

Riddle Me This: What Do Leader Green Behaviors, Inclusion, and Workplace Gossip Have in Common? They are GOM's 2024 Best Papers!

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Gather around kids, I have got a real brainteaser for you all today: “*What do leader green behaviors, inclusion, and workplace gossip have in common?*”. It might sound like the setup to a joke, but here is the punchline—they are all themes of the papers that grabbed the top honors at *Group & Organization Management* (GOM)’s 2024 Best Papers award! Yes, that is right! These fascinating topics have been explored in depth by our brightest minds, shedding new light on issues that touch every corner of our workplaces. From the environmental initiatives of green leaders to the intricate dynamics of leaders’ confidence in their ability to manage racially diverse teams and foster inclusion and the buzzing networks of workplace gossip, these studies have captivated our GOM-community and sparked conversations that are sure to influence theory and practice. So, let’s gear up to dive into the insights, appreciate the innovation, and celebrate the remarkable contributions of this year’s best paper winners!”

This year’s three articles selected by *GOM*’s editorial leadership for special recognition as the 2024 Best Quantitative Paper ([Houston III et al., 2023](#)), 2024 Best Qualitative Paper ([Greenslade-Yeats et al., 2023](#)), and the 2024 Best Conceptual Paper ([Zacher et al., 2024](#)) once more demonstrate *GOM*’s ability and success in achieving our mission statement. Indeed, our 2024 Best Paper Award winners reflect *GOM*’s openness to micro- and macro-research, conceptual and empirical articles, and both quantitative and qualitative methods. We believe that these 2024 articles offered the type of theoretical, conceptual, and/or empirical contributions to the literature that most warranted a Best Paper Award. Let me take you on a journey along some of the key attributes that led us to select these articles as awardees from a range of high-quality contenders.

The Motivation to be Inclusive: Understanding How Diversity Self-Efficacy Impacts Leader Effectiveness in Racially Diverse Workgroups

Ready to find out why some bosses are wizards at leading a team as diverse as a United Colors of Benetton ad (disclaimer: I did not receive any financial incentive for naming this company)? This paper dives into the magic of leaders who believe they can ace managing a rainbow coalition of employees. Turns out, those who think they can, really do! They are not just embracing diversity; they are rocking it. Buckle up to explore how believing in their own mojo makes these leaders the champions of diverse workplaces!

In this paper, Lawrence Houston III, Maria Kraimer, and Pauline Schilpzand dive into an increasingly relevant question: “Why do some leaders excel at managing racially diverse teams while others falter?”. They propose a fascinating idea: leaders who believe strongly in their ability to handle diversity, a trait termed “diversity self-efficacy”, tend to be more effective, especially in highly racially diverse environments. The core of this research suggests that it is not just about leaders feeling confident; their belief in their capability translates into real-world effectiveness. This is not about leaders just feeling good about their skills; it is about them leading teams in such a way that every team member feels included and valued, which in turn boosts overall team performance. The study argues that when leaders operate with high diversity self-efficacy in racially diverse groups, they create an environment where inclusivity is the norm, and every voice is heard.

Using two studies across multiple industries, Lawrence Houston III, Maria Kraimer, and Pauline Schilpzand gathered data from both leaders and their teams to support these claims. The results indicate that leaders who are adept at managing diversity, not just on paper but in their daily interactions, significantly enhance their effectiveness. Particularly in settings with considerable racial diversity, these leaders stand out for their ability to unite and motivate their teams.

What makes this study particularly impactful is its practical implications for today’s workplaces, which are more diverse than ever. It suggests that boosting a leader’s confidence in handling diverse groups and providing them with the tools to lead inclusively can make a real difference. This is not just a win for workplace harmony; it is a strategic advantage for organizations looking to thrive in a global market. In simple terms, this paper tells us that the secret recipe for leading effectively in diverse settings combines a genuine belief in one’s ability to manage diversity with a proactive approach to inclusivity. When leaders embody these qualities, they not only excel in their roles but also set the stage for their teams to succeed. This insight is invaluable

for organizations aiming to not just manage but celebrate workplace diversity, turning it into a stepping stone for greater innovation and success.

In summary, Lawrence Houston III, Maria Kraimer, and Pauline Schilpzand shine a spotlight on how essential it is for leaders to cultivate confidence in their diversity management skills and to act on this confidence by fostering an inclusive team culture. As workplaces continue to evolve, the ability to lead with empathy and inclusiveness is becoming a critical skill set that can dramatically impact a leader's effectiveness and their team's productivity and satisfaction.

How Workplace Gossip Shapes Interpersonal Relationships: A Qualitative Study From The Gossip Recipient's Perspective

Ever wondered what happens when the office grapevine starts buzzing? Well, dive into this juicy study that spills the tea on all things gossip. From whispers at the water cooler to chitchats on Zoom, this research takes you behind the scenes to show how a little birdie telling you something can stir up the whole workplace dynamic. So, grab your popcorn and get the lowdown on how gossip shapes who trusts who and who is sitting with whom at lunch. It is not just about who said what—it is about how those whispers echo through the hallways and what they do to our work friendships and frenemies (such an academic term to describe your colleagues who are working on similar ideas than you are) alike. Let's get gossiping about gossip!

In this study James Greenslade-Yeats, Helena Cooper-Thomas, Rachel Morrison, and Patricia D. Corner dove into the world of workplace gossip, focusing on how it affects relationships at work from the point of view of the person hearing the gossip—that is the gossip recipient. They wanted to understand the intricate ways gossip influences workplace relationships, whether it strengthens them, creates distance, or even affects trust and respect among colleagues. Gossip at work is not just idle chit-chat; it can shape how people see each other, who trusts whom, and how team dynamics evolve. This study looks at these effects from the perspective of the people receiving the gossip, which has not been thoroughly explored before. Typically, we think about the person spreading the gossip or the one we gossip about, but the gossip recipient plays a crucial role too. How they react to the gossip can really change the workplace environment—for better or worse.

Through interviews and written incident reports about workplace gossip incidents in which participants were the gossip recipient, James Greenslade-Yeats, Helena Cooper-Thomas, Rachel Morrison, and Patricia D. Corner

collected detailed accounts from gossip recipient, examining their reactions to specific gossip incidents. They explored how these reactions influenced the gossip recipients' relationships not just with the person who shared the gossip, but also with the person the gossip was about. This angle is particularly insightful because it adds depth to our understanding of gossip's role in the workplace, highlighting its potential to both forge and fracture work relationships. One key finding from the study is that the way gossip is interpreted by the recipient can trigger different responses. If the gossip is seen as mean-spirited or self-serving, it might harm the relationship between the gossiper and the gossip recipient. On the other hand, if the gossip seems to come from a place of concern or support, it could strengthen bonds. Essentially, the impact of gossip hinges on how it is perceived by those who hear it.

Understanding these dynamics can help managers and organizations craft better policies around communication and confidentiality. It also provides a new lens through which we can view team cohesion and employee morale. By appreciating the complex role of gossip in shaping workplace relationships, organizations can foster a more supportive and respectful environment. In sum, this paper not only broadens our grasp of how gossip operates in workplaces but also challenges us to think differently about everyday interactions and their profound impact on professional relationships.

Leadership and Environmental Sustainability: An Integrative Conceptual Model Of Multilevel Antecedents and Consequences of Leader Green Behavior

Ever wonder how a boss can make your office greener than your houseplant collection? Well, dive into this trailblazing conceptual study that maps out the secret paths from 'Green Giants' at the top, all the way down to the everyday eco-heroics in the cubicles. This paper does not just walk you through the green park—it lays out how the right leaders can sprinkle a little bit of that green magic across entire organizations. Get ready to see how green leadership does more than just recycle bins and carpooling—it is reshaping companies one eco-friendly step at a time!

In this conceptual paper, Hannes Zacher, Clara Kühner, Ian M. Katz, and Cort W. Rudolph wade into the deep waters of environmental sustainability within organizations, with a particular interest in how leadership at different levels can boost or bust green behaviors across the board. In doing so, the paper provides a detailed blueprint to understand the intricate dance between leaders who advocate for the environment and their influence on employees'

green actions. They do not just ask whether leaders matter, but how, why, and under what conditions their green behaviors trickle down or bubble up to create a culture of sustainability. Specifically, they begin with a rigorous definition of what green behavior in leadership entails—defining the actions and initiatives that qualify as environmentally sustainable leadership behaviors. Next up, they aim to integrate and map out the scattered findings from previous research, connecting the dots to form a clearer picture of how leaders' green behaviors influence not just the immediate work environment but ripple out to affect organizational practices and policies. Finally, they propose to use this newly mapped terrain to pinpoint where future researchers can dig further, identifying gaps and suggesting new paths for exploration in the realm of green leadership.

To tackle these ambitious goals, the study presents a conceptual model that is like a master key unlocking the complex layers of how green behaviors are transmitted through an organization. Here is a brief rundown: The model starts with the leader, whose green behaviors are influenced by their knowledge, skills, and motivational factors. But it does not stop there. These green behaviors can directly inspire employees to adopt similar environmental actions through modeling—essentially “do as I do”. Alternatively, leaders can change the organizational culture or structure to support and encourage green practices, affecting employees' behaviors from the top down. The twist is that this is not a one-way street. The model suggests that employees' green behaviors can also influence leaders. If employees are proactive about the environment, their green behaviors can inspire their leaders to adopt similar behaviors or advocate for policies that support sustainable practices. It is a feedback loop where green actions beget more green actions.

But why wade through all this? Hannes Zacher, Clara Kühner, Ian M. Katz, and Cort W. Rudolph argue that understanding these pathways is crucial for companies aiming to beef up their environmental credentials. Leaders who not only practice what they preach about sustainability but also embed these values into the fabric of their organizations can make a significant impact. This is not just good for the planet—it is smart business, as more consumers and clients favor companies with strong environmental records. In short, this paper paints a comprehensive picture of how environmental leadership can permeate an organization, influencing not just the physical operations but the very culture and ethos of the workplace. By laying out this conceptual model, Hannes Zacher, Clara Kühner, Ian M. Katz, and Cort W. Rudolph provide a valuable framework for organizations striving to enhance their environmental impact and for future research aimed at expanding our understanding of effective green leadership.

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Acknowledgments

On behalf of the entire GOM editorial team, I am thrilled to celebrate and acknowledge the 2024 Best Papers. These exceptional works exemplify the rich diversity of topics, the breadth of disciplines, innovative methodologies, and scholarly rigor that our journal proudly champions. They not only showcase the variety of methods employed but also significantly impact both the academic community and practitioners. Here is to another year of outstanding contributions and ground-breaking insights in our field! I will continue to keep up with this “Riddle Me This” tradition as a way of recognizing the wonderful scholarship you can expect to find in GOM. Although the questions the GOM community will be dealing with in 2025 will be different, the answer to my editorial will be the same: GOM’S BEST PAPERS!

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