

# A multilevel investigation of the link between ethical leadership behaviour and employees green behaviour in the hospitality industry

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## ABSTRACT

The present study develops a multilevel model that examines the effects of supervisory ethical leadership behavior at the team level on employees green behaviour mediated by CSR at the organisational level, employees well-being, and taking responsibility at the individual level. Data were collected from a sample of 936 supervisors and 2284 employees from 184 hotels in United Arab Emirates. Utilizing multisource data and multilevel path analysis, the results indicated that supervisory ethical leadership behavior has indirect effect on green behavior through CSR, employees-wellbeing and taking responsibility behavior. These findings provide important implications for ethical leadership-green behavior link by developing and validating a multilevel model empirically in the hospitality industry.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the traditional social governance model has faced several challenges (Cardoni et al., 2020; Zubeltzu-Jaka et al., 2018). Corporate governance model that demonstrates higher ethical and moral standards have been developed (Levillain and Segrestin, 2019; Murphy and Smolarski, 2020). The significance role ethical leadership behaviours and CSR for improving employees organisational trust and employees attitudinal and organisational behaviours in the organisation is being examined and identified (Archimi et al., 2018; Bedi et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2015; Rivers et al., 2018; Sarwar et al., 2020; Tourigny et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2016).

Prior research has investigated the direct effect of CSR and ethical leadership behaviours on different behavioural and attitudinal consequences (e.g., Newman et al., 2015; Tourigny et al., 2019). However, research investigating the mechanisms through which such influences establish is lacking in the hospitality and tourism industry (Chilufya et al., 2019; Hu et al., 2019; Tuan, 2018). Prior research examined the organisational trust as a consequence of ethical leadership behaviours from affective, cognitive, and organisational point of view (Lu, 2014; Peng and Kim, 2020; Xu et al., 2016; Yurtkoru et al., 2018). Prior studies investigated the association between ethical leadership and CSR on

green behaviour through two intermediary methods. First approach, CSR plays a mediating role in the link between ethical leadership and organisational trust (Tourigny et al., 2019) and both organisational trust and employees well-being act as a mediator of the link among organisational trust and green behaviour (Bulatova, 2015; Haar et al., 2019; Suganthi, 2019; Su and Swanson, 2019). Second, trust is used as a moderator or as a mediator of the link between ethical leadership and green behaviour (e.g., Lu, 2014; Su and Swanson, 2019). Moreover, employees well-being was suggested as a main driver of green behaviour (Han and Hyun, 2019; Su and Swanson, 2019; Xing and Starik, 2017).

Although further empirical research is needed to substantiate the presumed supervisory ethical leadership behaviour–employee green behaviour association, a review of the literature indicates that the theoretical justifications for whether, how, and when ethical leadership behaviour will impact employee green behaviour continue to lack integrative and systematic testing and rebuttal, which further restricts the generalizability of previously published results (Su and Swanson, 2019; Tourigny et al., 2019). To overcome these shortcomings, we build and evaluate a model that elucidates the importance of CSR, organisational trust, employee well-being, and accountability as a mechanism for understanding how ethical leadership behaviours can influence employee green behaviours.

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While the results of these studies offer meaningful insights into the link among ethical leadership behaviours, CSR, and organisational trust, they do not provide us with a comprehensive image about the ethical leadership behaviours dynamics and its outcomes across the multilevel in the organisation. Particularly, the mechanism behind the role of ethical leadership behaviours in promoting CSR activities and how CSR can foster the organisational trust between employees is unknown. The sequential mediating influences of organisational trust, CSR, employees well-being on the association between ethical leadership behaviours and green behaviour is unknown (Su and Swanson, 2019). Investigating the main process by which ethical leadership behaviour and CSR effects employees behaviours in the organisations contributes to the management practice and theory which leads to effective organisational intervention (Tourigny et al., 2019). Therefore, in recent years, the hospitality industry has directed considerable attention to analysing the specific antecedents of green behaviour (Su and Swanson, 2019; Wells et al., 2015). In the hospitality industry, the existing literature cannot clearly explain how ethical leadership behaviour affect employee green behaviour. Therefore, the research addresses the following questions:

**RQ1.** What are the direct and indirect effect of ethical leadership on employee green behaviour?

**RQ2.** Do CSR, organisational trust, employee well-being mediate the link between ethical leadership and employee green behaviour?

Thus, the present study focuses on the work units supervisors and their subordinates to examine the association between supervisors ethical leadership behaviours and their subordinates green behaviour through CSR, organisational trust, taking responsibilities behaviour, and employees well-being. Our study used a multilevel model to examine how supervisors ethical leadership behaviour develop shared perceptions of corporate social responsibility between employees at the level of work units. We then examine how subordinates shared perceptions of corporate social responsibility have a cross-level mediating role on the link between ethical leadership behaviour and organisational trust at the individual levels. The role of employees well-being and responsibilities taking behaviours were examined as mediators on the link between organisational trust at the individual levels and employees green behaviours.

Our manuscript is structured into four sections. The literature review about the study variables is demonstrated and a conceptual framework was developed. The utilised methodology is indicated and the study results are demonstrated. The last section demonstrates the discussion and implications.

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Beauchamp and Bowie (1988) revealed that ethical leadership is originated from the principles of justice, respect, community, service, and honesty. Ethical leadership can be defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate behaviour in both personal and interpersonal contexts and the active promotion of socially responsible behaviour at all levels in the organization reinforcing a moral ethos through communication and ethical decision making” (Tourigny et al., 2019, P. 429). Based on the ethical leadership theory, ethical leadership results from situational and individual characteristics that incorporate a moral context and reasoning (Babalola et al., 2019; Bedi et al., 2016; Ciulla, 2005). This paper focuses on the influences of ethical leadership behaviour on organisational behaviour (Tourigny et al., 2019).

Based on the ethical leadership theory, ethical leaders should take interactional justice earnestly and make sure that internal and external stakeholders are treated fairly (Neubert et al., 2009). For instance, ethical leaders should invest in the employees, engage other stakeholders in activities that develop a social unanimity in the society, ensure their personal growth, and communicate a sense of social responsibilities (Tourigny et al., 2019). Thus, ethical leaders can be

perceived as trustworthy and honest by the employees (Brown and Treviño, 2006). This trust in leaders can be translated into positive attitudes and motivations, such as organisational trust, commitment, satisfaction, and motivates pro-social roles (Neubert et al., 2009; Tourigny et al., 2019).

While there is a theoretical basis for the link between corporate social responsibility and employees green behaviour (De Roeck and Farooq, 2017; Kim et al., 2017; Su and Swanson, 2019), our study focuses on examining the dynamics of this process on how ethical leadership behaviour effects employees green behaviour. Our paper develops an overarching theoretical model that can help with building up a management system based on ethical leadership behaviour. While theory of ethical leadership cannot explicit its cascading effect a cross levels (i.e., individual and organisational levels), its theoretical relationships to individual trust and CSR at the team level and the followed behaviours can justify a multilevel conceptual framework of the organisational leadership behaviour.

### 2.1. Ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility

In the current era, the concept of ethics in different business practices has gained extensive attention community (Treviño et al., 2006); therefore, ethical leadership term becomes a catchword in academic and business field. Ethical leadership includes two aspects, the moral manager and the moral person (Pasricha et al., 2018). Moral managers motivate and support the ethical practices in the firm by serving as role model for adapting reinforcement systems, communicating of ethics, and for ethical conduct to hold persons accountable for appropriate conduct (Den Hartog, 2015). Moral person has characteristics such as integrity, trustworthiness, and honesty; they involve in ethical conduct and behaviours and implement decision making in line with the principles of ethics.

Although different other styles of leadership such as authentic leadership (Alvesson and Einola, 2019), transformational leadership (Hoch et al., 2018), and spiritual leadership (Fry et al., 2017) all capture the aspect of moral person, the aspect of moral manager in confirming that “leaders do not undermine ethical standards in their quest for achievement of short term ends, sets ethical leadership apart from these styles” (Brown and Treviño, 2006, P. 613). Brown et al. (2005, P.120) provided an essential definition of ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making”. Previous studies revealed the significance role of ethical leadership in influencing followers behavioural and attitudinal consequences (e.g., Babalola et al., 2019; Eva et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2019; Huang and Paterson, 2017; Lin et al., 2020; Peng and Kim, 2020; Shareef and Atan, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2017).

The conceptualization of ethical leadership to encourage CSR activities was adopted from Brown et al.’s (2005), for different reasons. First, altruism differentiate ethical leadership (Haar et al., 2019). “Ethical leaders have a broad ethical awareness in that they are concerned about (a) serving the greater good, (b) means, not just ends, (c) long-term, not just the short-term, and (d) multiple stakeholders’ perspectives” (Treviño et al., 2003, p. 19). They have a great level of ethics, recognise the importance of ethics, and implement decisions making taking into account the interests of the stakeholders and the organisation long term interests, and thus exhibit leadership behaviours (Nassif et al., 2020; Pasricha et al., 2018). Previous studies revealed that drawing on the perspective of stakeholder, ethical leaders should find ways to enhance the social, ethical, and environmental performance of the firm to meet the expectations of the stakeholders and thus improve the social and ethical responsibilities of the business practices (Lin et al., 2020; Sarwar et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2014). Second, prior research indicated that ethical leaders have a high level of ethical standards, moral developments, practice values-based management, and develop sets of

ethical programs and policies, which are linked to greater corporate social responsibilities practices in the firm (Pasricha et al., 2018). Third, ethical leaders motivate employees to act responsibly and pay more attention to the organisation and stakeholders interests over their self-interests (Javed et al., 2020). They should make sure that the undertaken practices and activities achieve the maximum value for the stakeholders and the organisation. Fourth, ethical leadership behaviour has a significant and positive effects on transformational leadership (Chon and Zoltan, 2019; De Roeck and Farooq, 2018; Lin et al., 2020), which has a positive influences on the firm CSR activities.

In the tourism and hospitality context, Zhu et al. (2014) extend this argument by suggesting that a company’s social responsibility must rest on an organizational culture that is grounded on ethical values. In this case, a firm’s ethical behaviour reflects the values and beliefs espoused by the leader. Senior management can develop specific and relevant social responsibilities (e.g., CSR activities) in accordance with the ethical aspects of leadership and encourage staff to initiate them (Kim and Thapa, 2018). Based on the above argument and as demonstrated in Fig. 1, we propose that ethical leadership is related to CSR practices.

**H1.** Supervisory ethical leadership has a positive direct effect on CSR at the work unit levels.

2.2. CSR and organisational trust

Greenwood and Van (Greenwood and Van Buren, 2010) pointed out that CSR guidelines and policies are launched at the firm level and plays a critical role in influencing the institutional contexts that effects workers behaviours. Several studies indicated that employees’ perceptions of CSR at the team levels has a significant influence on their organisational identification, organisational citizenship behaviour, and engagement at the individual levels (De Roeck et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Tian and Robertson, 2019). Thus, in order to answer the call of Tourigny et al. (2019), we develop a multi-level model that links work unit perceptions of CSR to organisational trust at the individuals levels. Although CSR guidelines and policies are initiated by the firm top management, supervisors have the authority to interpret and make decisions with respect to CSR activities. Thus, its necessary to examine CSR at the team

level because subordinates and their supervisors play a critical role in carrying out and its effects on internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, Hunt and Jennings (1997) demonstrated that the perceptions of CSR at the team level effect employees behaviours and firm performance.

Mayer et al. (1995, P. 723) defined trust at the individuals level as “one’s willingness to accept vulnerability to another party based on positive expectations of that party’s actions”. When workers perceive the firm as benevolent and socially responsible, they are more willing to trust that the firm treats them fairly. Thus, the values and ethics of the firm will help employees to be more open to the firm and trust it. Thus, we suggest that organisational trust at the individuals levels is a consequences of CSR. The perceptions of CSR has a significant positive influence on organisational trust (Tourigny et al., 2019). Regarding the subordinates, CSR plays an important role in offering information of what the firm stands for and what personal treatments they expect. Therefore, “the perceptions of CSR formed within a work unit communicate information about the responsibility the organization is willing to take vis-à-vis its stakeholders, including employees” (Ko et al., 2019, P. 37). CSR plays a significant role in increasing the level of trust that can minimize bureaucratic control, conflict, and transactions cost (Acquier et al., 2017). When the firm is perceived as trustworthy and benevolent, it deceases the level of uncertainty. The firm should be perceived as predictable and acting in ethical manners towards its internal and external stakeholders (Lemoine et al., 2019). Therefore, organisational trust is determined by CSR practices that depends on employees experience about CSR and the linguistic and cognitive processes of stakeholders (Tourigny et al., 2019).

Thus, the level of analysis plays a critical role in conceptualising organisational trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Tourigny et al., 2019). Organisational trust can be developed based on the perceptions of employees about CSR and the leaders actions. Consequently, we suggest that CSR is a group-level term shared by a team of employees according to the supervisory behaviour observations about CSR activities. When subordinates work with supervisors who are an ethical leader they will share consistent perceptions about CSR. This will enhance the level of employees trust toward the firm. However, employees past experiences, identification with the firm, and propensity to trust play a significant

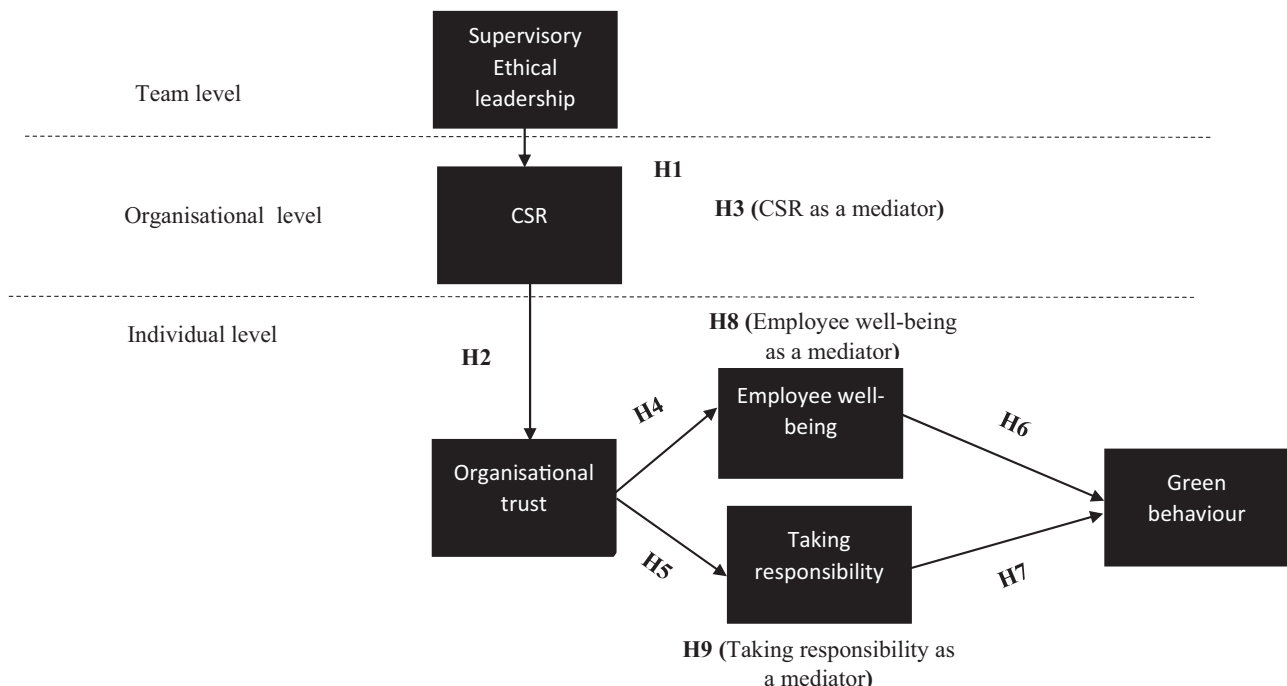


Fig. 1. Hypothesized multilevel model.

role in building organisational trust. Therefore, organisational trust considers a dynamic and complex phenomena that can reflect employees differences between and within work unit. Thus, we propose that CSR at the organisational level has a significant and positive influence on organisational trust at the individuals levels. When firm resolve social issues in an ethical manners, employees will trust the firm (Hosmer, 1995).

In the tourism and hospitality context, prior research indicated that CSR practices and activities are key driver of organisational trust (e.g., Farrington et al., 2017; Su and Swanson, 2019). Our study further proposes that CSR at the work unit mediates the influence of ethical leadership on organisational trust at the individuals levels. The role of supervisors is not limited to carrying out the CSR activities but also involves using their power to influence subordinates behaviours. Subordinates can process and observe their supervisory CSR activities and initiatives. Subordinates also can use supervisory CSR activities as a cue to expect receiving fair treatment by the organisation. Therefore, ethical leadership can impact organisational trust at the individuals levels through CSR practices. Therefore, we suggest the following hypothesis:

**H2.** CSR at the organisational levels has a positive direct effect on organisational trust at the individuals levels.

**H3.** CSR at the organisational levels mediates the link between supervisory ethical leadership and organisational trust at the individuals levels.

### 2.3. Organisational trust, employee well-being, and taking responsibility

Prior research revealed that more investigation is needed on how the relationship between the employees and organisation can effect employees well-being (Dode et al., 2016; Mihail and Kloutsiniotis, 2016). When the organisation treats their employees fairly for their exerted efforts, they are more likely to trust the organisation, which increases employees levels of well-being (Chughtai et al., 2015). Employees trust can develop a confidence in the firm which enhances the self-efficacy of the employees. Low level of trust in the organisation leads to low level of employees engagement and high levels of emotional exhaustion (Chughtai et al., 2015), leading to low levels of employees well-being.

In the tourism and hospitality context, prior research revealed that enhanced trust at the individual levels has a significant positive influence on employees well-being (Mozumder, 2016; Su and Swanson, 2019). The link between organisational trust and subordinates green behaviour is determined by the extent to which subordinates inclined to accept responsibility and take risks (Mihail and Kloutsiniotis, 2016; Zientara and Zamojska, 2018). Employees are willing to take responsibilities and increase their accountability because they trust the organisation. Prior research revealed that the ethical leadership influences goes via CSR at the group level and trust at the individuals levels (Randy Evans and Davis, 2011; Tourigny et al., 2019). Thus, we suggest that organisational trust at the individuals levels enhances the level of responsibility taking among employees. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H4.** Organisational trust at the individuals level has a positive direct effect on employees well-being.

**H5.** Organisational trust at the individuals level has a positive direct effect on employees responsibility taking behaviour.

### 2.4. Employees well-being, taking responsibility, and green behaviour

Prior research by Melnyk et al. (2013) indicated that different workplace issues such as conflict and stress are linked to low level of employees well-being. These issues influence negatively on employees productivity and increase the organisation social costs (Koc and Bozkurt, 2017). A significant influence and positive link between employee well-being and their behaviour is supported by Erreygers et al. (2018)

and Su and Swanson (2019).

Hwang and Hyun (2012) pointed out that employees well-being is a key driver of behaviour intentions in the restaurants industry. Prior study revealed that employees' quality of life is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour (Kim et al., 2017). The present study suggests that high level of employees well-being will help employees to behave in ways that benefit hotels. As the present study suggested, CSR activities is a key driver of employees well-being through organisational trust. Su and Swanson (2019) and pointed out that high level of employees well-being can improve employees social and environmental behaviour. Organisational trust at the individual levels sets the foundations for developing green behaviour in firms. When employees develop a trust in the organisations, this leads to responsibility taking behaviour which leads to taking risks. Thus, subordinates taking responsibility mediates the link between organisational trust and green behaviour at the individual levels. When subordinates take additional responsibilities beyond and above what is demonstrated in their job description, they are more willing to engage in green behaviour (Xing and Starik, 2017).

Unsworth et al. (2013) pointed out that employee green behaviour can be defined as the behaviour demonstrated by employees that will be beneficial for the environment. Green behavior is among those several strategies that are followed by hotels to enhance their environmental performance and achieve sustainable targets. Erreygers et al. (2019) indicated that employees having high level of well-being put greater thought and effort into their work. Danna and Griffin (1999) conclude that behavioral intentions are direct consequence of well-being. Moreover, Su and Swanson (2019) in their study conclude that the more positive the well-being of employees the more likely workers will engage in green behaviors at workplace. Hotels should encourage employee's environmentally positive behavior by improving well-being of employees.

In the tourism and hospitality context, our study also suggests that organisational trust at the individuals levels has significant indirect influence on green behaviour through employees well-being and taking responsibilities. Kim et al. (2017) indicated that employees working-life quality is related to engagement in organizational citizenship behaviours. Prior research by Su and Swanson (2019) revealed that employees well-being mediates the relationship between organisational trust and employees green behaviour. Furthermore, individual responsibilities taking play a mediating role in the relationship between individual organisational trust and green behaviour. Subordinates taking responsibilities behaviours represents a response of CSR coming from the supervisory ethical leadership behaviours creating greater subordinates organisational trust. Therefore, when subordinates take additional responsibilities due to their high level of trust in the organisation, they are more likely to engage in green behaviours. Therefore, we suggest the following hypotheses:

**H6.** Employees well-being has a positive direct effect on green behaviour.

**H7.** Taking responsibility has a positive direct effect on green behaviour.

**H8.** Employees well-being mediates the link between organisational trust at the individuals levels and green behaviour.

**H9.** Taking responsibility behaviour mediates the link between organisational trust at the individuals levels and green behaviour.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Sample and data collection

The Ministry of Tourism in UAE provided us with each hotel information and contacts. Two hundred hotels were contacted during January-February 2020. 184 hotels agreed to participate in our study



including 937 work units. Based on the human resources director support, employees from different units in the participated hotels were invited. The main purpose of the study was explained and the questionnaires were distributed to the employees and their supervisors with the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of the answers. The back translation approach was utilized in order to convert the questionnaire into the local language (Arabic) and then translated into English by language experts. Once the permission from the HR manager has been given, we provide supervisors and subordinates with the survey and were asked to complete the questionnaires.

Since ethical leadership behaviour could happen in any tasks that involve a supervisor–subordinate dyad, our sample included diverse work teams. Through the human resources department of each firm, we invited supervisors (936 hotel manager and office workers) and their subordinates (2284 employees) to participate in our survey. With the assistance of specialists from human resources, we codified the questionnaires in advance to match the data sets of the employees and the supervisors while guaranteeing anonymity. They also assisted us in distributing and collecting surveys in each department. Supervisors were asked to provide us with ratings about their subordinates green behavior and their responsibilities taking behavior. While, subordinates were asked to provide ratings about their supervisors ethical leadership behaviors, extent of organizational trust, well-being and perceptions of CSR.

Of the 937 work units, there are 937 supervisors and 2375 subordinates participated in our study. Excluding non-response (92) from our sample leads to the final sample of 936 supervisors and 2284 employees. The average of employees in the work unit is 3 employees and the largest one includes 5 employees while the smallest one includes 2 employees. The subordinates sample includes 69% males and the average age of the subordinates was 36 years. Most of the subordinates had a university degree (31.54%). 68% of the subordinates have organizational tenure more than 4 years. Regarding the supervisors sample, 63% were males and the average age was 41 years. Most of the supervisors had a university degree (63.28%). The length of the relationship between supervisors and their subordinates was 9 years.

### 3.2. Measures

Valid and reliable scales were adopted from prior studies to measures our study variables. Our study measured ethical leadership behaviour using a 10-item measurement from [Brown et al. \(2005\)](#). We asked the subordinates to rate the provided questions about supervisory ethical leadership behaviour. A sample of these items was: “My supervisor sets an example of how to do things in the right way in terms of ethics.” We adopted [Turker \(2009\)](#) scale to measure CSR variable. This measure distinguishes five types of CSR initiatives according to the type of stakeholders targeted: CSR to customers, government and society, environment, employees, and philanthropy. A sample of Human Resources dimension was “My hotel provides a wide range of indirect benefits to improve the quality of employees’ lives.” A sample of environment dimension was “My hotel makes investment to create a better life for future generations.” A sample of customers dimension was “My hotel respects consumer rights beyond the legal requirements.” A sample of philanthropy dimension was “My hotel makes sufficient monetary contributions to charities.” A sample of society dimension was “My hotel emphasizes the importance of its social responsibilities to society.” Cronbach alpha for CSR was 0.91. Seven items were adopted from [Robinson \(1996\)](#) to measures organisational trust. The subordinates provided their perceptions about their trust in the hotel. A sample of these items was “I can expect my hotel to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.” We used 3-items measurement from [Wagner \(1995\)](#) to assess the responsibility taking behaviour in team work. A sample of these items was “Is responsible for the productivity of the group”. Employees well-being was measured with three items based on those developed by [Sharma et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Su and Swanson \(2019\)](#). A

sample of these items was “How would you rate your quality of life?”. Employees green behavior was measured with five items utilized from [Su and Swanson \(2019\)](#). Supervisors were asked to assess their subordinates’ green behavior. A sample of these items was “Employees adequately complete assigned duties in environmentally friendly ways”. All scale items associated with the constructs of interest were administered using five-point (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) Likert scales. The content validity of the research measures was validated by five academic marketing experts. We further conducted interviews with 20 employees who work in some UAE hotels to assess the content of the questionnaires and the reliability of the measures. We modified the questionnaire based on their feedback.

## 4. Data analysis and results

### 4.1. Analysis method

A multilevel model and nested data were used to test our proposed conceptual framework. Ethical leadership behavior was suggested at the group level, CSR at the organizational level, while organizational trust, employees well-being, taking responsibilities behavior, and green behavior at the individuals levels. The interrelationships between the constructs at the group and individuals levels were analyzed. Our hypotheses were tested using a multilevel path analysis. A multilevel analysis was conducted using Mplus 6.0 ([Muthén and Muthén, 2010](#); [Tourigny et al., 2019](#)). Mplus provides new insights to analyses data with various models and estimator choices, such as cross-sectional, multilevel, and longitudinal data that can be analyzed. We utilized the procedures by [Preacher et al. \(2011\)](#) to conduct the multilevel analysis. First, Type I Intra-class Correlation Coefficients were computed to examine between-level variance proportion ([Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002](#)). In order to examine inter-rater agreement, Rwg(j) statistic was computed ([James et al., 1993](#); [Klein and Kozlowski, 2000](#)). A multilevel confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to measure the validity of the study variables at within and between levels ([Hox, 2002](#)). Finally, we utilized multilevel path analysis to test the study hypotheses. As presented in [Table 1](#), Composite reliabilities (CR) ranged from 0.931 to 0.969. All factor loadings exceeded 0.7 and were statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ). Average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor exceeded 0.5. Thus, these results demonstrated acceptable reliability and convergent validity based on recommendations by [Hair et al. \(2010\)](#).

[Table 2](#) shows descriptive statistics about the study samples and the variables. The reliability coefficients, means, correlations, and standard deviations for individual, organizational, and work units level were summarized in [Table 2](#).

### 4.2. Aggregation analyses

The random effects with one-way ANOVA test was conducted. The results indicated that the variance of the between-group between the research constructs is significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), which demonstrates significant between group variance. Based on [James \(1982\)](#) recommendations, we calculated type I intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC1) and the values were 0.18 for supervisory ethical leadership behaviour and 13 for CSR which indicates acceptable values. Based on [Schnabel et al. \(1998\)](#) recommendations, ICC(2) is used to measure of group means reliability. The values of ICC(2) were 0.49 for ethical leadership and 0.36 for CSR. The ICC(2) were 0.48 and 0.36 for ethical leadership and CSR, respectively. Based on [James et al. \(1993\)](#), we calculated the value of median Rwg(j). The values of Rwg(j) were 0.86 for supervisory ethical leadership behaviour and 0.82 for CSR indicating acceptable values ( $Rwg(j) < 0.70$ ). the results of this analysis provide support for the data aggregation at the team and organisational levels for supervisory ethical leadership behaviour and CSR.

**Table 1**  
Measurement statistics of construct scales.

Construct/Indicators	Standard Loading	CR	VIF	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE	Mean	SD	t-statistic	Skewness	Kurtosis
Ethical leadership behaviour (ELB)		0.96	1.834	0.94	0.674					
ELB1	0.91					3.89	0.74	26.3	-1.45	3.05
ELB2	0.93					3.87	0.82	24.65	-2.43	3.2
ELB3	0.9					4.29	0.8	24.47	-0.87	1.28
ELB4	0.94					4.03	0.64	24.39	-2.39	2.39
ELB5	0.96					3.76	0.71	27.05	-3.23	2.1
ELB6	0.93					4.03	0.69	23.3	-2.3	1.28
ELB7	0.9					4.21	0.84	29.82	-1.2	2.87
ELB8	0.94					3.2	0.78	21.25	-0.83	3.05
ELB9	0.96					3.74	0.72	23.28	-0.48	1.27
ELB10	0.94					3.89	0.74	21.24	-2.1	3.29
						4.11	0.79	27.45	-0.93	2.19
Corporate social responsibility (CSR)		0.97	1.843	0.95	0.691					
CSR1	0.95					3.49	0.76	23.37	-3.59	1.64
CSR2	0.94					4.1	0.79	22.07	-2.3	2.19
CSR3	0.92					3.96	0.8	26.65	-1.29	2.8
CSR4	0.95					4.14	0.75	24.83	-0.85	1.75
CSR5	0.91					3.2	0.73	25.1	-3.04	3.18
CSR6	0.96					3.2	0.69	24.3	-0.84	2.39
CSR7	0.93					4.03	0.83	21.89	-2.39	2.9
CSR8	0.9					3.28	0.82	28.35	-1.2	4.03
CSR9	0.95					3.23	0.74	23.47	-0.94	2.1
CSR10	0.96					3.2	0.72	23.26	-3.2	2.11
CSR11	0.89					3.45	0.69	21.9	-0.9	3.19
CSR12	0.96					4.3	0.83	24.39	-1.2	1.2
CSR13	0.9					4.19	0.78	21.78	-0.65	2.19
CSR14	0.96					3.27	0.77	23.45	-3.29	3.11
CSR15	0.93					3.11	0.68	23.28	-1.29	2.18
CSR16	0.92					3.22	0.81	21.84	-2.3	2.6
CSR17	0.96					3.45	0.84	23.49	-1.85	2.09
CSR18	0.92					4.02	0.78	25.06	-2.39	1.2
CSR19	0.97					3.22	0.76	28.44	-1.27	3.09
CSR20	0.92					3.18	0.73	24.9	-2.3	2.19
						3.74	0.69	27.83	-3.77	2.87
Organisational trust (TRU)		0.94	1.245	0.92	0.664					
TRU1	0.96					3.29	0.81	26.37	-2.19	2.03
TRU2	0.92					3.82	0.85	25.39	-0.95	1.97
TRU3	0.95					3.97	0.76	28.06	-2.06	2.04
TRU4	0.94					3.48	0.83	29.3	-0.73	1.29
TRU5	0.9					4.21	0.79	25.39	-1.29	2.38
TRU6	0.93					3.89	0.67	23.78	-2.1	2.03
TRU7	0.9					4.02	0.81	21.52	-3.21	1.98
Responsibility taking behaviour (RTB)		0.93	2.067	0.89	0.592					
RTB1	0.9					4.31	0.78	24.33	-1.28	1.84
RTB2	0.89					3.17	0.81	23.09	-0.83	2.03
RTB3	0.91					3.2	0.88	25.48	-0.9	2.74
Employee well-being (EMB)		0.96	2.109	0.93	0.61					
EMB1	0.94					3.29	0.82	23.49	-2.39	2.1
EMB2	0.96					3.48	0.79	26.38	-1.26	3.08
EMB3	0.91					4.03	0.84	25.12	-0.86	1.27
Green behaviour (GRB)		0.93	1.842	0.91	0.705					
GRB1	0.96					4.51	0.81	26.39	-1.2	1.28
GRB2	0.92					3.78	0.76	23.9	-2.38	2.03
GRB3	0.95					3.94	0.8	25.4	-2.37	2.17
GRB4	0.94					4.01	0.75	28.39	-1.03	1.89

Note:

ELB = Ethical leadership behaviour, CSR = Corporate social responsibility; TRU = Organisational trust; RTB = Responsibility taking behaviour; EMB = Employee well-being; GRB = Green behaviour; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; CR= Composite reliability; SD = Standard deviation.

### 4.3. Validity of measures

A multilevel confirmatory factor analysis was performed to verify the multilevel constructs validity including CSR and supervisory ethical leadership behaviour. The results of the analysis in Table 3 demonstrated that the measurement model is acceptable. The construct validity of the single-level factors was verified using a confirmatory factor analysis including employees green behaviour, organisational trust, employees well-being, and taking responsibility. The results revealed acceptable indices of the measurement model ( $\chi^2(105) = 429.17$ , TLI = 0.92, CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.06).

To minimise common method bias, a marker variable (MV) was utilised based on the recommendation by Lindell and Whitney (2001).

Economic confidence item that is not relevant to our research measures was utilised: "How much confidence do you have in your national economy today?". The link among the MV and the research variables was  $-0.20-0.09$  and all correlations are insignificant at 0.05. Based on Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommendations, we performed a principal component factor analysis. The largest variable accounted for 24.19% and no general variable accounted for greater than 50% of variance, demonstrating that common method bias may not be a serious issue in our dataset. Moreover, we paid attention to the questionnaire's design and the questions were mixed.

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics and correlations.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Individual-level variables										
1. Age	36.2	7.95	–							
2. Gender	1.28	0.56	0.32**	–						
3. Education	2.93	0.81	0.28**	-0.51**	–					
4. Tenure	12.02	8.64	-0.37**	-0.63**	0.49**	–				
5. Organisational trust	4.21	0.87	0.12*	0.47**	-0.63**	-0.48**	(0.85**)			
6. Taking responsibility	3.20	0.81	0.48**	0.13*	0.51**	0.32**	0.62**	(0.79**)		
7. Well-being	3.65	0.82	0.71**	-0.56**	0.26**	0.29**	0.32**	0.33**	(0.74**)	
8. Green behaviour	4.15	0.86	0.66**	-0.28**	0.25**	0.18**	0.49**	0.52**	0.38**	(0.81**)
Team-level variables										
1. Age	41.18	9.62	–							
2. Gender	1.22	0.59	0.11*	–						
3. Education	3.76	0.77	-0.21**	-0.37**	–					
4. Tenure	18.25	8.90	0.58**	0.62**	-0.52**	(0.78**)				
5. Ethical leadership	4.11	0.87	0.83**	0.11*	-0.47**	-0.37**	(0.83**)			
Organisational-level variables										
1. Age	43.78	11.29	–							
2. Gender	1.37	0.52	0.23**	–						
3. Education	3.60	0.61	-0.60**	-0.32**	–					
4. Tenure	19.37	8.32	0.59**	0.66**	-0.56**	–				
5. CSR	4.03	0.865	0.91**	0.86**	0.91**	0.49**	(0.64**)			

For individual-level measure, N = 2284; for team-level measures, N = 936; numbers in parentheses are coefficient alphas.

\* p < 0.05;

\*\* p < 0.01

**Table 3**  
Model fit for multilevel confirmatory factor analysis models.

Constructs	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	TLIC	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Ethical leadership	158.39	80	1.98	0.93	0.95	0.07	B = 0.16; W = 0.03
CSR	170.54	91	1.84	0.92	0.94	0.06	B = 0.16; W = 0.04

Note:

df degrees of freedom, CFI comparative fit index, RMSEA root-mean-square error of approximation, SRMR standardized root-mean-square residual, W within-group portion of the model, B between-group portion of the model.

4.4. Testing the research hypotheses

The multilevel path analysis was used to test the research model. Findings revealed that the model demonstrated acceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 147.31$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $CFI = 0.96$ ,  $TLI = 0.95$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ,  $SRMR = 0.05$  (within),  $0.07$  (between)).

At the team level, as demonstrated in Table 4 and Fig. 2, ethical leadership behaviour had a significant positive influence on CSR ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H1 was supported. H2 suggested that CSR at the organisational level has a cross-level direct influence on organisational trust at the individual levels. The findings revealed a significant positive cross-level effect ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the results support H2. 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect was used to test the cross-level mediation effect. The indirect link between supervisory ethical leadership behaviour and organisational trust through CSR is positive (0.08 [95% CI 0.05, 0.13]). Thus, the results support H3. H4 and H5 suggested a significant direct influence of organisational trust on employees well-being and responsibility taking. The analysis revealed that organisational trust had a significant positive influence on employees well-being and taking responsibility ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ), respectively. Therefore, H4 and H5 were supported. Moreover, H6 and H7 suggested a significant positive link between employees well-being, responsibility taking, and employees green behaviour. The results supported both hypotheses ( $\beta = 0.73, 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), respectively.

For the mediating test, the method of confidence intervals with bootstrap estimation was employed. The mediating effect of employees well-being and taking responsibility on the link between organisational trust and green behaviour are significant (0.16, 95% CI [0.002, 0.291], 0.13, 95% CI [0.017, 0.240]). Thus, H8 and H9 were supported. Based on Baron and Kenny (1986), we constructed a structural equation model to include the indirect and direct effects for each of the proposed mediation links. If the direct and indirect effects were significant, there was a partial mediating effect. If the indirect effect was significant, but the direct effect was not, a full mediating effect exists. We examined the mediating role of employee well-being and organisational trust on the link between CSR and green behaviour. Results demonstrated that employee well-being partially mediated the effect of CSR on green behaviour. However, organisational trust fully mediates this relationship. Thus, H8 and H9 were supported.

There are, however, a number of additional variables that might affect green behaviour that need to be controlled (i.e., organizational tenure, length of the relationship between supervisors and their subordinates). Our analysis indicated that both organizational tenure and length of the relationship between supervisors and their subordinates have no significant effect on green behaviour.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

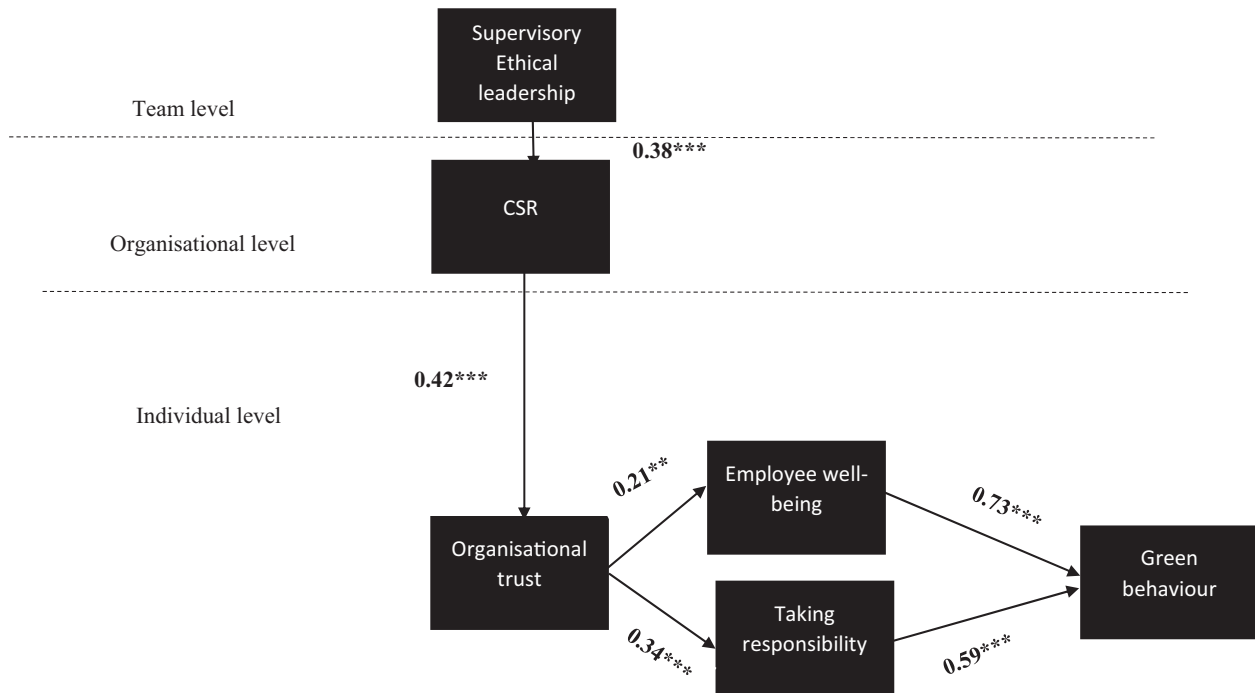
The present paper investigates a mechanism that links supervisory ethical leadership behaviour at the team level to employees green behaviour at the individual level through CSR, organisational trust, employees well-being, and taking responsibilities behaviour. Supervisory ethical leadership behaviour at the team level was found to be an important driver of CSR. Moreover, CSR at the organisational level has a direct influence on organisational trust at the individual level. We also found that ethical leadership behaviour has indirect influence on organisational trust through CSR. Organisational trust was found to motivate employees to take responsibilities, improve the level of employees well-being, and engage in green behaviour.

Our study results expand the current background in two significant ways. Previous studies have performed a thorough investigation of the

**Table 4**  
Summary of path coefficients and indirect effects for mediation models.

Path coefficients	to CSR	to organisational trust	to taking responsibility	to employees well-being	to green behaviour
Ethical leadership	0.38*** (0.02)				
CSR		0.42*** (0.001)			
Organisational trust			0.21** (0.03)	0.34*** (0.04)	
Employees well-being					0.73*** (0.000)
Taking responsibility					0.59*** (0.000)
Results from tests of indirect effects			Indirect effect		Symmetric confidence interval
Cross-level indirect effect					
Ethical leadership → CSR → organizational trust			0.08*		CI 95% [0.054, 0.113]
Individual-level indirect effect					
Organizational trust → Taking responsibility → Green behaviour			0.16*		CI 95% [0.002, 0.291]
Organizational trust → Employees well-being → Green behaviour			0.13 <sup>+</sup>		CI 90% [0.017, 0.240]

Note:  
\* p < 0.05;  
\*\* p < 0.01;  
\*\*\* p < 0.001;  
<sup>+</sup> p < 0.10.



( $\chi^2 = 147.31$ ,  $df = 53$ ,  $CFI = 0.96$ ,  $TLI = 0.95$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ,  $SRMR = 0.05$  (within),  $0.07$  (between)).

**Fig. 2.** Structural model.

links between our conceptual framework variables. However, the analysis was limited to one or two constructs at a time or at one level. The phenomena was examined as multifaceted, demonstrating itself through levels including different multiple actors. The phenomena was modelled such that the full influence of supervisory ethical leadership behaviour

revealed across CSR to create organisational trust, employees well-being, and taking additional responsibilities that manifested itself across employees green behaviour. We combined multiple constructs to supervisory ethical leadership behaviour and CSR in a comprehensive model and tested utilizing a multilevel analysis using multisource data.



This support the decisions towards investing in ethical leadership as an effective strategy to improve the level of employees well-being and green behaviours. Second, the investigation scope was broaden on supervisory ethical leadership behaviour, CSR, and green behaviour by investigating it in UAE's hospitality industry where much of UAE's economic well-being is specified.

The results of the analysis provided support for all the suggested hypotheses in our model. The results revealed that supervisory ethical leadership behaviour has a direct effect on CSR. Furthermore, ethical leadership has indirect effect on organisational trust through CSR. These findings provide deeper insights into the link between supervisory ethical leadership behaviour at the team level and organisational trust at the individual level. This mediating influence demonstrates the significance role of CSR toward bridging ethical leadership behaviour and organisational consequences (Pasricha et al., 2018). The supervisory ethical leadership behaviour was analysed using a character-based method and revealed that supervisor's integrity, fairness, and dependability influence subordinates trust in the organisation. But the effect of ethical leadership behaviour on employees organisational trust is mediated by CSR. If employees perceive that the hotel supports CSR activities they are more willing to trust the hotel. Therefore, socially responsible behaviour by the hotel plays a critical role in making employees developing expectations about the hotel. When employees are confident that the hotel and the supervisors treat them in a fair way and support CSR initiatives, they will be more likely to trust the hotel, taking additional responsibilities, and engage in green behaviour. When the hotel acts in a predictable and consistent manner toward its internal and external stakeholders and invest in CSR activities, it demonstrates to its subordinates that it is worth take additional responsibilities and engage in green behaviour. These findings confirm the validity of the reciprocity norms in the collectivist culture such as UAE. Thus, the reciprocity norms play a critical role in facilitating the social exchange and the way employees can respond to the perceived treatment from the hotel in the ethical leadership behaviour context. Therefore, trust in the hotel at the individual level is a key driver of the social exchange between the subordinates and their hotel. This research shows that subordinates trust in the organisation plays a mediating role in the process of social exchange. By indicating the co-existence of CSR at the team organisational level, organisational trust, employees well-being, and taking responsibilities at the individual level as supportive in the link among ethical leadership and employees green behaviour, it affirms that the complementarity of these variables are important for effective organizational outcomes.

Furthermore, our study results are compatible with prior research examining the link between ethical leadership and green behaviour (Pasricha et al., 2018; Tourigny et al., 2019; Xing and Starik, 2017). These studies supported the values-driven CSR perspective by indicating that supervisory ethical leadership behaviour is a key driver of CSR (De Roeck and Farooq, 2018). Thus, consistent with previous research, hotels leadership influence hotel outcomes in the form of corporate social responsibility. Expanding this, our study maintains that organisational trust, employees well-being, and taking responsibilities behaviour are influential in this effect, since in line with the results, the supervisory ethical leadership behaviour is a key driver of CSR, organisational trust, taking responsibility, and employees well-being which in turn determines employees green behaviour.

### 5.2. Theoretical implications

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of our study contribute to leadership and green behaviour literature by explaining the mechanism through which supervisory ethical leadership behaviour at the team level influence employees green behaviour at the individual level. Prior studies focused mainly on employees attitudes as consequences factors of CSR and ethical leadership behaviour. But, our study focused on investigating ethical leadership-green behaviour link through

individual and group level mediating variables. Thus, when employees perceive fair treatment from their supervisors, they are more likely to engage in green behaviour.

Our study is one of the first attempts to empirically examine the joint influences of ethical leadership behavioural the team level and CSR at the organisational level on employees green behaviour and to integrate an explanatory mechanisms for those influences. Prior studies indicated that different approaches that study organisational behaviour are statistically and theoretically insufficient (Tourigny et al., 2019), using a multilevel integrated model offers a richer understanding of the extent to which the interplay between groups and individuals can foster employees green behaviour.

Our study further suggested that positive perceptions of corporate social responsibility at the group organisational can improve the level of employees trust in the hotels at the individual level which in turns lead to taking additional responsibilities and improve the level of employees well-being which result in high level of engaging in green behaviour. Thus, our study results highlighted the significance of examining the interrelationships between ethical leadership behaviour and employees green behaviour using multilevel analysis with multisource data (i.e., individual and group level). CSR at the organisational level and individual trust in the hotel were used as explanatory variables that include both affective and cognitive process.

### 5.3. Managerial implications

This paper provides managers and policy makers with several implications in the hospitality and tourism industry. First The findings of our research found that supervisory ethical leadership behaviour is a key driver of CSR practices. An ethical course of action should be followed by hotels leaders. Hotels have code of ethics but the main issue is that hotels leaders should walk the talk by themselves committing to social and ethical behaviour. This walk the ethical behaviour by the hotels leaders would encourage effective administration of responsiveness, and can continuously channelize their endeavours to manage their associations to socially gainful results; since when chiefs by virtue of their welcoming qualities and moral qualities display moral conduct, they can accordingly sustain others conscious and venturesome societies, which give an impulse to CSR rehearses and thus are of extraordinary import in utilizing the organisation's assets toward the achievement of its social target.

Moreover, hotels demonstrate high level of CSR wherein supervisory ethical leadership behaviour are encouraged. Thus, hotels in their endeavours to improve social influence should pay more attention to their supervisory ethical leadership behaviour, since ethical leadership is a key driver that can foster socially responsible activities. The findings also provide HR practitioners with ramification by encouraging them to incorporate ethical behaviour as a fundamental component of the leadership evaluation and improvement forms. Moreover, social responsibility programs should be embedded in the development agenda of leadership which helps to improve employees abilities to foster CSR in the hotels.

Our findings indicated that employees well-being can motivate employees to engage in green behaviour. Hotels manager should utilise different approaches to enhance employees well-being. For example, hotels' managers can perform a training programs that can be used to enhance the technical and interpersonal skills of the employees. Hotels can use teamwork and training to establish positive and innovative work environment to improve the employees sense of well-being.

Our multilevel conceptual framework offered a higher quality empirical evidence by examining the variance at the individual and team levels. Our results revealed that supervisory ethical leadership behaviours and CSR at the organisational level have a significant influence on employees trust in the hotel at the individual level. A significant cross-level path was found between CSR at the team level and employees trust in the hotels at the individual level. Our multilevel

analysis also revealed a sequential mediation effect of CSR at the organisational level, organisational trust, taking responsibility behaviour, and employees well-being at the individual level, thus indicating the influence of supervisory ethical leadership behaviour on employees green behaviour. Thus, hotels leaders are able to constitute their employees perceptions. When supervisors act in an ethical manner, they demonstrate to their employees that corporate social responsibility is important. Shared perceptions of CSR is a key factor that influence employees trust in the hotels which improve the level of employees well-being and taking additional responsibilities and as a result, elicit employees green behaviour.

Our study revealed that supervisory ethical leadership effects employees green behaviour via CSR, Trust, taking responsibility, and well-being based mechanism. Thus, training and hiring more ethical leaders at the group level can be an effective approach for developing trusting associations in hotels. Our study provides hotels with three main recommendations to boost ethical leadership behaviours. First, hotels could utilise ethical practices tests, concentrating more on ethical issues, to choose leaders at the group level. Second, hotels could develop training programs for ethical practices and demonstrate the significance of acting as ethical role models at the group levels. Third, incentive system can be developed and carried out by hotels to support an reward subordinates ethical behaviours.

## 6. Limitations and directions for future research

Our study is not without caveats. The first limitation of our study is about the cross-sectional data analysis. Adopting a longitudinal research can offer more details about the extent to which the changes in employees trust in hotels can be affected by changes in corporate social responsibility. Interesting findings can be yielded from investigating the influence of changes in leadership behaviour and CSR at the organisational level on the changes in employees trust, wellbeing, taking responsibility and green behaviour at the individual level. The scope of our study is the hospitality industry. Future research could apply this model in different services such as travel, restaurants, and airline industry. The study sample was collected from the UAE, and therefore we might not be able to generalise these results to other cultures. Researchers can apply our model in different culture context and can also compare different culture to validate our proposed model in different societies. According to social identity theory, variables (e.g., perceived organizational support and job satisfaction) can be incorporated in our model to offer meaningful insights into the link between a hotel and its employees. Furthermore, data were collected from a survey instrument. Future studies should consider utilising other sources of information (i. e., secondary data) for certain of the key variables. Finally, the moderating effect of some variables such as slack resources and team size can be incorporated in our model to be considered. These variables influence the extent to which employees engage in green behaviour.

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## Declarations of interest

None.

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