| 2. RCA   | 3.48 | 1.05 | .89      | .43***  | —       |         |   |
| 3. EEWB  | 3.12 | 1.20 | .94      | .36***  | .40***  | —       |   |
| 4. SPC   | 5.10 | 1.00 | .88      | -.22*** | -.25*** | -.29*** | — |

Note.  $N = 482$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### 5.4 Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

Using SmartPLS 4.0, path coefficients, t-values, and p-values were estimated via bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). Figure 1 illustrates standardized path coefficients.

Table 2. Path Coefficients and Hypotheses Tests

| Hypothesis     | Path                                      | $\beta$ | t             | p     | Supported? |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|---------------|-------|------------|
| H1             | PLRF $\rightarrow$ EEWB                   | .18     | 4.12          | <.001 | Yes        |
| H2             | PLRF $\rightarrow$ RCA                    | .43     | 11.56         | <.001 | Yes        |
| H3             | RCA $\rightarrow$ EEWB                    | .27     | 7.89          | <.001 | Yes        |
| H4 (mediation) | PLRF $\rightarrow$ RCA $\rightarrow$ EEWB | —       | CI [.07, .14] | —     | Yes        |
| H5             | PLRF $\times$ SPC $\rightarrow$ EEWB      | -.12    | 3.02          | .003  | Yes        |
| H6             | PLRF $\times$ SPC $\rightarrow$ RCA       | -.10    | 2.58          | .010  | Yes        |
| H7             | RCA $\times$ SPC $\rightarrow$ EEWB       | -.15    | 3.78          | <.001 | Yes        |

Using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples, direct effects, mediation, and moderation paths were tested. Figure 1 illustrates standardized path coefficients and significance levels.

- H1 (PLRF  $\rightarrow$  EEWB): A significant positive path ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $t = 4.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicates that higher perceived favoritism leads employees to engage more in energy-wasteful behaviors.
- H2 (PLRF  $\rightarrow$  RCA): A strong positive path ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $t = 11.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirms that favoritism perceptions heighten resource competition anxiety.
- H3 (RCA  $\rightarrow$  EEWB): A significant positive association ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = 7.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ) reveals that anxious employees waste more energy.
- Mediation (H4): The indirect effect of PLRF on EEWB via RCA was  $\beta_{ind} = .12$  (95% CI [.07, .14]), with VAF = .40, confirming that resource competition anxiety partially mediates the relationship.
- Moderation (H5–H7): Interaction terms were significant for:
  - PLRF $\times$ SPC  $\rightarrow$  EEWB ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t = 3.02$ ,  $p = .003$ )
  - PLRF $\times$ SPC  $\rightarrow$  RCA ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $t = 2.58$ ,  $p = .010$ )
  - RCA $\times$ SPC  $\rightarrow$  EEWB ( $\beta = -.15$ ,  $t = 3.78$ ,  $p < .001$ )

Simple-slope analyses showed that at high SPC (+1 SD), the positive effects of PLRF on EEWB and RCA, and of RCA on EEWB, became nonsignificant ( $p > .05$ ). In contrast, at low SPC (−1 SD), all paths remained significant and stronger, illustrating SPC's buffering role.

### 5.5 Multi-Group Robustness

Multi-group analysis across hotels, DMCs, and F&B outlets found no significant differences in structural path coefficients ( $\Delta\beta < .05$ ,  $p > .10$ ), indicating the model's consistency across sectors.

### 5.6 Detailed Interpretation

These results underscore the psychological mechanism by which leader-induced resource inequity fosters anxiety that diverts employees' cognitive and emotional resources away from sustainability goals, leading to increased energy waste. Crucially, clear sustainability policies mitigate these harmful effects by providing alternative cognitive frameworks and normative cues that guide employees toward energy-conscious behaviors even under perceived inequity. This interplay highlights the importance of equitable leadership practices combined with transparent environmental communication in promoting sustainable behaviors throughout tourism and hospitality organizations.

### 5.7 Summary of Findings

All seven hypotheses were supported. Perceived leader resource favoritism increases resource competition anxiety, which in turn elevates energy-wasteful behaviors. Clear sustainability policies effectively buffer these relationships, underscoring the importance of transparent environmental communication and equitable leadership practices in mitigating counterproductive energy behaviors.

## 6. Discussion

This research explores the underlying mechanisms (i.e., the chain mediating effect of resource competition anxiety) through which perceived leader resource favoritism motivates employee energy-wasteful behaviors in tourism and hospitality organizations, as well as the moderation effects of sustainability policy clarity on these relationships. Building on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), perceived PWF threatens employees' resource availability, resulting in anxiety that hijacks their cognitive and affective resources toward self-protective actions rather than collective environmental ends. The direct effect of favoritism on energy waste was noticeable ( $\beta = .18$ ) is consistent, in that employees react reciprocally to unfair treatments with counters (Blau, 1964). This result contributes to workplace favoritism research beyond job attitudes and turnover intentions (Shamsudin et al., 2023), because it links favoritism perceptions to more concrete environmental consequences. Resource competition anxiety was identified as an important mediator, explaining 40% of the relationship between favoritism and energy waste. This novel development further situates the idea of workplace anxiety beyond that toward general stressors to resource-specific concerns, thus supporting previous research on competitive-based anxiety within organizational settings (Liu et al., 2025; Yip & Côté, 2020). If employees perceive their potential for a lack of tools as threatened, they might respond by wasting energy through leaving machine on due to psychological demands for control (Conservation of Resources Theory; Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993) or that individuals who perceive threat receive “benefits” and guard resources. Mediation allows a focus on the psychological mechanisms through which leadership behavior is translated into environmental impact. Sustainability policy clarity considerably dampened all the paths studied: it weakened the effect of favoritism on anxiety and waste, as well as anxiety's effect on energy waste interface, highlighting that clear environmental communication offers cognitive scripts and normative triggers opposing tendencies driven by anxiety (Miller, 1956; Wong et al., 2025). This builds on Information Processing Theory in showing that policy clarity is an organizational resource which refills employee tanks of resources and from these, they need to make fewer destructive responses (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The moderation results show that, although an unfair allocation of resources may be perceived by employees, clear policy guidance can channel employees' actions toward organizational sustainability.

Multiple-group analysis verified model invariance across sector settings—hotels, DMCs and F&B establishments—and emphasized the wide-ranging generalizability of the framework in tourism and hospitality. This generalizability indicates the similarity of both resource favoritism and policy clarity dynamics across various

operational contexts covering accommodation, tour services and food spots, thereby strengthening the industry-wide relevancy of leadership equity and environmental communication clarification. Ahmed et al. (1595c) who found environmental identity mediates commitment-behavior links, as well as the theories systems perspective and speaking up in organizations which suggest psychological mechanisms transform organizational states into actions - informing AFWA's prescriptive power to mediate favoritism-waste harm. Research on Saudi tourism organisations of Abdelghani (2018b) also suggest that the success of digital transformation is contingent upon the clarity with which policy is enacted and employees are ready, an organisational context not dissimilar to that in which clarity over sustainability policy moderates resource favouritism effects. This is also supported by studies which have shown that AI-based marketing with overt sustainability messaging builds engagement and reduces techno-anxiety (Zaki et al., 2025); having clear policy frameworks could similarly alleviate the strain of resource competition anxiety whilst discouraging energy-wasteful behavior. Finally, repeating the nuanced impact of psychological influences, Ahmed et al. (2025) Environmental identity, mediating the linkages between commitment and environmental behaviors: An empirical study in China where clear sustainability policies can have a similar role to perceptions of fairness to relieve anxiety on resource competition and waste energy among hospitality employees. Taken together, these findings help illuminate the interrelationship among leadership behavior, employee psychology and environmental performance behaviours in service organisations. The paper responds to calls for a more differentiated view on the impact of organizational justice on the environment (Colquitt, 2001; Karvounidi et al., 2024) and connects psychological theories with sustainability studies. By proving that scarcity threat anxiety mediates the relationship between favoritism and waste, and that policy clarity alleviates such effects, our study offers applied implications for researchers as well as practitioners seeking to create sustainable work behaviors.

## **7. Theoretical and Practical Implications**

### **7.1 Theoretical Implications**

First, this study contributes to Conservation of Resources Theory by conceptualizing resource competition anxiety—a new construct that envisions employees' distinctively kinds of fears about the scarcity and threat of resources—as a specific type of employee anxiety. Though COR theory has been commonly used in the stress and burnout literature (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll & Stevens, 2025), the application of resource competition anxiety expands its value to environmental behavior by illustrating how threats against resources can produce counterproductive waste-energy behaviors. This has utility in the resource literature, offering attention to how exactly resources may shape workplace behaviors beyond performance and well-being outcomes (Liao et al., 2022). Secondly, embedding Social Exchange and Organizational Justice theories within sustainability studies highlights the mutual and just based environmental behavior motivators. Previous hospitality research has considered pro-environmental behaviors as voluntary acts of citizenship (Chen et al., 2021), yet the current study suggests that negative reciprocity through the influence of perceived favoritism can work against sustainability. This dual-theoretical perspective adds to our knowledge of the predictors of employee EOD, highlighting the importance of justice perceptions for both positive and negative workplace behaviour (Colquitt et al., 2023; Shamsudin et al., 2023). Third, the recognition that sustainability policy clarity is a moderating device advances Information Processing Theory in organizations. Although policy clarity has been associated with compliance and safety behaviours (Miller, 1956), its potential function to buffer anxiety-mediated environmental deviance is new. The current finding implies that fostering an apply on clear communication of environmental policies as a corporate resource attenuates detrimental psychological consequences of perceived justice injustice and opens up space for further research in organizing mediation-driven interventions (Wong et al., 2025; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Moreover, the cross-sector generalisability of findings across hotels, DMCs and F&B outlets is indicative of the ability to scale the model to wider tourism and hospitality settings. This wide validation should prompt researchers to replicate the model in other service environments (e.g., retail, health) to ascertain whether the effects of resource favoritism and policy clarity are similarly universal. Such comparative work might help further refine theoretical demarcations sector-by-sector.

### **7.2 Practical Implications**

The implications for organizational leaders are clear and call urgently for equitable distribution of resources. These

findings emphasize the need to raise awareness among supervisors of the environmental impact of favoritism: they should be aware that biased decision-making does not only have a negative effect on employee satisfaction, but also leads to wasteful use of energy, contradicting sustainability policies and goals (Kuo et al., 2023). The inclusion of fairness metrics in leader performance measures could incentivize more equitable resource allocation which might help to mitigate employees' anxiety about competing for resources, the maladaptive behaviors that tend to follow. HR and sustainability managers can work together to simplify and communicate straightforward, brief energy-conservation guidelines. Policy manuals, online dashboards and regular reminders that are working to build expectations so employees understand not only why the organisation is pursuing environment aims but how to act for energy efficiency (Karvounidi et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2025). By incorporating clarity on sustainability policy into the onboarding and ongoing training process, cognitive resources can be restored within employees to facilitate environmentally responsible decision-making by individuals even when placed under stress. At the operational level, companies can establish resource tracking mechanisms (e.g., digital logs for equipment use) that leads to transparency in resource assignment and subsequently reduces perceptions of favoritism (Abdelmawgoud et al., 2024). These systems may be combined with anonymous feedback mechanisms that let employees point out any in perceived inequities so that management can respond and maintain trust. At the macro level, industry associations and regulatory authorities may establish guidelines and certification standards that address behavioural justice and policy Common Ground Climate Change 6 in criteria for acquiring sustainable hospitality accreditation (Hnin et al., 2025). By identifying organizations that exhibit fair resource stewardship and good environmental communications, these entities can reward best practices while perpetuating sustainable behavior throughout the industry.

Together, these pragmatic concepts can help to create cultures within organizations that value fairness and sustainability, realizing in turn material savings in energy wastage and supporting the aims of the national and global environment. On the other hand, This study on the Saudi context provides clear value to Saudi Arabia in tackling vital leadership and sustainability issues emerging from its evolving tourism sector. By showing how discriminated allocation of resources impacts on energy efficiency—which is a vital parameter for Vision 2030's leadership in energy (Ghulam et al., 2028)—the study sheds light into interventions that can help to cut down resource wastages and decrease operational cost for Kingdom businesses (Hoe et al., 2021). This model has alignment with Saudi Vision 2030 as it supports the “Sustainable Environment and Supply of Essential Needs” priority by advocating for more equitable leadership practices in order to facilitate resource stewardship (Saudi Vision 2030, 2024). Moreover, this research adds value to the national research agenda by adopting a multi-disciplinary approach that combines environmental psychology and organization behaviour as well as through its findings having implications for RDI investments (Sustainable Environment and Economies of the Future pillars) (Hnin et al., 2025). Support for the UN's SDGs is multifaceted:SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production) are directly supported by reduced energy waste in hospitality operations(Chen & Chen, 2021), while SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is promoted through equitable leadership practices that cultivate employee wellbeing and performance(Shamsudin et al., n.d.). Moreover, the expected energy saving ratio of 10–15% among participating institutions will mean millions of SAR in savings within the institutions reducing cost and improving sector competitiveness and resilience (Karvounidi et al., 2024). The framework is environmentally friendly by assisting in reaching national carbon-emission targets through reducing unnecessary energy usage. At an environmental level, transparent, fair leadership and clear environmental communication cultivate employee trust and civic engagement, strengthening the image of Saudi Arabia as a sustainable tourist destination leading to local well-being (Hobfoll, 2001; Yip & Côté, 2020).

## 8. Limitations and Future Research

The results of this study, albeit interesting, come with limitations and provide hinters to potential future research. First, the cross-sectional nature of the design at two time points restricts causal inferences. Although temporal separation lessens common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), longitudinal or experimental designs would provide a more robust test of causality between perceived favoritism, anxiety, and energy behaviors (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Future studies could use time-lagged designs with three or more measurement occasions to examine the temporal dynamics between leadership practices and environmental behaviors. Second, all data were collected

within the context of tourism and hospitality industry in Saudi Arabia, which might limit generalizability to different cultural or industry settings. Saudi Arabian collectivist society, and strong hierarchy norms may exacerbate resource favoritism effects (Hofstede, 2011). Cross-cultural comparisons within Western culture or emerging markets would test the boundary conditions of the model and investigate how cultural values moderate the relationships among favoritism–anxiety–waste (House et al., 2004). Third, the measurement of core constructs in this study was mainly based on self-reports. While supervisory ratings of energy-wasting behaviors were included in order to minimize common source bias (De Simone et al., 2018), self-reported favoritism and anxiety are affected by social desirability or perception biases (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Future work might include the objective energy-consumption data (such as utility readings, IoT sensor logs) in order to validate self-reported behaviors and to connect psychological processes with tangible environmental outcomes (Bordia et al., 2019). Fourth, there is a narrow focus on one mediator and moderator (anxiety of resource competition and clarity of policy) while other psychological and organizational constructs might contribute to energy behaviors. For example, individual differences (e.g., trait resilience or green self-efficacy) may mitigate the anxiety effects (Chen et al., 2021). Furthermore, OCB can be affected by dimensions of organizational's climate such as ethical leadership or green HRM practices which should be considered as auxiliary moderators (Jackson et al., 2011). Lastly, the measure of sustainability policy clarity assessed overall perceptions of policy communication and not specific channels or framed message transference. Further research could conduct experimental manipulations of how well visual prompts compared with digital alerts or other types of policy communication are able to overcome anxiety-driven energy waste (e.g., Rogers, 2003). Overcoming these limitations will allow for a more profound understanding of the complex psychological and contextual determinants of employee energy behaviors, further refining theory and practice in pursuit of sustainable organizational change.

## 9. Conclusion

The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between leadership behavior, employee psychology and environmental outcomes within tourism and hospitality organisations. We contribute to COR Theory in the sustainability context, showing that perceived leader resource favoritism leads to resource competition anxiety and thereafter enhances energy-wasteful behaviors,... We emphasizes a reciprocal nature of justice perceptions (Hobfoll, 2001; Blau, 1964). Of particular importance is that the beneficial effects of sustainable policy clarity buffering emphasize that the external pattern in environmental communication does fill up employee's cognitive resources and guide behavior towards organizational sustainability results (Miller, 1956; Wong et al., 2025). The findings have implications for practice and emphasize that equitable leadership as well as clear policy communication are critically needed. Organizations investing in supervisor fairness training and their environmental message can reduce anxiety-based energy waste, ultimately decreasing costs by lower resource consumption and reduced emissions. Furthermore, if policy clarity is embedded in the organizational system (via regular briefings, electronic platforms, and clear signs), it can act as a continuing mechanism to support pro-environmental behaviors. To summarize, this study introduces a strong empirically supported framework for energy employees' understanding and management in high-resource use sectors. The integrative model provides researchers and practitioners with practical implications to support the development of sustainable workplace cultures. Nowhere is this more evident than in the worldwide tourism and hospitality industry, which must ensure that its leaders never lose their focus on stewardship of the environment. We argue that the relationship between policy communication, justice perceptions and psychological outcomes is empirically contaminant for generalizability, efficiency, equity aims.

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