



The effect of green human resource management on hotel employees' eco-friendly behavior and environmental performance



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Green human resource management
Eco-friendly behavior
Environmental performance
Social identity theory

ABSTRACT

The subject of human resource management in hotels' environmentally friendly management remains relatively underexplored. This study examines how to improve employees' eco-friendly behavior and hotels' environmental performance through green human resource management. The findings show that green human resource management enhances employees' organizational commitment, their eco-friendly behavior, and hotels' environmental performance. This study suggests that hotel top management and HR managers should establish green human resource management policies.

1. Introduction

The preservation of the natural environment (hereafter, "environment") has been an important issue for the last few decades. Nearly every industry has embraced environmental protection practices. Most manufacturing companies have aimed to eliminate waste created during the production and disposal of their products and, therefore, have improved corporate performance (Melnyk et al., 2003). In terms of service industries such as hotels, their green efforts include reducing waste, conserving energy and water in their operations, and educating customers and employees (Bohdanowicz et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2012). For example, to protect the environment, Hilton established operational goals and policies and eco-friendly programs and developed reporting tools to monitor its progress. As a result, Hilton Worldwide reduced its overall water consumption by 14.1% and energy usage by 14.5% from the period of 2009–2014. Marriott International, another large hotel chain, has promoted preservation initiatives to help conserve the environment.

Most of previous environmental management research has examined hotel firms' environmental management practices (e.g., energy saving and water preservation) (Hsiao et al., 2014; Molina-Azorín et al., 2015). For example, Hsiao et al. (2014) established environmental management attributes for the hotel industry to use to audit green hotels. In addition, studies have approached environmental research in the hotel industry from two distinct aspects: *the consumer* and *the employee*. However, most of the studies have concentrated mainly on green marketing, *the consumer perspective* (Kim and Choi, 2013). For instance,

Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) explored consumer attitudes and behaviors concerning hotels' environmentally friendly practices. Kang et al. (2012) disclosed that American hotel consumers had deeper concerns about their environment and showed a higher price premium for green hotels. The other stream, *the employee perspective*, deals with issues pertaining to the attitudes or awareness of hotel staff (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Harris and Crane, 2002). However, regardless of the important role of employees' behavior in enhancing environmental outcomes, there is a lack of empirical studies that link human resource management (HRM) to environmental performance via employees' commitment and their behavior (Fernández et al., 2003; Paillé et al., 2014). HRM supports a company's strategic vision and goal. Traditionally, the roles of HR are to communicate corporate executives' strategic vision to their workers and to help them comprehend the vision (Evans, 1986; Lado and Wilson, 1994). Evans (1986) argued that the direct consequences of HRM include success in the implementation of the strategic vision and organizational effectiveness. Considering the important role of HRM in an organization, this study links HRM to environment conservation in the hotel industry. The term GHRM is used as shorthand for green human resource management. GHRM includes hiring and maintaining eco-friendly employees, providing environmental training, and reflecting on employees' eco-friendly contributions in employee performance appraisals (Guest, 1997). GHRM is instrumental in environmental management since the HR function plays an important role in accomplishing environment-friendly corporate goals (Bohdanowicz et al., 2011; Jabbour and Santos, 2008; Paillé et al., 2014).

The success of a firm's environmental management hinges on

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employees' eco-friendly behavior because their behavior improves the firm's environmental performance in the aggregate (Daily et al., 2009; Lo et al., 2012). For a company to achieve ecological sustainability, it is critical to comprehend how GHRM affects employees' eco-friendly behavior, which in turn, influences a company's environmental performance. Social identity theory provides a theoretical base for employees' psychological process of a firm's green efforts: organizational commitment acts as a mediator of GHRM on eco-friendly behavior. Based on social identity theory, employees who are likely to integrate positive organizational values (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Carmeli, 2005; Peterson, 2004) tend to demonstrate strong organizational commitments (Turker, 2009). If employees are concerned about environment conservation, they are more likely to attach themselves to their company's implementation of environmental management initiatives, including GHRM. Once employees become emotionally involved in their company, they are likely to demonstrate a higher level of organizational commitment to the company (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Organizational commitment is "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 4). Organizational commitment is a vital element of employee attitude because it leads to employees' altruistic or prosocial behavior, for example, organizational citizenship behavior (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996; Carmeli, 2005; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). However, previous studies have rarely considered employees' eco-friendly behavior as an outcome variable of organizational commitment. In addition, few studies have investigated the association between employees' eco-friendly behavior and a company's environmental performance. Environmental performance refers to a hotel's environmental outcome from environmental activities it implements to reduce the negative effects on the environment. In sum, there has been a notable lack of research that explores how GHRM stimulates employees' commitment and eco-friendly behavior, empowering hotels to improve their environmental performance. The main contribution of this research endeavor is to facilitate a better understanding of how implementing GHRM practices enhances environmental performance via employees' commitment and eco-friendly behavior.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the interrelationship between hotels' GHRM and environmental performance via employees' eco-friendly behavior. The objectives of this research are fivefold: (1) to investigate the relation between GHRM and employees' eco-friendly behavior (EEB); (2) to assess the role of employees' organizational commitment (EOC) between GHRM and employees' eco-friendly behavior (EEB); (3) to examine the role of EEB between GHRM and hotel environmental performance (HEP); (4) to investigate the relation between employees' eco-friendly behavior and HEP; and (5) to explore a non-green hotel's boundary effect in the relationships among GHRM, EOC, EEB, and HEP.

2. Literature review

2.1. The link of HRM and environmental management: GHRM

Some scholars have linked HRM with environmental management, naming it "green human resource management" or "environmental human resource management" (Renwick et al., 2013). The current study uses the term "green human resource management (GHRM)." GHRM pertains to the human resource management aspect of environmental management (Renwick et al., 2013). Scholars have developed specific procedures for implementing green HRM practices. For example, Milliman and Clair (1996) proposed four steps for an environmental HRM model: (1) provide an environmental vision as a guide, (2) train employees to share their environmental vision and goals, (3) evaluate employee environmental performance, and (4) recognize employee environmental activities using reward programs. Similarly, Daily and Huang (2001) suggested a conceptual framework for implementing elements of human resource in the environmental

management system. The proposed model included (1) the support of senior executives, (2) training, (3) empowerment, and (4) rewards as main components of environmental HR. Top management communicates the environmental policy, plan, and other pertinent information to employees. Training employees helps them understand new environmental practices, and empowered employees tend to engage in environmental activities. Also, rewards can stimulate employees to be environmentally responsible. In addition, Renwick et al. (2013) categorized elements of the HR perspective of environmental management. First, GHRM relates to developing green abilities in recruiting, selecting, training, and developing green leadership. Second, GHRM deals with motivating green employees by evaluating and rewarding employees' green performance. Third, GHRM relates to stimulating employees' involvement by empowering them and generating an environmentally friendly organizational culture.

2.2. Theoretical background

People classify themselves into groups and identify with teams to cultivate a positive self-concept (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Ashforth and Mael (1989) stated that societal membership may influence an individual's self-concept. Social identity theory posits that people are pleased when they attach themselves to groups that have positive standings since the belonging helps reinforce their self-concept with regards to their association with the group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Tajfel and Turner, 2004). Social identity theory helps explain the relationship between a company and its employees. Some scholars argue that employees who integrate their company's positive activities and values tend to demonstrate strong organizational commitment (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Peterson, 2004). For example, employees who have a positive perception of corporate social responsibility activities tend to exhibit a high level of organizational commitment (Brammer et al., 2007; Turker, 2009). Likewise, workers with favorable perceptions of environmental management initiatives are likely to exhibit high levels of organizational commitment (Yen et al., 2013). In addition, social identity theory postulates employees' organizational commitment correlates with their behavior (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Shen and Benson (2016) suggested that employees' organizational commitment accelerates their extra-role behavior beyond their duties, often referred to as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Other studies confirmed that employees who identify with their company tend to devote extra effort to accomplish the company's goal and vision through extra-role behavior or OCB (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986).

2.3. Hypotheses development

HRM scholars have suggested that strategic HRM practices influence employee attitudes, such as commitment (Domínguez-Falcón et al., 2016; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005; Takeuchi et al., 2009). Specifically, Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) stated that strategic HRM improves employees' performance by developing and empowering employees to achieve the specific goals of a company. In contrast, traditional HRM focuses on the external recruitment of competencies and behavioral controls (Bratton and Gold, 2017). For example, Arthur (1994) proposed that strategic HRM practices influence employee attitudes and behaviors by developing a psychological connection between a company and its employees. In addition, Domínguez-Falcón et al. (2016) postulated that firms can foster their employees' commitment by utilizing strategic HRM and empirically confirmed that strategic HRM practices directly leads to employees' organizational commitment.

Scholars can apply the concept of strategic HRM to the areas of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental conservation. Shen and Benson (2016) proposed that socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) is an integral part of CSR initiatives.

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