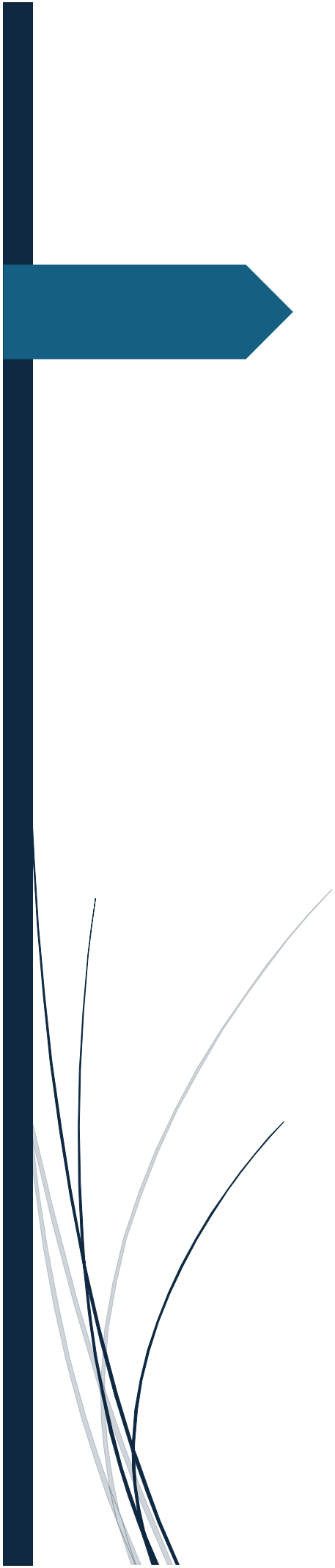




Sustainability orientation and innovative behavior of employees

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, sustainability has evolved from a peripheral corporate concern into a central strategic priority for organizations worldwide. Increasing environmental challenges, social expectations and regulatory pressures have compelled organizations to integrate sustainability principles into their business models and daily operations. At the same time, organizations face growing demands for innovation in order to remain competitive, improve efficiency and respond effectively to rapidly changing market conditions. Consequently, understanding how sustainability-related attitudes and practices influence innovation has become an important area of academic and managerial interest.

Innovation is increasingly recognized as a critical capability that enables organizations to create value while addressing environmental and social challenges. However, organizational innovation is ultimately driven by employees through their willingness to generate, promote and implement new ideas. This behavior, commonly referred to as Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), plays a fundamental role in organizational adaptability and long-term success. Previous studies have demonstrated that innovative behavior is influenced not only by individual characteristics such as creativity, motivation and personal values, but also by organizational factors including leadership, culture and support mechanisms.

Within this context, sustainability orientation has emerged as a potentially important driver of innovative behavior. Sustainability orientation can be examined from two complementary perspectives. At the individual level, it reflects employees' personal values, environmental awareness, and commitment to sustainable development. At the organizational level, sustainability orientation refers to the extent to which organizations incorporate environmental and social responsibility into their strategies, policies and operational practices. Existing literature suggests that both dimensions may contribute to innovation by encouraging employees to identify opportunities for improvement, reduce waste and develop creative solutions that support sustainable objectives. Despite the growing body of literature examining sustainability and innovation, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the perceived alignment between employees' sustainability values and the sustainability orientation of their organizations. Furthermore, empirical evidence from the Greek organizational context remains scarce.

Greece represents an interesting research setting because organizations are increasingly facing pressures related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance, digital transformation and sustainable business practices. At the same time, many Greek organizations continue to operate within relatively hierarchical structures and face resource constraints compared with larger European economies. Understanding how sustainability orientation influences innovative work behavior in this context may therefore provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners.

Despite growing interest in sustainability and innovation, research findings remain fragmented. Some studies argue that sustainability-oriented leadership and organizational practices stimulate employee innovation, while others suggest that sustainability initiatives alone are insufficient to generate innovative behavior without adequate organizational support and individual capabilities. Furthermore, relatively little

attention has been given to the alignment between employees' personal sustainability values and the sustainability practices adopted by their organizations. When employees perceive a mismatch between these two dimensions, a "sustainability gap" may emerge, potentially reducing motivation, engagement and innovative contributions.

The present study seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior within the Greek organizational context. More specifically, the study investigates the effects of individual sustainability orientation, corporate sustainability orientation, organizational support and the perceived sustainability gap on employees' innovative behavior. By focusing on employees working across various industries and sectors in Greece, the research provides evidence from a context that remains relatively underexplored in sustainability and innovation studies. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does individual sustainability orientation influence innovative work behavior?
2. Does corporate sustainability orientation influence innovative work behavior?
3. Does a sustainability gap reduce innovative work behavior?
4. Does organizational support strengthen innovative behavior?

Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, this thesis proposes that employees are more likely to engage in innovative work behavior when they perceive strong support for sustainability both personally and organizationally. Furthermore, the study argues that organizational support may strengthen innovation outcomes, while misalignment between employee values and organizational sustainability practices may hinder innovative efforts.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it examines sustainability orientation and innovation within the under-researched Greek context. Second, it simultaneously considers individual and organizational sustainability dimensions. Third, it introduces the sustainability gap as a factor potentially influencing innovative work behavior. The findings of this research are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. From a theoretical perspective, the study expands current understanding of how sustainability-related factors influence employee innovation. From a managerial perspective, the results may help organizations design sustainability initiatives and support mechanisms that foster greater employee engagement and innovative behavior. Ultimately, understanding the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovation can assist organizations in achieving both competitive advantage and long-term sustainable development.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The pursuit of sustainable development has transitioned from a peripheral corporate concern to a core strategic necessity, requiring a fundamental shift in how organizations operate and innovate. Within this thesis, the theoretical foundation rests on the intersection of corporate sustainability and individual sustainability. While corporate sustainability provides the structural and cultural framework, expressed through leadership styles, human resource practices and entrepreneurial orientations, though, it is the employee who serves as the primary agent of change. Innovative work behavior represents the mechanism through which an organization's sustainability goals are transformed into tangible green products, efficient processes and eco-friendly solutions.

To understand this relationship, it is important to look at how the organization's sustainability goals match employees' personal motivations. The following analysis explains how company initiatives can support and strengthen employees' abilities and motivation, helping connect overall sustainability goals with employees' everyday innovative behavior. Using frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model, this chapter shows how a strong sustainability focus can create a workplace where innovation is encouraged and becomes a natural part of the organizational culture.

To explore the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative behavior, this chapter synthesizes findings from six pivotal studies that represent a diverse range of organizational contexts and geographical settings. These studies were selected because they provide a multi-dimensional view of sustainability, ranging from micro-level individual career resources to macro-level corporate management systems.

The literature can be categorized into three primary thematic streams:

- The Behavioral and Psychological Stream: This includes research by Li et al. (2019) and Piwowar-Sulej et al. (2025), which focuses on how transformational and sustainability-oriented leadership activates individual psychological mediators like trust and environmental awareness to drive innovation.
- The Strategic and Institutional Stream: Studies by Ma and Wang (2024) and Yang and Li (2023) utilize AMO framework and Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) to demonstrate how corporate structures and policies institutionalize green innovation behavior.
- The Contextual and Career Stream: Research by Zhang and Chin (2024) and Lia and Fitri (2023) examines how external pressures, such as digitalization in high-tech sectors or entrepreneurial orientation in SMEs, shape the capacity for innovative work behavior.

We will present a short review of each paper with regards to the relation of sustainability with innovative work behavior.

- The study by Li et al. (2019) examined 281 employees from multinational organizations in China's pharmaceutical, electronics and automobile manufacturing sectors. Using a serial mediation model tested via SPSS macro processes, the researchers concluded that transformational leadership and work

engagement significantly drive innovative work behavior. Regarding sustainability, the authors argue that human performance is a critical dimension of organizational sustainability alongside economic and environmental factors. Individual sustainability is represented through work engagement and creativity, while corporate sustainability is achieved by leaders who foster a culture of trust and empowerment to satisfy customer demands. The gap between these levels is bridged by leadership that compels employees toward innovative behavior, a relationship moderated by empowerment. The study highlights that innovative work behavior is associated with the manufacturing industry but does not explicitly detail other demographic variables.

- Lia and Fitri (2023) conducted a systematic literature review focused on Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia. Their analysis concluded that factors such as green dynamic capabilities, green market orientation and Corporate Social Responsibility enhance the implementation of Green Entrepreneurial Orientation and Green Innovation. Individual sustainability in this context is linked to the environmental awareness of MSMEs' actors, whereas corporate sustainability involves adopting a Green Entrepreneurial Orientation to achieve cost savings and long-term competitiveness. The gap is addressed by identifying catalysts and restraints for implementing "greenness" in micro-level entrepreneurship. The variables associated with these behaviors are specifically tied to the MSME industry context.
- Ma and Wang (2024) surveyed 219 Chinese corporate employees using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs-QCA) based on the AMO framework. They concluded that there are three primary driving paths for green innovation behavior: leadership-organization co-driving, leadership-driving, and organization-driving. Individual sustainability is reflected in green self-efficacy and intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, while corporate sustainability is manifested through organizational support and environmentally transformative leadership. The study identifies that motivational factors can substitute for leadership or organizational support, addressing gaps in individual and corporate synergy.
- Piwowar-Sulej et al. (2025) focused on 284 employees from Polish manufacturing SMEs, utilizing partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). They found that sustainability-oriented leadership significantly impacts eco-friendly innovative behaviors indirectly through environmental awareness. Individual sustainability is centered on environmental awareness and a proactive personality, which are personal characteristics facilitating green behaviors. Corporate sustainability is represented by sustainability-oriented leadership, which provides the situational context for innovation. The research identifies "proactive personality" as a key individual variable that amplifies the impact of corporate leadership. A proactive personality is defined as a stable behavioral disposition characterized by taking personal initiative to enact or change one's environment.
- Yang and Li (2023) analyzed 436 employees from 28 high-tech enterprises in Fujian Province of China using social information processing and social exchange theory. They concluded that Green Human Resource Management positively influences green innovation behavior, with green organizational commitment

acting as a mediator. Individual sustainability is found in an employee's green organizational commitment, while corporate sustainability is driven by Green Human Resource Management practices. The gap between them is moderated by knowledge sharing, which strengthens the link between commitment and innovative conduct. Innovative behavior is specifically associated with the high-tech industry.

- Zhang and Chin (2024) surveyed 537 employees in Chinese high-tech enterprises to investigate career sustainability under digitalization. They concluded that dimensions like career renewability and flexibility positively relate to innovative work behavior, while career resourcefulness has an inverted U-shaped influence. Individual sustainability is viewed through the lens of personal career resources, whereas corporate sustainability is impacted by the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and digitalization. The gap is defined by user resistance to technology versus “human capital”, where high human capital mitigates the negative effects of digital transition.

Although the reviewed studies consistently identify positive relationships between sustainability-related factors and innovative work behavior, the mechanisms through which these relationships emerge differ considerably. Some studies emphasize leadership and organizational practices (Li et al., 2019; Yang & Li, 2023), while others highlight individual characteristics such as environmental awareness and proactive personality (Piwovar-Sulej et al., 2025). Furthermore, most existing evidence originates from China and other Asian economies, with limited research examining these relationships in European contexts and almost none focusing on Greece. This inconsistency suggests that the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior may be context-dependent and influenced by cultural and organizational factors.

This thesis investigates the complex relationship between sustainability and innovative work behavior within the context of the Greek labor market. By analyzing data collected from employees across both the public and private sectors and spanning various industries, the study employs SPSS statistical analysis to explore how individual sustainability orientations and corporate sustainability initiatives, as well as the perceived gap between these two levels, influence the innovative contributions of the workforce. Grounded in the frameworks established by contemporary research (e.g. Li et al., 2019; Piwovar-Sulej et al., 2025), this research seeks to determine whether a synergy between personal green values and organizational mandates acts as a catalyst for innovation, or if a misalignment between individual beliefs and corporate practices hinders creative output. Ultimately, the findings aim to provide evidence-based insights into how Greek organizations can bridge the sustainability gap to foster a more innovative and environmentally conscious work environment.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

This chapter develops the hypotheses of the study by examining the theoretical and empirical relationships between sustainability orientation, organizational support and innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior refers to the generation, promotion and implementation of new ideas that improve products, services or work processes. Previous studies suggest that both individual characteristics and organizational conditions influence employees' willingness to engage in innovative activities. Sustainability orientation may represent one of these factors because it encourages employees and organizations to focus on long-term improvement, responsible decision-making and continuous development.

1. Individual Sustainability Orientation and Innovative Work Behavior

Individual sustainability orientation reflects the extent to which employees value environmental protection, social responsibility and sustainable development. Employees with a strong sustainability orientation tend to be more aware of the consequences of their actions and are often interested in improving existing practices in order to reduce waste, increase efficiency and create positive social or environmental outcomes.

Innovation and sustainability share several common characteristics. Both require individuals to challenge existing routines, identify opportunities for improvement and consider long-term outcomes rather than short-term convenience. Employees who are concerned about sustainability are therefore more likely to question current work practices and search for alternative solutions that can create value for both the organization and society.

Previous research supports the existence of a positive relationship between sustainability-related attitudes and innovative behavior. Piwowar-Sulej et al. (2025) found that environmentally conscious employees are more likely to demonstrate proactive behaviors and participate in activities that support organizational improvement. Similarly, employees who possess strong personal values related to sustainability often show higher levels of initiative because they seek opportunities to align their work with their beliefs.

From a theoretical perspective, sustainability-oriented employees may be motivated to generate new ideas because innovation provides a practical way to achieve sustainability objectives. For example, an employee who is concerned about environmental issues may propose changes that reduce resource consumption, improve operational efficiency or minimize waste. In this way, sustainability values can encourage employees to engage in behaviors that go beyond their formal job responsibilities.

Based on these arguments, employees with stronger sustainability values are expected to display higher levels of innovative work behavior.

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** When an individual's commitment to sustainability increases, their innovative work behavior also increases.

2. Corporate Sustainability Orientation and Innovative Work Behavior

Corporate sustainability refers to the extent to which organizations integrate environmental, social and economic considerations into their strategies, policies and daily operations. Organizations that prioritize sustainability often communicate a long-term vision, encourage responsible decision-making and invest in practices that create value for a broad range of stakeholders.

Corporate sustainability can influence employee behavior in several ways. First, sustainability initiatives signal that the organization is committed to continuous improvement and long-term success. Employees working in such environments may feel encouraged to contribute ideas that support organizational goals. Second, sustainability strategies frequently require organizations to develop new processes, technologies and ways of working. As a result, employees may be exposed to more opportunities to participate in innovation-related activities.

Research has shown that sustainability-oriented organizations often create conditions that support employee creativity and innovation. Yang and Li (2023) found that Green Human Resource Management practices can strengthen employees' willingness to contribute new ideas. Similarly, Li et al. (2019) reported that transformational leaders who promote sustainability values can encourage employees to participate more actively in innovative activities.

Social Exchange Theory also provides support for this relationship. When employees perceive that their organization is committed to socially responsible and sustainable practices, they may develop stronger feelings of trust and identification with the organization. In return, employees may be more willing to contribute discretionary efforts, including innovative behavior that benefits the organization.

Therefore, organizations that actively promote sustainability are expected to create an environment that encourages employees to generate and implement new ideas.

- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** When corporate sustainability initiatives increase, the innovative work behavior of employees increases.

3. The Sustainability Orientation Gap and Innovative Work Behavior

Although both individual and corporate sustainability orientation may positively influence innovative work behavior, the degree of alignment between the two may also be important. This study introduces the concept of the sustainability gap, which refers to the difference between employees' personal sustainability values and their perceptions of the organization's sustainability practices.

Employees are more likely to feel motivated and engaged when their personal values are consistent with organizational values. When employees believe that their organization shares their commitment to sustainability, they may experience a stronger sense of identification with the organization and greater motivation to contribute to organizational goals. In contrast, a mismatch between personal and organizational values may create frustration, dissatisfaction or reduced commitment.

Value congruence theory suggests that alignment between individual and organizational values contributes to positive employee attitudes and behaviors. When employees perceive a large sustainability gap, they may question the organization's authenticity and become less willing to invest effort beyond their formal responsibilities. In such situations, employees may view sustainability initiatives as symbolic rather than meaningful, reducing their motivation to contribute innovative ideas.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of value alignment in shaping employee responses to organizational change and sustainability initiatives. Zhang and Chin (2024) argue that perceived inconsistencies between employee expectations and organizational actions can create resistance and lower engagement levels. Because innovative work behavior often requires additional effort and voluntary participation, employees who perceive a large sustainability gap may be less willing to engage in innovation-related activities.

Consequently, a greater difference between individual and corporate sustainability orientation is expected to have a negative effect on innovative work behavior.

- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** When the gap between corporate sustainability and individual sustainability increases, innovative work behavior decreases.

4. Organizational Support and Innovative Work Behavior

Organizational support refers to the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contribution and provides the resources necessary for successful performance. Support can take many forms, including training opportunities, managerial encouragement, access to information, autonomy and a positive work environment.

Innovative behavior involves uncertainty and risk. Employees who generate new ideas may face criticism, resistance or the possibility that their suggestions will not succeed. As a result, employees are more likely to engage in innovative activities when they believe that the organization supports experimentation and learning.

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework provides a useful explanation for this relationship. According to the framework, employees are more likely to perform effectively when they possess the necessary abilities, motivation and opportunities. Even highly motivated and creative employees may struggle to innovate if they lack sufficient support, resources or opportunities within the organization.

Perceived Organizational Support theory also suggests that employees respond positively when they believe the organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions. Employees who experience high levels of support often demonstrate stronger commitment, higher engagement and a greater willingness to contribute beyond their formal job requirements. Innovative behavior is one example of such discretionary effort.

Previous studies have consistently reported positive relationships between organizational support and innovation-related outcomes. Employees who receive encouragement, feedback and access to resources are more likely to propose new ideas and participate in their implementation. In contrast, limited organizational support may

discourage innovation because employees perceive that their efforts are unlikely to be recognized or supported.

For these reasons, organizational support is expected to have a positive effect on innovative work behavior.

- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** When organizational support increases, the innovative work behavior of employees increases.

In summary, the study proposes that both individual sustainability orientation and corporate sustainability orientation positively influence innovative work behavior. Organizational support is also expected to have a positive effect on innovative work behavior, while the sustainability gap is expected to have a negative effect. Figure X presents the conceptual framework and the proposed relationships among the study variables.

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of 63 questions which are included in Appendix A. The questionnaire examined both independent and dependent variables related to sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior. The main **dependent variable** of the study was **Innovative Work Behavior**, which consisted of 16 questions adopted from Jeroen de Jong and Deanne den Hartog (2008). The **independent variables** included **Individual Sustainability Orientation** (6 questions) based on Andreas Kuckertz and Marcus Wagner (2010), **Corporate Sustainability Orientation** (6 questions) based on Pablo Muñoz and Dimo Dimov (2015) and **Perceived Individual Creativity** (13 questions) based on Jing Zhou and colleagues. In addition, the study examined the **gap between individual sustainability orientation and corporate sustainability orientation** as an independent variable, in order to investigate whether differences between employees' personal sustainability beliefs and the sustainability practices perceived within their organizations influence innovative work behavior. **Organizational Support** (6 questions), based on Robert Eisenberger et al. (1986), was examined as a **moderating factor** in order to investigate whether organizational support strengthens or weakens the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior. In addition, the questionnaire included demographic and control questions related to gender, age, educational background, work experience, organizational position, industry, and employment characteristics. The reliability of the questionnaire constructs was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. The results demonstrated acceptable to excellent levels of internal consistency reliability:

- Individual Sustainability Orientation $\rightarrow \alpha = 0.681$
- Corporate Sustainability Orientation $\rightarrow \alpha = 0.768$
- Individual Creativity $\rightarrow \alpha = 0.951$
- Innovative Work Behavior $\rightarrow \alpha = 0.943$
- Organizational Support $\rightarrow \alpha = 0.839$

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to 75 participants on 15 March 2026, and all responses were collected by 22 March 2026. All respondents were employed in organizations operating in Greece. The sample included employees from different demographic and professional backgrounds. The gender distribution of the sample was relatively balanced, with male and female participants representing approximately 50% each of the respondents. Most participants belonged to the 31–40 and 41–50 age groups, indicating that the majority of respondents were experienced professionals in the middle stages of their careers with an average of 16 years of experience with a standard deviation of 7 years.

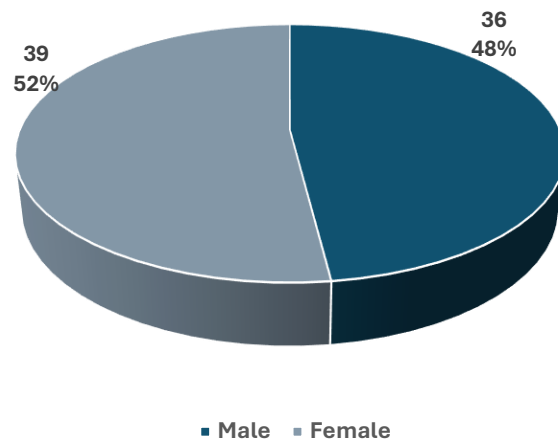


Figure 1. Gender

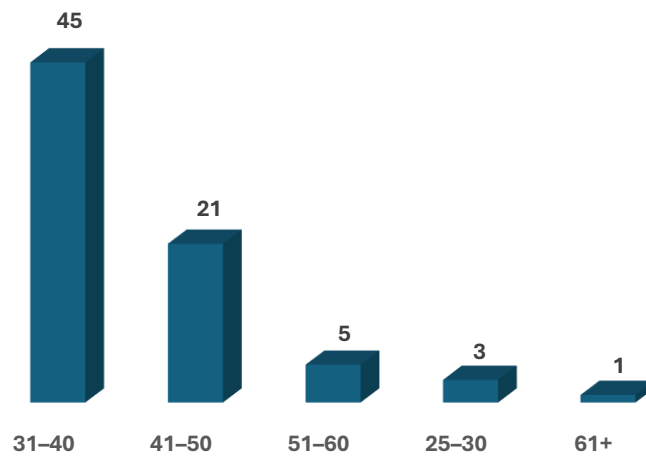


Figure 2. Age group

Regarding educational background, most respondents held a Master's degree, while smaller percentages held undergraduate degrees or PhDs, reflecting a highly educated sample population. In terms of employment arrangement, the majority of respondents were permanent employees, suggesting relatively stable employment conditions among the participants.

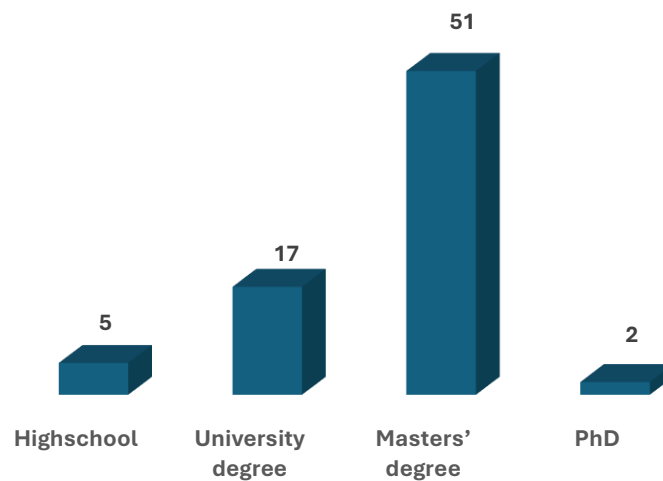


Figure 3. Educational background

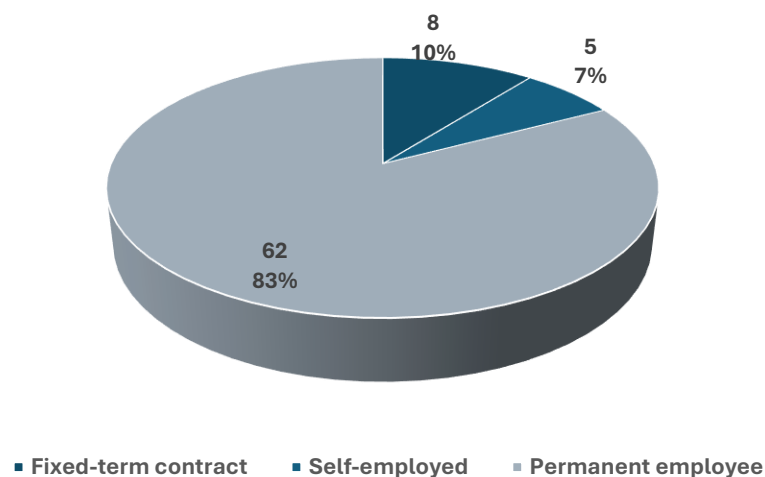


Figure 4. Employment arrangement

The respondents represented different sectors and industries, providing a broad organizational perspective for the study. More specifically, a significant percentage of participants worked in the finance and banking sector, while others were employed in education, technology and telecommunications, healthcare, tourism, commerce and retail, manufacturing, and public sector organizations. This diversity of professional backgrounds contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior across different organizational environments and industries operating in Greece.

Regarding the size of the organizations, the majority of respondents were employed in large companies with more than 250 employees (49 respondents), while the remaining participants worked in medium-sized companies with 50–249 employees (11 respondents), small companies with 10–49 employees (9 respondents), and very small

companies with 1–9 employees (6 respondents). The Greek labor market provides a particularly relevant context for examining sustainability and innovation due to the coexistence of large multinational corporations, public organizations and small-to-medium enterprises. This diversity enables the investigation of sustainability orientation across different organizational environments.

With regards to the organizational position, the sample was relatively balanced, with approximately 60% of the respondents occupying non-managerial employee roles, while the remaining participants held positions involving responsibility and leadership, such as supervisors, team leaders, managers, directors, or business owners.

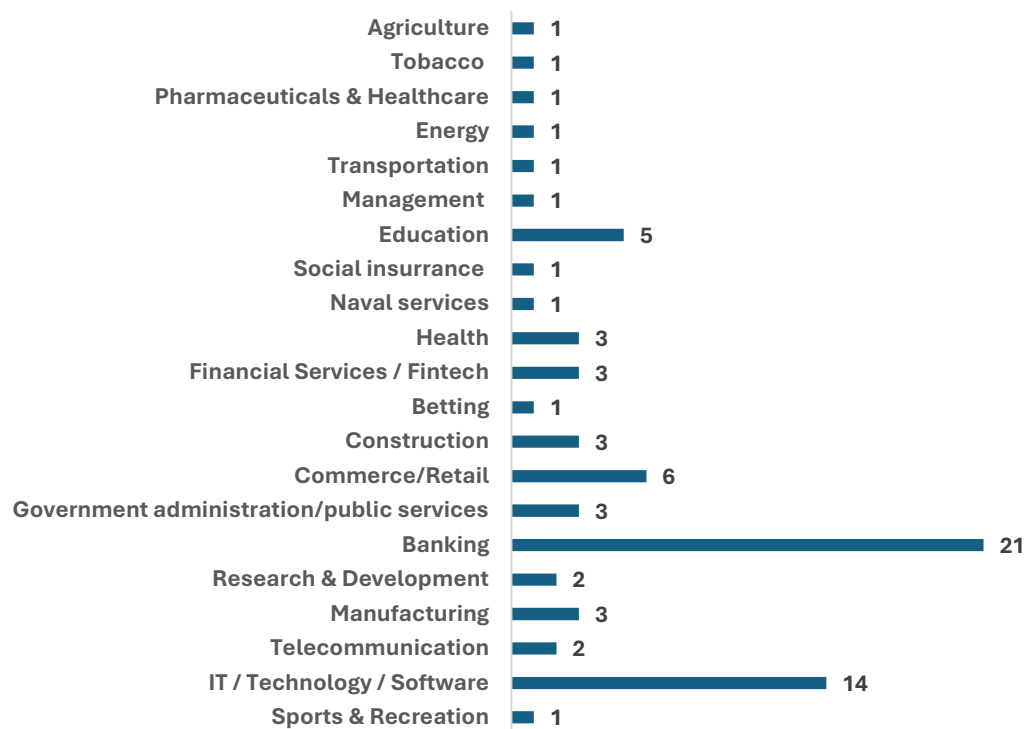


Figure 5. Industry in which current employer operates

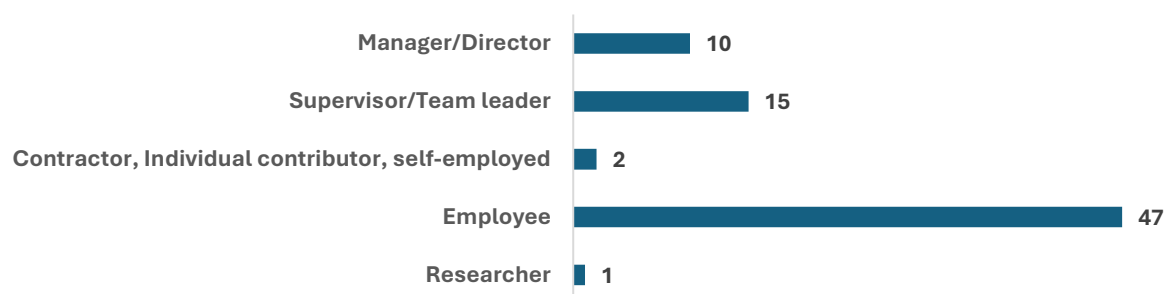


Figure 6. Current organizational position

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent and dependent variables, while regression analysis was performed to evaluate the effect of sustainability orientation, creativity, the sustainability orientation gap, and organizational support on employees' innovative work behavior. These statistical methods were selected in order to identify both the strength and direction of the relationships among the study variables and to assess the predictive power of the independent variables on innovative work behavior.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the statistical analysis conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis included correlation tests and multiple regression models in order to examine the relationships between corporate sustainability, individual sustainability, organizational support, perceived individual creativity and innovative work behavior among employees working in Greece.

Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationships between the variables, both Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were conducted, and the analytical results can be found in Appendix B. The purpose of these tests was to identify the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, namely Innovative Work Behavior (IWB).

Individual Creativity demonstrated the strongest relationship with Innovative Work Behavior. This finding suggests that employees' ability to generate novel ideas may represent a more immediate driver of innovation than sustainability-related attitudes alone. While sustainability orientation may shape employees' values and intentions, creativity appears to be the mechanism through which these intentions are translated into actual innovative actions. More specifically, the Spearman correlation coefficient between Individual Creativity and Innovative Work Behavior was statistically significant and strong ($r = 0.607$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that employees, who perceive themselves as more creative, are significantly more likely to demonstrate innovative behaviors in their workplace. This result is consistent with the theoretical background presented earlier and supports the argument that creativity acts as a direct driver of innovation.

Employees who perceived higher levels of organizational support were significantly more likely to engage in innovative activities ($r = 0.271$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that employees who feel supported by their organization are more willing to engage in innovative actions, such as proposing new ideas, improving processes and supporting organizational change. The result supports the principles of the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework, according to which employees require supportive organizational conditions in order to innovate effectively.

The relationship between Corporate Sustainability Orientation and Innovative Work Behavior was positive but relatively weak and not statistically significant. Similarly, Individual Sustainability Orientation showed a very weak relationship with Innovative Work Behavior. These findings suggest that sustainability orientation alone may not automatically translate into innovative behavior unless additional supporting conditions, such as creativity or organizational support, are present.

The correlation analysis also revealed a positive relationship between Individual Sustainability Orientation and Corporate Sustainability Orientation ($r = 0.252$, $p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that employees with stronger personal sustainability beliefs tend to perceive their organizations as more sustainability-oriented as well.

Several demographic variables also demonstrated weaker relationships with the main variables of the study. For example, years of work experience and organizational position

showed moderate relationships with sustainability orientation and creativity, suggesting that employees in more experienced or leadership-oriented roles may perceive sustainability and innovation differently.

Overall, the correlation analysis partially supports the proposed hypotheses. In particular, the findings strongly support the relationship between creativity and innovative behavior, while organizational support also appears to positively influence innovation. However, the direct relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior appears weaker than initially expected.

Regression Analysis

To further examine the predictive relationships among the variables, several multiple regression models were developed, and the analytical tables can be found in Appendix B. The regression analysis aimed to determine whether sustainability orientation, the sustainability gap, creativity and organizational support could predict employees' innovative work behavior after controlling demographic variables.

Regression Model 1: Full Regression Model without Sustainability Gap

The first regression model included all primary independent variables and demographic controls, excluding the sustainability gap variable. The model was statistically significant ($F < 0.001$) and explained approximately 85.2% of the variance in Innovative Work Behavior ($R^2 = 0.852$).

Regression analysis revealed that creativity retained a substantial effect even after controlling for demographic variables and sustainability-related factors. Employees with higher levels of creativity were significantly more likely to engage in innovative workplace practices. Organizational Support also contributed positively to the model, although its effect was weaker compared to creativity.

The results suggest that innovation is influenced more strongly by behavioral and organizational factors than by sustainability orientation alone. Although sustainability variables contributed positively to the model, their predictive power was lower than initially hypothesized.

Regression Model 2: Sustainability Gap and Organizational Support

The second regression model focused specifically on the impact of the sustainability gap and organizational support on Innovative Work Behavior while including selected control variables.

This model was statistically significant ($F = 3.087$, $p = 0.007$) and explained approximately 25.5% of the variance in Innovative Work Behavior ($R^2 = 0.255$).

The findings indicate that the gap between Individual Sustainability Orientation and Corporate Sustainability Orientation negatively affected Innovative Work Behavior. Employees who perceived a stronger mismatch between their own sustainability values and those of their organization demonstrated lower levels of innovative behavior. The negative coefficient associated with the sustainability gap provides empirical evidence in

favor of Hypothesis 3 and aligns with the theoretical discussion regarding value conflict and reduced employee motivation.

Organizational Support continued to demonstrate a positive effect on innovation, suggesting that supportive organizational environments may partially reduce the negative consequences of sustainability misalignment.

Hypotheses Evaluation

[Insert Table X here – Hypotheses Summary]

Based on the statistical analysis, the hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

- **H1:** Individual Sustainability Orientation positively affects Innovative Work Behavior → **Partially Supported**
- **H2:** Corporate Sustainability Orientation positively affects Innovative Work Behavior → **Partially Supported**
- **H3:** The Sustainability Gap negatively affects Innovative Work Behavior → **Supported**
- **H4:** Organizational Support positively affects Innovative Work Behavior → **Supported**

DISCUSSION

This thesis examined the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior among employees working in organizations in Greece. More specifically, it investigated whether individual sustainability orientation, corporate sustainability orientation, organizational support and the perceived sustainability gap influence employees' willingness to engage in innovative workplace behaviors. While sustainability has increasingly become a strategic priority for organizations, the findings suggest that sustainability alone does not necessarily translate into innovation. Instead, innovation appears to emerge through a combination of individual capabilities, organizational conditions and value alignment between employees and organizations.

The strongest finding of the study concerns the role of individual creativity. Creativity emerged as the most influential predictor of innovative work behavior, demonstrating a substantially stronger effect than either individual or corporate sustainability orientation. This finding suggests that sustainability-related attitudes may create a favorable mindset for innovation, but creativity represents the mechanism through which employees transform ideas into concrete innovative actions. Employees who perceive themselves as creative are more likely to identify opportunities for improvement, challenge existing practices and develop new solutions regardless of whether these initiatives are directly connected to sustainability objectives. This result is consistent with previous research highlighting creativity as a fundamental antecedent of innovative work behavior and reinforces the view that organizations seeking innovation should invest, not only in sustainability initiatives, but also in practices that stimulate creative thinking and experimentation.

The results also demonstrated a positive relationship between organizational support and innovative work behavior. This finding can be interpreted through both Social Exchange Theory and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework. Employees who perceive that their organization values their contributions and provides adequate support are more likely to reciprocate through positive discretionary behaviors, including innovation. Innovation inherently involves uncertainty and risk, and employees may hesitate to propose new ideas if they fear criticism or lack sufficient resources to implement them. Consequently, organizational support appears to create the psychological safety and opportunity structure necessary for innovative behavior to emerge. The findings therefore suggest that innovation is not solely a function of employee characteristics but also depends on the organizational environment in which employees operate.

An interesting finding concerns the relatively weak direct relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior. Although both individual sustainability orientation and corporate sustainability orientation demonstrated positive associations with innovation, their effects were considerably weaker than originally anticipated. This result may indicate that sustainability values alone are insufficient to stimulate innovative behavior. Employees may strongly support environmental and social responsibility without necessarily translating these beliefs into innovative workplace actions. Similarly, organizations may communicate sustainability objectives without providing the resources, autonomy or incentives required for employees to act upon them. In other words, sustainability orientation may establish motivation and direction,

but additional organizational mechanisms appear necessary to convert sustainability aspirations into innovation outcomes.

The findings partly differ from several studies reviewed in the literature. Research by Li et al. (2019), Yang and Li (2023), and Piwovar-Sulej et al. (2025) reported stronger relationships between sustainability-related factors and innovative behavior. One possible explanation for this difference lies in the organizational and cultural context of the present study. Most previous research was conducted in China or other environments where sustainability initiatives may be more formally embedded within organizational systems. In contrast, the Greek organizational environment may exhibit varying levels of sustainability maturity across sectors and organizations. As a result, employees may recognize sustainability as an important organizational objective without necessarily perceiving clear opportunities to contribute through innovative actions.

Perhaps the most theoretically significant finding relates to the sustainability gap. The results indicate that employees who perceive a mismatch between their personal sustainability values and the sustainability practices of their organization tend to demonstrate lower levels of innovative work behavior. This finding supports the argument that alignment between individual and organizational values plays an important role in shaping employee behavior. When employees believe that their organization genuinely supports principles that are consistent with their own beliefs, they may feel a stronger sense of identification, commitment and motivation. Conversely, when sustainability initiatives are perceived as superficial or inconsistent with organizational practices, employees may become disengaged and less willing to invest effort in innovation. This finding extends previous sustainability literature by highlighting the importance of perceived value congruence rather than focusing exclusively on individual or organizational sustainability in isolation.

The importance of value alignment may be particularly relevant within the Greek organizational context. In recent years, Greek organizations have increasingly adopted sustainability and ESG-related practices due to regulatory developments, investor expectations and international market pressures. However, the degree of implementation varies considerably across sectors and organizations. Employees may therefore encounter situations where sustainability is communicated as a strategic priority but is not consistently reflected in daily organizational practices. Under such conditions, perceived inconsistencies may reduce trust and weaken employees' motivation to contribute innovative ideas that support organizational objectives.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should avoid viewing sustainability and innovation as separate initiatives. Instead, managers should focus on creating environments in which sustainability objectives are integrated into everyday work practices and supported by appropriate organizational structures. Simply promoting sustainability values may not be sufficient. Organizations should provide employees with opportunities to participate in sustainability-related initiatives, encourage idea generation, recognize innovative contributions and ensure that sustainability commitments are visible in organizational decision-making. Particular attention should also be given to reducing the sustainability gap by ensuring that organizational actions are perceived as authentic and consistent with stated sustainability goals.

The study also contributes to the broader literature by extending sustainability and innovation research to the Greek context, which remains relatively underrepresented in previous empirical studies. By simultaneously examining individual sustainability orientation, corporate sustainability orientation, organizational support and the sustainability gap, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing innovative work behavior. The findings suggest that future research should move beyond examining sustainability variables independently and instead focus on the interactions between employee values, organizational culture and contextual conditions.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on a relatively small sample of 75 respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the sample contained a substantial proportion of respondents ($\approx 32\%$) from the finance and banking sector, which may influence the observed relationships and limit applicability to other industries. Future research could address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples.

Additional studies could also investigate the role of leadership style, organizational culture and employee engagement as potential mediators or moderators of the relationship between sustainability orientation and innovative work behavior. Comparative studies across different countries would further enhance understanding of how national and organizational contexts influence these relationships.

Overall, the findings indicate that innovative work behavior is influenced less by sustainability orientation alone and more by the interaction between individual capabilities, organizational support and value alignment. Sustainability remains an important organizational objective, but its contribution to innovation appears strongest when employees possess the creativity, support and organizational conditions necessary to transform sustainability-related values into meaningful workplace innovations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMO	Ability-Motivation-Opportunity
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
fs-QCA	fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
GHRM	Green Human Resource Management
IWB	Innovative Work Behavior
MSMEs	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A. Sustainability orientation indicators

A1. Individual sustainability orientation (A. Kuckertz, M. Wagner / Journal of Business Venturing 25 (2010) 524–539)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1. do not agree at all to 7. completely agree)

1. Firms should take an internationally leading role in the field of environmental protection.
2. Firms that are environmentally oriented have advantages in recruiting and retaining qualified employees.
3. The environmental performance of a company will in future be considered more and more by financial institutions.
4. Corporate social responsibility should be part of the foundations of each company.
5. I think that environmental problems are one of the biggest challenges for our society.
6. I think that entrepreneurs and companies need to take on a larger social responsibility.

A2. Corporate sustainability orientation (Munoz and Dimov, 2015) (Johnson & Hörisch Bus Strat Env. 2022; 31:908–920)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1. do not agree at all to 7. completely agree)

1. I strongly believe in the power of my company in contributing to solve many of the problems we have as a society.
2. My company has an obligation to society that extends beyond making money.
3. My company gives back to society since it derives its profits from society.
4. Regardless of the nature of our business, my company trades fairly with customers and suppliers.
5. Regardless of the nature of our business, my company makes a responsible use of natural resources.
6. When my company chose between business ideas, it always chose the one that helped build a better society

B7. Perceived Individual Creativity (Zhou, Shin, Canella, 2008) (Zhou and George, 2001) (Jelena Spanjol • Leona Tam • Vivian Tam J Bus Ethics (2015) 130:117–130)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1. do not agree at all to 7. completely agree)

In my job:

1. I suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives.
2. I come up with new and practical ideas to improve performance.
3. I search out new technologies, processes, techniques, and/or product ideas.
4. I suggest new ways to increase quality.
5. I am a good source of creative ideas.
6. I am not afraid to take risks.
7. I promote and champion ideas to others.
8. I exhibit creativity on the job when given the opportunity to.
9. I develop adequate plans and schedules for the implementation of new ideas.
10. I often have new and innovative ideas.
11. I come up with creative solutions to problems.
12. I often have a fresh approach to problems.
13. I suggest new ways of performing work

B8. Innovative Work Behavior (de Jong and den Hartog, 2008)

Please indicate how often do you involve in the following (1. never to 7. always):

1. pay attention to issues that are not part of your daily work
2. look for opportunities to improve things
3. consider innovative opportunities
4. wonder how things can be improved
5. explore new products or services
6. search out new working methods, techniques or instruments
7. generate original solutions for problems
8. create new ideas
9. find new approaches to execute tasks
10. mobilize support for innovative ideas
11. acquire approval for innovative ideas
12. make important organizational members enthusiastic for innovative ideas
13. attempt to convince people to support an innovative idea
14. transform innovative ideas into work practices

15. contribute to the implementation of new ideas

16. put effort in the development of new things

Part C. Moderating factors

C3. Organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) (Saskia Crucke, Tom Kluijtmans, Kenn Meyfroodt & Sebastian Desmidt (2022)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1. do not agree at all to 7. completely agree).

1. My organization values my contribution to its well-being.
2. If the organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.
3. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.
4. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.
5. Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
6. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.

D. Controls

D1. Gender

Please indicate your gender:

Male

Female

D2. Age

Please indicate your age group:

31–40

41–50

51–60

25–30

61+

D3. Family status

Please indicate your family status:

Single

Married with no children

Married with children

Other (please specify)

D4. Educational background

Please indicate which of the following describes better your educational background:

Highschool

University degree

Masters' degree

PhD

D5. Years of experience

Please indicate the number of years of your work experience: ____

D6. Years within your current employer

Please indicate the number of years you work in your current employer: ____

D7. Years in the current position

Please indicate the number of years you have in the current position: ____

D8. Position in the current employer

Please indicate your current position:

Employee

Supervisor

Manager/Director

Other (please specify)

D9. Type of employer for your current position:

Please indicate the type of employer you have in your current position:

Social service/charity

Public sector/civil service

Private sector/business

Other (please indicate)

D10. Industry category of your current employer

Please indicate the industry in which your current employer operates in:

Agriculture

Manufacturing

Education

Commerce/Retail

Energy

Construction

Transportation

Finance and Banking

Computer and Electronics

Military

Telecommunication

Tourism

Health

Other (Please indicate)

D11. Size of your current employer

Please indicate the number of employees in your current employer:_____

D12. Age of your current organization

Please indicate the year of establishment of your current employer:_____

D13. Strategy of your current organization

Please indicate which of the following describes better the strategy of your current employer:

My company follows a low-cost strategy in a big market

My company follows a differentiation strategy (placing emphasis on high quality or innovation) in a big market

My company follows a low-cost strategy in a niche market

My company follows a differentiation strategy (placing emphasis on high quality or innovation) in a niche market

D14. Which of the following describes better your employer:

Greek company

Foreign company operating in Greece

University

D15. Please indicate which of the following describes better the way of work in your current employer:

Full on site

Full remote

Hybrid

D16. Which of the following describes better your employment arrangement:

Fixed-term contract

Self-employed

Permanent employee

APPENDIX B: CORRELATION & REGRESSION TABLES



Results_final.xlsx

		Individual_Sustainability_Mean	Corporate_Sustainability_Mean	Individual_Creativity_Mean	Innovative_Work_Behaviour_Mean	Organisational_Support_Mean
Individual_Sustainability_Mean	Pearson Correlation	1	.269*	0,135	0,019	0,001
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,020	0,249	0,871	0,993
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Corporate_Sustainability_Mean	Pearson Correlation	.269*	1	.255*	0,105	.307**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,020		0,027	0,368	0,007
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Individual_Creativity_Mean	Pearson Correlation	0,135	.255*	1	.678**	0,040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,249	0,027		0,000	0,736
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Innovative_Work_Behaviour_Mean	Pearson Correlation	0,019	0,105	.678**	1	.252*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,871	0,368	0,000		0,029
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Organisational_Support_Mean	Pearson Correlation	0,001	.307**	0,040	.252*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,993	0,007	0,736	0,029	
	N	75	75	75	75	75

		Individual_Sustainability_Mean	Corporate_Sustainability_Mean	Individual_Creativity_Mean	Innovative_Work_Behaviour_Mean	Organisational_Support_Mean
Individual_Sustainability_Mean	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	.252*	0,079	-0,021	0,030
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,029	0,499	0,858	0,798
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Corporate_Sustainability_Mean	Correlation Coefficient	.252*	1,000	0,180	0,090	.317**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,029		0,122	0,443	0,006
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Individual_Creativity_Mean	Correlation Coefficient	0,079	0,180	1,000	.607**	0,038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,499	0,122		0,000	0,745
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Innovative_Work_Behaviour_Mean	Correlation Coefficient	-0,021	0,090	.607**	1,000	.271*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,858	0,443	0,000		0,019
	N	75	75	75	75	75
Organisational_Support_Mean	Correlation Coefficient	0,030	.317**	0,038	.271*	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,798	0,006	0,745	0,019	
	N	75	75	75	75	75

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.923 ^a	0,852	0,751	0,43028

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	31,015	20	1,551	8,376	<.001 ^b
Residual	5,369	29	0,185		
Total	36,384	49			

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1,082	4,068		0,266	0,792		
Individual_Sustainability_Mean	0,293	0,126	0,243	2,323	0,027	0,465	2,149
Corporate_Sustainability_Mean	-0,228	0,102	-0,253	-2,235	0,033	0,396	2,525
Individual_Creativity_Mean	0,721	0,082	0,798	8,737	0,000	0,610	1,640
Organiational_Support_Mean	0,306	0,074	0,449	4,136	0,000	0,431	2,320
D1. Please indicate your gender:	0,097	0,156	0,056	0,619	0,541	0,633	1,579
D2. Please indicate your age group:	0,140	0,106	0,137	1,328	0,195	0,481	2,081

D3. Please indicate your family status:	0,001	0,094	0,002	0,015	0,988	0,436	2,291
D4. Please indicate which of the following describes better your educational background:	-0,091	0,112	-0,076	-0,812	0,423	0,581	1,720
D5. Please indicate the number of years of your work experience:	-0,013	0,017	-0,105	-0,762	0,452	0,266	3,763
D6. Please indicate the number of years you work in your current employer:	0,045	0,022	0,279	2,047	0,050	0,274	3,651
D7. Please indicate the number of years you have in the current position:	-0,002	0,018	-0,012	-0,098	0,923	0,343	2,914
D8. Please indicate your current position:	0,011	0,064	0,016	0,178	0,860	0,636	1,571
D9. Please indicate the type of employer you have in your current position:	0,313	0,178	0,180	1,759	0,089	0,488	2,047
D10. Please indicate the industry in which your current employer operates in:	-0,052	0,019	-0,286	-2,678	0,012	0,445	2,246
D11. Please indicate the number of employees in your current employer:	1,070E-05	0,000	0,163	1,852	0,074	0,656	1,523
D12. Please indicate the year of establishment of your current employer:	-0,001	0,002	-0,065	-0,576	0,569	0,394	2,541
D13. Please indicate which of the following describes better the strategy of your current employer:	0,101	0,088	0,100	1,140	0,264	0,658	1,520
D14. Which of the following describes better your employer:	0,010	0,219	0,005	0,043	0,966	0,451	2,218
D15. Please indicate which of the following describes better the way of work in your current employer:	-0,207	0,093	-0,226	-2,229	0,034	0,494	2,024
D16. Which of the following describes better your employment arrangement:	0,208	0,115	0,165	1,819	0,079	0,617	1,621

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.505 ^a	0,255	0,173	0,77493

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12,975	7	1,854	3,087	.007 ^b
Residual	37,833	63	0,601		
Total	50,808	70			

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3,774	0,651		5,799	0,000					
OS_Mean	0,254	0,085	0,365	2,993	0,004	0,279	0,353	0,325	0,794	1,260
GAP_corporate_individual	0,019	0,112	0,021	0,174	0,863	-0,139	0,022	0,019	0,796	1,257
1. Please indicate your gender:	-0,244	0,192	-0,144	-1,272	0,208	-0,223	-0,158	-0,138	0,924	1,082

D2. Please indicate your age group:	-0,130	0,143	-0,123	- 0,909	0,367	0,009	-0,114	-0,099	0,647	1,545
D5. Please indicate the number of years of your work experience:	0,026	0,018	0,207	1,475	0,145	0,113	0,183	0,160	0,601	1,663
D10. Please indicate the industry in which your current employer operates in:	0,025	0,021	0,141	1,211	0,230	0,049	0,151	0,132	0,877	1,140
D11. Please indicate the number of employees in your current employer:	2,814E-05	0,000	0,367	3,126	0,003	0,259	0,366	0,340	0,857	1,167

