

# Does Greenwashing Affect Employee's Career Satisfaction? The Mediating Role of Organizational Pride, Negative Emotions and Affective Commitment.

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## Research Article

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# **Abstract**

Greenwashing occurs when companies deliberately deceive or mislead stakeholders regarding their environmental practices or benefits of a product/service. Most existing greenwashing studies focus on consumers, and the effects on employees have seldom been examined. Furthermore, little is known about how employees may respond emotionally to their company's greenwashing practices. Accordingly, the current research conducted an empirical study of the relationship between employees' greenwashing perception and their career satisfaction. The mediating roles of organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment are also examined. Based on information collected through a questionnaire applied to 398 Portuguese employees, a quantitative, causal, cross-sectional study was carried out, using structural equation model techniques, through AMOS. The results indicate that employees' perception of greenwashing relates negatively to their career satisfaction, organizational pride, and affective commitment. In turn, negative emotions are positively impacted by greenwashing. The results also reveal that the path between employees perceived greenwashing and their career satisfaction is established not only directly, but also through organizational pride and affective commitment. This study extends the literature by addressing the neglected side of employees' emotional reactions to greenwashing. Based on the central premise that corporate greenwashing is inherently an immoral act, we draw upon appraisal theory and moral foundations theory to investigate short-term (affective commitment, negative emotions, and organizational pride) and long-term (career satisfaction) work-related effects as an outcome for greenwashing.

## **1. Introduction**

Day by day, consumers, investors and corporations are increasingly aware and concerned about environmental issues, creating pressures for environmental protection (Tahir et al., 2020). Stakeholders are now expecting a certain level of socially responsible action from companies (Park et al., 2021), including their employees. In addition, several studies have documented positive outcomes from corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices for consumers (Kraus et al., 2021) and employees (Schaefer et al., 2020). However, while company's CSR practices influence judgments of corporate morality (Bauman & Skitka, 2012), irresponsible behavior of companies causes psychological discomfort among employees, whose loyalty decreases (H. Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Meaning, greenwashing is at the other end of the true meaning of CSR (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2019), as it is a form of immoral and irresponsible organizational practice (Siano et al., 2017) that is harmful to society (Bowen & Aragon-Correa, 2014) and presents damaging consequences for consumers, corporations (De Jong et al., 2018), and employees, although negative outcomes are poorly investigated in these.

This study defines greenwashing perceptions of employees as the degree to which they recognize dishonest, immoral, unethical or irresponsible corporate conduct, such as deceiving or misleading stakeholders about their environmental practices or benefits of a product or service (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). That is, the companies pretend to be environmentally responsible, but their actions do not fit with their claims (De Jong et al., 2018; Delmas & Burbano, 2011), willingly misleading or lying to their

stakeholders. It is worth considering its impact on the organizational identification of employees (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2019). Individuals usually react less strongly to positive events than to negative ones, thus, unethical behaviors will have a great impact on employees (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). In fact, when current job-related aspects, do not meet employee's expectations, they experience decreased career satisfaction (Ren et al., 2013). Understanding how they feel about their company's behavior might be quite challenging, especially when addressing aspects that do not directly affect their work experiences, such as greenwashing. However, employees' emotions toward the environmental conduct or communications of companies could still be relevant, as they might impact their motivations (Skudiene & Auruskeviciene, 2012) and their organizational commitment (Gupta, 2017). These outcomes can be turned into organizational success or failure (Azim, 2016), since long-term success depends on the level of satisfaction of employees with their careers (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021).

Despite the possible damages of corporate greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011), empirical research on its negative effects is still limited, requiring further research (De Jong et al., 2018; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013). Moreover, greenwashing literature has focused mostly on consumers (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2019; Nyilasy et al., 2014; Szabo & Webster, 2021). In doing so, ignoring the effect of greenwashing on other stakeholder groups, such as employees (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021; Gatti et al., 2021), who are a quite important internal stakeholder (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021). These activities might lead the company to lose the best contribution of one of its main resources. Thus, employee-focused research lacks a broader approach (Du et al., 2015), and there is a call for theorizing and evaluating outcomes specifically driven by corporate social irresponsibility and greenwashing in the workplace (Gond et al., 2017; Pizzetti et al., 2021). The antecedents of career satisfaction, such as context and personal aspects, have also gained interest among scholars (Ngo & Hui, 2018). However, this subject also calls for further research (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021; Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021), since extant research has focused almost entirely on its outcomes (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021). What has been missing in the literature is a theoretical framework that allows for understanding how corporate greenwashing affects employees at an emotional level, namely their career satisfaction.

The current research aims to contribute to the literature in multiple ways. First, greenwashing is likely to exert significant effects on employees and, surprisingly, no study has theoretically or empirically linked greenwashing to employees' emotions. By evaluating greenwashing impact on career satisfaction, organizational pride, negative emotions and affective commitment, our study documents an important and yet unestablished set of relationships, advancing research on greenwashing and career/organizational psychology literature. Second, it is a response to the call for more research on the antecedents of employee career satisfaction (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021; Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021) and greenwashing outcomes in the workplace (Gond et al., 2017; Pizzetti et al., 2021). Third, drawing on appraisal and moral foundations theories, this study presents new insights into the mechanisms behind their relationship. We suggest herein that these two theories help to explain the relationship between irresponsible and immoral behavior, such as greenwashing, and career satisfaction. The research argues that understanding the processes through which employees' emotions are affected by greenwashing will help enlighten management theory and practice, fostering the development of models and companies'

ethical and responsible interventions that best leverage employees' strengths. It would also help managers acknowledge the hazardous effects of this practice and implement programs that are able to fulfil employees' needs and aspirations, thus maximizing the returns of corporations at several levels.

Blending elements of appraisal theory of emotions (ATE) and moral foundations theory (MFT), this study is based on a cross-section sample of 398 Portuguese employees who recognize their employer as a greenwashing practitioner. This article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents literature review and lays out the hypotheses; section 3 describes the methodology; section 4 introduces the measurements; section 5 discusses the results, and the final section provides conclusions and implications.

## 2. Literature Review And Hypotheses Development

Greenwashing has been recognized as deliberate communicative behavior with the purpose of gaining benefits. However, it is harmful to society (Bowen & Aragon-Correa, 2014) and does not present any competitive advantage (De Jong et al., 2018; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013): moreover, it can harm the reputation and trust of the company and start negative attitudes towards it (De Jong et al., 2018; Pizzetti et al., 2021; L. Zhang et al., 2018). Greenwashing presents damaging consequences for consumers, corporations, and other stakeholders (De Jong et al., 2018). Despite the potential harming effects of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011), empirical research on its effects is still limited (De Jong et al., 2018). Most of the literature has focused on consumers or decision-making by the general public (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2019; Nyilasy et al., 2014; Szabo & Webster, 2021), thus neglecting the effects of companies' irresponsible behavior (Gond et al., 2017) on employees (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021). Nevertheless, calls for investigating the outcomes at the workplace, due to corporate social irresponsibility and greenwashing, have been made (Gond et al., 2017; Pizzetti et al., 2021). Additionally, very little attention has been paid to specific features and role of emotions caused by irresponsible corporate behavior (Antonetti, 2020). There are only a limited number of studies that address the relationship of greenwashing and employees, and they are focused on employee behavior (Tahir et al., 2020) and loss of confidence (Blome et al., 2017).

Companies are expected to engage in honest, responsible, and ethical behavior (Lin-Hi & Blumberg, 2018; Park et al., 2021), as they have the moral responsibility of conducting CSR activities (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021) and doing what is right (Ha-Brookshire, 2017). If the company is perceived as being dishonest (Parguel et al., 2011), stakeholders may respond to ethics violation negatively (Zachary et al., 2021). Considering that companies are appraised in terms of character and morality (Bauman & Skitka, 2012), and morality and emotions are connected (Cameron et al., 2015), this article assumes that there is incongruence/mismatch, between the company's irresponsible behavior and the moral grounds of employees. As emotions are preceded by appraisals (Chapman & Anderson, 2011), we suggest that employees are likely to appraise company's greenwashing practices through a moral lens and react with negative emotional outcomes. As MFT (Haidt & Graham, 2007) suggests, employees should perceive greenwashing as an immoral act, which harms stakeholders, there being a gap/incongruence between employees and their company. The extent to which employees identify with the firm is related to their

sense of mis(match) between their own moral concerns and that of their company (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). Furthermore, and considering ATE (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Moors et al., 2014), emotions are triggered and distinguished by an appraisal (i.e., evaluative judgment) of the stimulus, as a (mis)match between expectations and goals. In this case, Individuals make moral attributions based on the information available (Bauman & Skitka, 2012), and considering that employees are internal members who have access to key information, thus they are aware of greenwashing activities. Hence, this study suggests that greenwashing perceptions significantly affect employees' present (i.e., organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment) and long-term personal and work-related emotions (i.e., career satisfaction). It highlights further the gap in literature about the antecedents of career satisfaction (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021; Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021).

### The influence of greenwashing on career satisfaction

Career satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective career success and is related to subjective judgments about one's overall career experiences (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Subjective career success is usually measured as career satisfaction (Rigotti et al., 2020) or job satisfaction (Abele & Spurk, 2009). Thus, job satisfaction is a surrogate for career satisfaction (Moreo et al., 2020). In this way, they are intimately related constructs (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021), mainly because individuals who experience satisfaction in their job, will also be satisfied with their career (Boštjančič & Petrovčič, 2019). Nevertheless, career satisfaction refers to employee's choice of career (Singhapakdi et al., 2015), the perception of the accumulation of their experiences in several jobs and their progression over time in these jobs (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021), that translates into the feeling of self-fulfillment, achievement, and satisfaction (Salleh et al., 2020).

Situational and contextual factors have been proven to contribute to career satisfaction (Joo & Park, 2010). Literature has shown that organizational experiences have a direct effect on career outcomes, such as career satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Role stressors, such as ambiguity or conflict, are negatively associated with career satisfaction (Igbaria, 1991). Hence, current job-related issues seem to affect career satisfaction (Ren et al., 2013). Additionally, previous research suggests that corporate ethics values are linked to job satisfaction (Singhapakdi et al., 2015). Employees experience higher levels of career satisfaction when there is a close alignment between employee and company (Jung & Takeuchi, 2018). Thus, individual-organization value congruity is a determinant of career success. (Aryee et al., 1994). Moreover, employees who are overall satisfied with the organizational context tend to be more satisfied with their career (Joo & Park, 2010). Consequently, employees who do not agree with companies' greenwashing behavior, will not be satisfied with their organizational context, and consequently might experience lower levels of career satisfaction. Based on the above arguments, this study suggests:

**H1:** The perception of Corporate Greenwashing has a negative effect on the employee's career satisfaction.

## The influence of greenwashing on organizational pride

Organizational pride is closely related to employee psychological attachment and identification with their employer (Schaefer et al., 2020). It is a strong positive feeling, such as the sense of joy, meaningfulness, self-esteem, pleasure, and self-respect arising from organizational membership (Helm, 2013; Pereira et al., 2021). When employees' values match the company's values, they generally identify themselves with such values (Li et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2021). As a result, perceived morality of the company can be seen as a relevant source of pride for the employee (Ellemers et al., 2011). So, organizational pride results from the employee's identification and membership (Raza et al., 2021).

Positive perceptions of fairness and social welfare activities are likely to lead employees to feeling greater identification and pride of being a member of that company (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In addition, the company's morality is a relevant trait that leads to identification and organizational pride (Ellemers et al., 2011). Hence, if the company acts in a socially responsible manner, employees believe that it has a conscience and moral sense (Li et al., 2020). However, if companies pursue unethical or irresponsible behavior, a similar, but opposite response should emerge. The greater the perceived incongruence, the more unlikely it is that employees will identify themselves with the company (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). The presence of corporate greenwashing may negatively affect employees as they are unwilling participants of unethical/immoral behavior (Walker & Wan, 2012). Thus, there is a clash between employees' moral foundations and their company's irresponsible behavior, as appraisal and moral foundation theories suggest. Hence, this article predicts that in employees who perceive their employer as immoral/unethical, there is a mismatch between the conduct of the company and the moral standards of employees, so they are not likely to experience organizational pride, thus:

**H2:** Corporate Greenwashing perceptions have a negative effect on the organizational pride of employees.

## The influence of greenwashing on negative emotions

Negative emotions explain the trend in the negative moods and feelings that individuals experience over time and in different situations (Nikolaev et al., 2020). These individuals are usually nervous, pessimistic, agitated, distressed and present feelings of worthlessness (i.e., a negative view of oneself) (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Clark, 1988). Negative emotions at work are frequently triggered by management acts, such as company's policies and strategies or organizational values (Domagalski & Steelman, 2005; Kiefer, 2005), corporate transgression (Xie & Bagozzi, 2019), unfair situations or moral violations (Septianto, 2021) or lack of social responsibility (Nasab & Abakari, 2016).

Literature has acknowledged the relevant role of emotions as a response to corporate social irresponsibility (Septianto, 2021). Unethical behavior or irresponsible actions towards the environment can trigger consumer negative emotions (Antonetti, 2020; Grappi et al., 2013; Septianto, 2021; Xie &

Bagozzi, 2019). This happens because customers are becoming more sensitive by the day to factors that negatively affect society, such as damages to the environment (Nasab & Abakari, 2016). Although these authors have focused on consumer outcomes, it is expected that greenwashing could also have similar effects on employees, as they are internal customers (Carlini et al., 2019). Additionally, studies revealed that when there is an alignment between company's values and that of employees, these tend to be more positive and present lower levels of work stress and job anxiety (Singhapakdi et al., 2015). Similarly, several authors demonstrated that social and ethical transgressions foster negative emotions (Grappi et al., 2013; Voliotis et al., 2016) and arise as a link between violations of individual moral standards and moral behavior (Grappi et al., 2013). Nevertheless, if there is employee-firm congruence, a positive reaction is more likely to emerge (Bryson, Atwal & Hultén, 2013). In contrast, if companies do not act in line with individuals social, legal, or moral values, such as pursuing greenwashing, ideological incompatibility occurs (Bryson et al., 2013). This construct has been associated with high levels of negative emotions (Hashim & Kasana, 2019; Islam et al., 2020; Kucuk, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016). This article suggests that employee appraisal of greenwashing practices causes an emotional/affective response. If employees do not agree with the company's irresponsible or unethical behavior, ideological incompatibility arises and a negative emotional outcome should occur, thus:

**H3: Corporate Greenwashing perceptions have a positive effect on the negative emotions of employees.**

### The influence of greenwashing on affective commitment

Employees may experience organizational commitment in three different ways: normative, continuance and affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). This study focuses on affective commitment, because it was demonstrated to be the most important aspect of organizational commitment (Chun et al., 2013) and the one that could affect other components in the long run (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It reflects the psychological and emotional bond that employees develop with their company, it is the feeling of being part of the family, nurturing positive feelings and caring about them (Pereira et al., 2021). It is identifying and engaging with the company, nurturing a strong emotional attachment and engagement (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer & Allen, 1991). An employee that is affectively committed identifies with their company's goals, supporting it to achieve them (Allen & Meyer, 1996). This happens because there is value congruence between the employee and the company (Joo & Park, 2010; Raza et al., 2021; Singhapakdi et al., 2015).

Previous literature has shown a positive connection between CSR and ethical activities with employee attachment (Lee et al., 2013) and affective commitment (Azim, 2016; Joo & Park, 2010). If employees find that their employer is working in a socially responsible way, they enjoy being associated to it, leading to higher levels of commitment (Azim, 2016). Thus, ethical, and responsible behavior, seen in CSR initiatives, increase employee commitment and sense of belonging (Bouraoui et al., 2019). Thus, one might expect an opposite reaction when companies engage in irresponsible behavior, as greenwashing. Meaning that, where employees perceive their employer as immoral/unethical, there is a mismatch

between the behavior of the company and the moral standards of the employees, so their commitment to corporate goals might decrease (Ha-Brookshire, 2017). Based on the discussion above, this article suggests that:

**H4:** Corporate Greenwashing perceptions have a negative effect on employee affective commitment.

### **The influence of organizational pride on career satisfaction**

Career success is influenced by the degree to which the employee fits into the organization. (Aryee et al., 1994). When employees realize that their values are consistent with those of their company, they feel proud of it and are more satisfied with their job (Srivastava & Madan, 2020). Previous studies have established a positive connection between the organizational pride and job satisfaction of employees (Oo et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2021). Even though organizational pride is a relatively short-lived emotion, if employees stay with the same company for a certain period of time, the emotions of organizational pride can be experienced continuously (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). Thus, job satisfaction is a rather stable emotion over time (Judge & Larsen, 2001). Consequently, we suggest that organizational pride is related to career satisfaction:

**H5:** Employee organizational pride has a positive effect on their career satisfaction.

### **The influence of negative emotions on career satisfaction**

Negative affect arises from worsening emotion at work (Madrid et al., 2020), and employees with higher levels of negative affectivity tend to have lower job satisfaction (Judge & Larsen, 2001), which is a proxy for career satisfaction (Moreo et al., 2020). Employees who frequently experience negative emotions tend to focus on their own unpleasant attributes (Nikolaev et al., 2020), the world's worst problems, the future, and the worst in other people (Judge & Larsen, 2001). They are more centered on the dark side of their lives, priming memories of displeasing and unsuccessful experiences or events in the workplace (Madrid et al., 2020). Negative emotions at work usually affect the employees on views on their skills (Madrid et al., 2020), lowering their job performance (Bouckenoghe et al., 2013). Individuals that experience higher levels of negative affect appear to be dissatisfied with their surroundings, other people, and themselves, and are pessimistic about the future (Judge & Larsen, 2001). Therefore, their appraisal of their achievements and their future career advancement might be affected (Ulas & Yildirim, 2019). Based on the arguments above, this paper suggests that employees with high levels of negative emotions might have an unfavorable opinion in respect of their work and their own skills, and subsequently, their career satisfaction:

**H6:** Employee's negative emotions have a negative effect on their career satisfaction

## **The influence of affective commitment on career satisfaction**

Affective commitment is a strong emotional attachment and engagement (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer & Allen, 1991) that turns into strong identification and involvement with the company (Raza et al., 2021; Singhapakdi et al., 2015).

Research has demonstrated that lower levels of affective commitment might result in risky outcomes such as lower performance (Allen & Meyer, 1996), ineffective behavior, low employee engagement, reduced job satisfaction, employee procrastination or absenteeism (Kaur et al., 2020). If employees are affectively committed to their company, it means that they identify with the organization (Kaur et al., 2020). They are «willing to go the extra mile» for the company (Ellemers et al., 2011). They are engaged to the extent that they put extra effort into their work, acquiring more knowledge and improving their skills, consequently performing better in their jobs, and developing a sense of achievement, evaluating their careers in a positive way (Ngo & Hui, 2018). Research has also demonstrated that employees who are more engaged at work are also more satisfied with their career (Boštjančič & Petrovčič, 2019). So, there is a positive association between affective commitment and career satisfaction (Joo & Park, 2010). This paper thus suggests that:

**H7: Employee affective commitment has a positive effect on their career satisfaction.**

## **The mediating role of organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment**

This article suggests that employees' appraisals of corporate greenwashing, expressing the mismatch between the moral values of employees and the irresponsible practices of the company, are expected to negatively affect their career satisfaction, as stated in H1. It also suggests that greenwashing may lead to a decrease in organizational pride, as postulated in H2, a reduction in affective commitment, as stated in H4 and a growth of negative emotions, as expressed in H3. In turn, these outcomes might influence career satisfaction, as assumed in H5, H6 and H7. Therefore, one may expect organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment to be mediators in the proposed model.

Support for this relationship can be found in previous literature. Companies that engage actively in CSR are recognized as responsible, distinctive, and prestigious by outsiders (Oo et al., 2018). Employees who acknowledge this positive evaluation and status experience the enhancement of their self-image (Azim, 2016), higher levels of self-worth, pride of membership, commitment, and job satisfaction (Oo et al., 2018). Positive perceptions of the company's CRS practices drive employees to identify with (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021), engage in and get involved with such practices, feel proud of the organization (Raza et al., 2021) and experience career satisfaction (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021). Considering that greenwashing is at the opposite end of the true meaning of CSR (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2019) the perception of unethical or immoral practices is expected to have an effect opposite to that of CRS.

Affective commitment was previously used as a mediator to investigate the connection between the actions of the companies and job satisfaction (Kaur et al., 2020). Organizational pride acted as a mediator in the relationship between organizational characteristics and performance, commitment, or turnover reduction (Pereira et al., 2021) and negative emotions were also used as mediator between stressors and behavior (Fida et al., 2014). In brief, this paper suggests that employees that perceive irresponsible behavior from their firm, will exhibit lower levels of organizational pride and affective commitment and higher levels of negative emotions, consequently their satisfaction regarding the career path that led them to this company will be affected (i.e., career satisfaction). Stated formally, it implies the following:

**H8:** Organizational pride (a), negative emotions (b) and affective commitment (c) mediate the relationship between greenwashing and employee career satisfaction.

### 3. Method

Employees are incredibly important stakeholders but have often been ignored. Irresponsible behavior by companies, including greenwashing, affect employees in several ways. This study examines how employees respond emotionally to companies' greenwashing activities. Figure 1 presents the theoretical model of the current study.

#### 3.1. Sample and data collection

For this study the authors used cross-sectional primary data from a sample consisting of 398 Portuguese employees. A pre-test ( $n= 30$ ) was conducted to detect any potential issue, which allowed some minor adjustments to the questions. The authors chose 10 employees, from different industries, and asked them to fill out the questionnaire hosted at the Google Forms® web site, and they shared it with other employees, using snowball techniques. Additionally, the authors also spread the questionnaire via LinkedIn®. To assure anonymity and high standard of the survey, respondents were not asked to provide their companies' names. The size and number of companies whose employees took part in the study are not known.

All participants gave their informed consent prior to accessing the questionnaire. Respondents were first asked to specify whether they are currently employed or if they had been in the last year. Additionally, a yes/no question inquired if in their present or past work experience, they perceived/recognized that their employer pretended to be environmentally responsible, but their actions did not match their claims (De Jong et al., 2018; Delmas & Burbano, 2011), by sending misleading messages regarding their environmental practices or environmental benefits of a product or service. If the answer was "no" in, at least one of these questions, the questionnaire was considered completed and the participation was not included in the study. In the second part, questions were intended to measure the proposed constructs, and the last part included demographic questions.

Most of the responses were obtained from married (51.5%) women (76.4%), over the age of 35 years (55.8%), with a higher education degree (69%).

Table 1 - Respondents' demographic profile

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Men	91	22.90
	Women	304	76.40
	Other	3	0.80
<b>Age, years</b>	20-26	86	0.22
	27-34	90	22.61
	35-42	81	20.35
	43-50	62	15.58
	Over 51	79	19.85
	Divorced	27	6.80
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	162	40.70
	Married	205	51.50
	Widowed	4	1.00
<b>Education</b>	Secondary School	123	31.00
	Higher education	275	69.00

Source: Own elaboration

## 4. Measurement

The measurements in the questionnaire were adapted from established and tested scales, translated into Portuguese, using back translation procedures (Brislin, 1970). The questionnaire contained 5 demographic and 26 closed questions to measure the proposed concepts. All the items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, with anchors from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Metrics can be found in table 2, identifying the origin of the metric and the standardized regression weights.

Table 2 - Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Metrics	SRW	CR
<b>Greenwashing (Laufer, 2003)</b>	1. The brand misleads with words in its environmental features 2. The brand misleads with visuals or graphics in its environmental features 3. The brand possesses a green claim that is vague or seemingly un-provable 4. The brand overstates or exaggerates how its green functionality actually is 5. The brand leaves out or masks important information, making the green claim sound better than it is	0.955 0.953 0.878 0.882 0.901	43.136 31.072 31.434 33.85
<b>Organizational Pride (Cable &amp; Turban, 2003; Helm, 2013)</b>	1. I would be proud to tell others that I work for this organization 2. I would be proud to identify myself personally with this organization 3. I would be proud to be part of this organization 4. I would feel proud to be an employee of this organization	0.886 0.927 0.927 0.930	29.260 29.281 29,475
<b>Negative Emotion (Thompson, 2007)</b>	Thinking about yourself and how you normally feel, to what extent do you generally feel 1. Upset 2. Hostile 3. Ashamed 4. Nervous 5. Afraid	0.854	---
<b>Affective Commitment (Allen &amp; Meyer, 1996)</b>	1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization 2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own 3. I do not feel like "part of my family" at this organization (R) 4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization (R) 5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me 6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization (R)	0.954 0.958 0.945 0.962 0.976 0.974	---
<b>Career Satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990)</b>	1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career 2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals 3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income 4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement 5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills	0.913 0.944 0.955 0.935 0.911	---

Note: Abbreviation: CR, critical ratio; SRW, standardized regression weights.

To minimize common method variance (CMV), the respondents were assured that their answers would be confidential and anonymous, that there were no wrong or right answers, and that their participation was crucial for the research. Additionally, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. We loaded all items into a single factor, and the results showed less than 50% total variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). In addition, the authors conducted a common latent factor test, whereby all items were loaded on a common latent factor. If the measurement model displays satisfactory model, it presents a threat of CMV (Hair *et al.*, 1998). However, CFA single factor model did not display a satisfactory model. Thus, considering both approaches, it is not likely that the results are contaminated by CMV (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

AMOS 25, a structural equation model (SEM) tool, was used to perform a confirmatory factor analysis and to assess the psychometric properties of the scales and model fit (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994). Data present convergent validity, as evidenced by all AVE above 0.5, and has reliability, evidenced by all CR above 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 1998). It also has discriminant validity, based on the square root of AVE greater than any inter-factor correlation in the matrix (Hair *et al.*, 1998) (see table 3). The measurement model shows a good fit ( $\text{IFI}=0.981$ ;  $\text{TLI} = 0.978$ ;  $\text{CFI} = 0.981$ ;  $\text{RMSEA} = 0.054$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.144$ ) (Hair *et al.*, 1998; Hooper *et al.*, 2008).

Table 3 - Bivariate Correlations, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliabilities, and average variances extracted

Constructs	GW	OP	NE	AC	CS	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$
<i>GW</i>	<b>0.965</b>					0.962	0.836	0.914
<i>OP</i>	-0.758	<b>0.955</b>				0.955	0.842	0.918
<i>NE</i>	0.876	-0.746	<b>0.961</b>			0.959	0.825	0.908
<i>AC</i>	-0.487	0.671	-0.496	<b>0.987</b>		0.971	0.868	0.932
<i>CS</i>	-0.726	0.818	-0.703	0.597	<b>0.970</b>	0.987	0.925	0.962

Note: Diagonal in bold - Cronbach's Alpha; CR - Composite Reliability; AVE - Average Variance Extracted.

## 5. Results

AMOS 25 was used to perform structural equation modelling. The structural model reveals a good fit ( $\text{IFI}=0.973$ ;  $\text{TLI} = 0.969$ ;  $\text{CFI} = 0.973$ ;  $\text{RMSEA} = 0.063$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.590$ ) (Hair *et al.*, 1998; Hooper *et al.*, 2008).

### Direct effects

The results of this study are shown in Table 4. Six out of seven hypotheses are supported herein, which means that only H6 was not supported.

Table 4 - Summary of the structural model

Hypotheses	Hypotheses paths	Proposed effect	Path coefficients	P	Results
H1	GW → CS	-	-0.203	**	Supported
H2	GW → OP	-	-0.774	***	Supported
H3	GW → NE	+	0.882	***	Supported
H4	GW → AC	-	-0.511	***	Supported
H5	OP → CS	+	0.536	***	Supported
H6	NE → CS	-	-0.081	NS	Not Supported
H7	AC → CS	+	0.119	***	Supported

Note: GW: Greenwashing; OP: Organizational Pride; NE: Negative Emotions; AC: Affective Commitment; CS: Career Satisfaction  
 \*\*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \* =  $p < 0.1$ ; NS = non-significant

Source: Own elaboration

Hypotheses H1 ( $R=-0.203$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), H2 ( $R=-0.774$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and H4 ( $R=-0.511$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) are supported, indicating that greenwashing negatively impacts career satisfaction, organizational pride, and affective commitment. H3 ( $R=0.882$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) is also supported, suggesting that greenwashing positively affects negative emotions. H5 ( $R=0.536$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and H7 ( $R=0.119$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) are supported, showing that both organizational pride and affective commitment influence career satisfaction. In turn, H6 ( $R=-0.081$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) is not supported, indicating that negative emotions do not seem to have a direct influence on career satisfaction.

## Indirect effects

To test the significance of the possible mediating effects of organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment, we conducted a bootstrap procedure with 2000 samples to create bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects.

Table 5 - Indirect effects and results

Hypotheses	Hypotheses paths	Standardized indirect effect	95% confidence interval	Significance	Results
H8	(a) GW→OP→CS	-0.321 (0.040)	[-0.405; -0.251]	0.001	Supported
	(b) GW→NE→CS	-0.055 (0.054)	[-0.152; 0.057]	0.316	Not Supported
	(c) GW→AC→CS	-0.047 (0.017)	[-0.084; -0.017]	0.004	Supported
	Total Indirect Effect	-0.423 (0.063)	[-0.546; -0.303]	0.001	Supported

Specific indirect effects of organizational pride (-0.321; [-0.405; -0.251]) and affective commitment (-0.047; [-0.084; -0.017] were both significant at a 95% Bias-corrected bootstrap. Specific indirect effects of negative emotions (-0.055; [-0.152; 0.057] were not statistically significant. The total negative indirect effect of greenwashing on career satisfaction (-0.423) was significant at a 95% Bias-corrected bootstrap (confidence interval = [-0.546; -0.0303]). Therefore, organizational pride and affective commitment act as mediators in the relationship between greenwashing and career satisfaction.

## Discussion

The current research analyzed a model connecting employee greenwashing perceptions with their career satisfaction, through mediation of organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment. The study found that when employees perceive greenwashing positively, they seem to be less satisfied with their careers, they experience lower levels of organizational pride, less affective commitment and more negative emotions.

The results indicate that when employees realize that their companies engage in immoral or irresponsible activities, they tend to feel lower career satisfaction. ATE (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Moors et al., 2014) and MFT (Haidt & Graham, 2007) defend that the individual's emotions are a consequence of the appraisals that are done, considering what one believes it is right or wrong. When working in a company that deliberately deceives stakeholders about their environmental practices or characteristics of their products, employees' moral standards are defied, because the company's standards conflict with their own. In this case, employees are unwilling participants of unethical/immoral behavior (Walker & Wan, 2012). Consequently, their emotional response is negative. When perceiving corporate greenwashing, employees feel that the company deceives and does not care about ethical or environmental aspects. Consequently, the prospect of working for such company fades and employees do not experience satisfaction in the long run (i.e., career satisfaction).

As expected, the results also suggest that greenwashing has a negative effect on organizational pride and affective commitment. Considering that the more employees perceive their company to be socially responsible, the more likely it is that employees will feel organizational pride (Schaefer et al., 2020) and affective commitment (Azim, 2016; Joo & Park, 2010), this research's results suggest that the opposite reaction also occurs. Meaning, that if employees perceive their company as socially irresponsible (i.e., practice greenwashing), they feel that it deceives and does not care about ethical or environmental aspects, so they wish to distance themselves from such behavior. Thus, it is even more unlikely that employees will feel proud of being part of this company or will experience affective commitment. The

findings also indicate that greenwashing positively affects negative emotions. Just as unethical or irresponsible behavior towards the environment can induce negative emotions in consumers (Antonetti, 2020; Grappi et al., 2013; Septianto, 2021; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019), it also does so in employees. Environmental concern is increasingly embedded in our daily lives. When employees perceive that their company does not care about these aspects, there is ideological incompatibility, which can trigger negative emotions. Organizational pride and affective commitment are responsible for higher levels of career satisfaction. Meaning that when employees' values are aligned with their company's values, there is high-quality relationship between them, producing positive work outcomes, such as career satisfaction. In turn, negative emotions did not seem to be significant enough to affect career satisfaction, as posited in H6. Greenwashing does enhance negative emotions, however, not enough to significantly affect career satisfaction. As individuals who experience negative emotions tend to see the worst in their surroundings (Judge & Larsen, 2001), they were expected to develop negative evaluations of their careers. However, this relationship was not supported. We wonder if the way individuals perceive their career success may trigger or enhance negative emotions, and not the opposite, as we have proposed. This could be a clue for future investigations on these relationships.

Greenwashing affects career satisfaction not only directly, but also through organizational pride and affective commitment. As a matter of fact, hazardous greenwashing effects on career satisfaction seem to be amplified through the mediation of organizational pride and affective commitment. Al-Ghazali and Sohail (2021) found that organizational pride mediates the effect of CSR perceptions on career satisfaction. Again, our results demonstrate that a similar reaction occurs in the relationship between greenwashing and career satisfaction. That is, employee-firm value (mis)match, evidenced by organizational pride and affective commitment, act as mediators in this association. Previous literature has shown that responsible and ethical behavior, as CSR, brings benefits for employees. Our results suggest that, on the opposite side of this behavior, there is greenwashing, representing immoral and unethical behavior that has a damaging effect on these stakeholders.

## 6. Conclusions And Implications

As the frequency of corporate greenwashing perception increases, a better understanding of its relationship with employees' emotions is of strong managerial and academic interest. This article explores the direct and indirect effects of greenwashing on career satisfaction added to the mediation effects of organizational pride, negative emotions, and affective commitment. The results show that the destructive path between greenwashing and career satisfaction as perceived by employees is established not only directly, but also through organizational pride and affective commitment.

### Theoretical contributions

The current research complements present literature on greenwashing in several ways: first, greenwashing is likely to impact employees significantly and, surprisingly, no study has theoretically or

empirically linked greenwashing to employees' emotions. By focusing on the negative effects of greenwashing, both on the current emotional work and personal related effects (affective commitment, negative emotions, and organizational pride) and long-term work-related effects (career satisfaction), this study documents an important and yet unestablished relationship, advancing research on greenwashing literature. Second, it responds to the call for more research on greenwashing outcomes in the workplace (Gond et al., 2017; Pizzetti et al., 2021) and the antecedents of employee's career satisfaction (Al-Ghazali et al., 2021; Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021). Third, the article draws on appraisal and moral foundations theories, it presents new insight into the mechanisms behind their relationship. This research suggests that these two theories help to explain the relationship between irresponsible or immoral behavior, such as greenwashing, and employees' emotions. Greenwashing negatively influences how individuals, in this case, employees, perceive and appraise the immoral actions of companies. Thus, allegations of immoral behavior lessen emotional ties between the employee and the organization.

## **Practical and policy implications**

The current research also offers practical implications. It argues that understanding how employees' emotions are affected by greenwashing will help enlighten managers and promote their engagement in ethical and responsible activities that best leverage employees. By acknowledging the hazardous effect that greenwashing has on employees, companies ought to reduce these practices to fulfil employees' moral needs and aspirations, which is likely to maximize companies' returns on several levels.

Environmental challenges are the order of the day. Therefore, this study intends to shed light on organizations and show how much they will benefit from being transparent and environmentally concerned. As positive feelings toward one's company foster more fruitful work behavior among employees (Oo et al., 2018), it seems clear that companies have much more to gain from behaving in a morally, ethically, and environmentally responsible manner. It is crucial for managers to recognize and identify the aspects that promote career satisfaction (Al-Ghazali & Sohail, 2021). By fostering organizational pride and affective commitment, companies will consequently increase employee career satisfaction. For that matter, it is essential that the former present appropriate, true communication strategies and act responsibly towards the environment.

## **Limitations and future research directions**

First, this study was performed in a specific country: Portugal. Thus, the findings can be different in other countries, as what is "right" or "wrong" depends on the ethical principles in a given social context (Schultz & Seele, 2019). Thus, future research could assay external validity of our findings by testing the model in distinct cultural contexts. In this case, it would be possible to make cross-cultural comparisons. Second, it is possible that employees' emotions and attitudes towards Greenwashing are influenced by the industry

in which their company functions and their personal features (for example, tenure in the organization, tenure in the current position, years of business experience). Thus, future studies can incorporate these factors in the relationship between greenwashing and career satisfaction. Third, the hypotheses were tested in a single moment in time. Accordingly, longitudinal studies might be useful to better understand the cause-effects of corporate greenwashing on employees. Forth, the authors presumed incompatibility between firm' greenwashing practices and their employee's moral standards. Meaning that employees were considered homogeneous, thus neglecting the reality of diversity in employees' perceptions and moral foundations. Not all individuals will appraise work context reality and respond to it in the same manner (Fida et al., 2014). So, individual differences in moral identity might be meaningful and, for that matter, future studies could include this construct.

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## Declarations

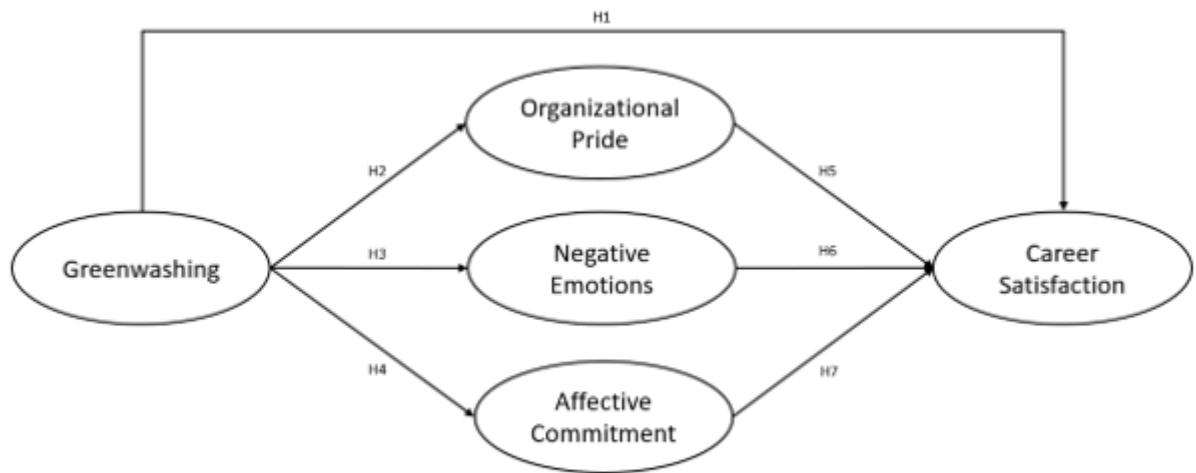
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The authors declare no competing interests.

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## Figures



Source: Own elaboration

**Figure 1**

Conceptual model