THE EFFECT OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEES' ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BEHAVIOR AND HOTEL'S ENVIRONMENTAL COST PERFORMANCE: A GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY OUTLOOK

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Abstract

Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, is the political, economic, cultural, and social center, converging all the factors to develop tourism into a key economic sector. Human resources (HR) are the basic factor in promoting sustainable tourism development. In previous studies, the three aspects of sustainable development of enterprises are financial performance, environmental cost performance, and social performance are both affected by green human resources management, GHRM (Yusoff et al., 2018; Longoni et al., 2016; Zaid et al., 2018). Therefore, the article focuses on determining the effect of GHRM on the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment and the hotel environmental cost efficiency in Hanoi, Vietnam. The article is based on a survey of 250 employees of three to five-star hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. The main analytical methods used include reliability testing of Cronbach's alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). Research results show that GHRM has a positive influence on the friendly behavior towards the pro-environment of hotel employees. The article found that the GHRM measures contribute to enhancing the hotel's environmental cost performance by reducing materials use, and waste, reducing water cost, and electric costs, and enhancing the reputation of the hotel.

Keywords: Environmentally Friendly Behavior, Environmental Cost Performance, Green Human Resources Management, GHRM, Hanoi, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Prime Minister's Overall Strategy on International Integration to 2020, Vision 2030 (Decision No. 40/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister: Approving the Overall Strategy for International Integration to 2020, with a vision to 2030, 2016), the Vietnamese Government focuses on developing tourism into a core industry, forming a modern economic structure. To do this, it is necessary to develop sustainable tourism and green growth. The green human resources management (GHRM) towards sustainable growth, improving the capacity of working and the satisfaction of employees, promoting environmental protection is a very good development trend of enterprises in the world. The GHRM plays a very important role in achieving the sustainable growth of the enterprise, because it not only benefits all employees in the enterprise, but also benefits the enterprise and the whole society. In response to the increasing environmental pollution, Vietnam has recently implemented many policies to ensure sustainable development, as shown in the Prime Minister's decision on the National Strategy on Green Growth for the 2016–2030 period and Vision 2050.

Hanoi, the capital of the country, is the political-economic-cultural center of the Red River Delta, converging all the factors to develop tourism into a key economic sector. In 2023, Hanoi was honored to be voted by the World Travel Awards Organization as "Asia's Leading City Destination 2023", "Asia's Leading City Destination for Short Breaks 2023" and "Asia's Leading City Tourism Authority"; In particular, on December 4, 2023, Hanoi was honored to receive the title of "World's Leading Tourist City 2023". Therefore, Hanoi, Vietnam needs to take more environmental actions to affirm its solid position on the regional and world tourism map. To achieve that title, there is no small contribution from workers in the tourism and travel industry. Building sufficient human resources (HR), quality assured, and friendly environmental behavior is a way to promote sustainable tourism development. However, the HR in this field in Hanoi still has many shortcomings and the city is making efforts to change. According to travel companies and hotels, after recruiting employees, workers will be retrained, especially in soft skills and practical work. Only about 40% of managers and supervisors of departments working at hotels have expertise in tourism and hotel services. It can be said that research on the GHRM as well as practices on this topic in Vietnam is still very limited, not only in scale but also in quite modest numbers, with only a study by Tran et al. (2023) based on a sample of 160 employees in Cantho. Research related to the GHRM for environmental activities of tourism and hotels is also quite limited, especially in Hanoi city, this issue has not yet received attention. Enterprises that effectively apply GHRM have cost efficiency and differentiation advantages (Carmona-Moreno et al., 2012). Three factors determine the development of a business, and HR management based on employees performing work with environmental friendliness will have a great impact on these factors, which are financial performance (Zaid et al., 2018; Longoni et al., 2018), social performance (Zaid et al., 2018), environmental performance (Yusoff et al., 2018; Masri & Jaaron, 2017).

Thus, there has been no research on the impact of green workforce management on the environmentally friendly behavior of employees in hotels in Hanoi. Therefore, the objective of this article is to determine the influence of the GHRM on environmentally friendly behavior and operational efficiency of hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. The research results are an important scientific basis for policymakers as well as hotel managers to refer to in issuing policies and making decisions on hotel management and operation, contributing to promoting the friendly behavior of employees toward the environment so the hotels can gain environmental cost performance in the future. These are the steps to develop sustainable, harmonious, and environmentally friendly tourism.

The study used primary data collected from 250 room and lobby managers and staff of hotels with three to five-star operating in Hanoi, Vietnam using the method of non-random convenience sampling. To check the tightness of the scale in the model, the article uses Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The article used the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) method to group factors with similar characteristics and form new groups of factors that affect the friendly behavior of employees toward the environment and the environmental cost efficiency of hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam, helping to calibrate the research model more accurately. Then, the structural equation model (SEM) was used to determine the impact of each factor on the friendly behavior of employees toward the environment and the environmental cost performance of Hanoi hotels in Vietnam. The results of the article stated that GHRM has a positive impact on the friendly behavior toward the environment of hotel employees in Hanoi, Vietnam. Empirical evidence shows that GHRM practices contribute to improving the environmental cost performance of hotels by reducing materials used, waste, and reducing energy costs; and enhancing the environmental cost efficiency of the Hanoi hotels in Vietnam.

The article is structured as follows. Section 1 introduces the study. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 analyzes the methodology used to conduct an empirical study on the influence of the GHRM on employee pro-environmental behavior in hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. Section 4 describes the results of the study. Section 5 presents a discussion of the main findings. Section 6 provides some key conclusions and recommendations from the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many definitions have been put forward to explain GHRM. According to Mampra (2013), it is the promotion of sustainable use of the enterprise's resources. The enterprise uses management policies in HR to encourage environmental protection and improve work motivation and employee satisfaction. The study indicated that results that management makes employees increasingly "green" can be beneficial for individuals, society, the environment, and enterprises (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). According to Mandip (2012), green resources are expressed through two main factors: environmental friendliness and maintaining intellectual capital. HR management practices can play an important role in converting green HR policies in enterprises into operational practices. This study uses social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) as a foundation. The study determines the effectiveness of GHRM

because HR management practices are a key factor in helping enterprises succeed through the contribution of employees, especially in service businesses such as hotels. This theory indicates that humans tend to classify themselves and those around them into different groups, such as gender, organization, religion, etc. (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This theory shows how members of community groups confirm their social identities. For the business environment, Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) argue that people tend to be attached to companies and organizations that have a lasting, distinctive identity and can enhance their self-esteem. Typically, companies that engage in activities related to environmental thinking will have a lasting and distinct identity from other organizations, which can increase customer self-esteem (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Christy et al., 1996), which affects significantly on firm performance.

Social identity theory also explains the correlation between an organization and its employees. Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that employees will show a strong commitment to the organization when they associate the organization's activities with the positive values they bring. For example, employees usually have a high commitment to their organization if their organization implements socially responsible activities positively (Turker, 2009). In the process of social identity perception, when an individual identifies as a member of a group, social identification with a group causes individuals to behave in ways that they believe members of that group should behave (Brammer et al., 2007). For example, if an individual identifies as an environmentalist, they may try to conserve water, recycle whenever possible, and participate in climate change awareness campaigns (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). On the other hand, social identity theory stated the relationship between employees' commitment and their behavior. That is, employees' organizational commitment can motivate them to perform tasks that are beyond their roles and responsibilities (Shen & Benson, 2016; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Kim et al. (2019) also suggested that organizational managers should practice GHRM.

Furthermore, Kim et al. (2019) also emphasized the psychological process of an employee when they participate in the company's green efforts. Combining the analysis of organizational variables and employee variables, the authors found the relationship between the organization (hotel GHRM) and employees is an important factor in the formation of employees' behaviors toward pro-environment. In addition, the authors pointed out that GHRM has different impacts compared to different types of hotels, specifically, the impact of GHRM on the environmental cost performance of hotels that have not met the environmental standards is much larger than that of hotels that have met the standards. The reason for this difference is green infrastructure. Most green-certified hotels have decorated their facilities in a pro-environment direction to meet the criteria of environmental certifications. Therefore, the environmental cost performance of these hotels is less directly dependent on their GHRM because their facilities and equipment can already contribute to improving environmental cost performance. However, the physical environment of non-green-certified hotels often does not meet environmental standards, and the level of investment in pro-environmental facilities to save energy, electricity,

and water and reduce waste is much lower than that of green-certified hotels. Therefore, the role of GHRM in improving environmental cost performance is much more important for non-green hotels. This does not mean that non-green-certified hotels have better environmental performance than green-certified hotels, but rather that their environmental cost performance depends more on GHRM. These findings support previous studies (Liden et al., 2003; Carmeli, 2005) that hypothesize that commitments of employees to the company are the main factors that motivate positive behaviors toward the common good of the organization. Jacoba et al. (2024) examined the university's performance. This study has several variables such as HR management, financial management, and compliance with governance standards. The university with excellence in HR management, forward pro-environment will foster a conducive environment cost-efficiently.

GHRM practices increase employees' discretionary effort (Astuti et al., 2023; Huselid, 1995). When an employee perceives positive outcomes from a good relationship with the company or superior, he or she will be motivated to exert his or her best effort for the organization. For example, the higher the understanding of GHRM of a frontline employee, the better his service behavior (Tsaur & Lin, 2004). If employees are aware of GHRM (through recruitment or training), they provide customers with a good experience, because they often go above and beyond their job responsibilities.

In the environmental lexicon, environmental organizational citizenship behavior has gained attention and is widely used to better understand friendly behavior forward pro-environment in the workplace (Daily et al., 2009; Paillé et al., 2013). Paillé et al. (2014) found that strategic human resource management, as well as green human resource management, are positively related to employees' environmental organizational citizenship behavior. Environmentally friendly behavior focuses on specific behaviors related to energy use, water use, and waste reduction, appropriate to the hotel context. Purwanto et al. (2024) studied the GHRM and sustainable innovation. The findings of the study suggest that eco-conscious transformative leadership has a positive impact on GHRM, green innovation, and environmental outcomes. Similarly, organizational culture was found to influence GHRM and green innovation. Additionally, both GHRM and green innovation were positively associated with environmental performance.

Based on that, the first hypothesis put forward in the study is as follows:

H1: There is a positive correlation between GHRM and the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment.

A hotel's environmental cost performance is considered to be the positive environmental outcome of its activities aimed at minimizing its negative environmental impacts. Abdelwahed et al. (2024) and Becker and Gerhart (1996) found a significant relationship between a firm's GHRM and its success after reviewing several empirical studies. According to Jiang et al. (2012), GHRM has a direct positive impact on a firm's financial performance. Judge and Douglas (1998) found a positive relationship between a firm's environmental management and its environmental performance. Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated:

H2: There is a positive correlation between GHRM and environmental cost performance.

The results of Paillé et al. (2014) show that the friendly behavior of the employee is a major factor driving hotel environmental cost performance. Jindal et al. (2024) argue that employee actions like waste management, energy, and water conservation, etc. will help businesses increase their overall environmental cost performance. Roy et al. (2013) have emphasized that spontaneous green action by employees can also improve corporate environmental performance because it adds to the hotel's green management system. From this, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: There is a positive correlation between the friendly behavior of employees towards the pro-environment and the environmental cost performance.

The research model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model
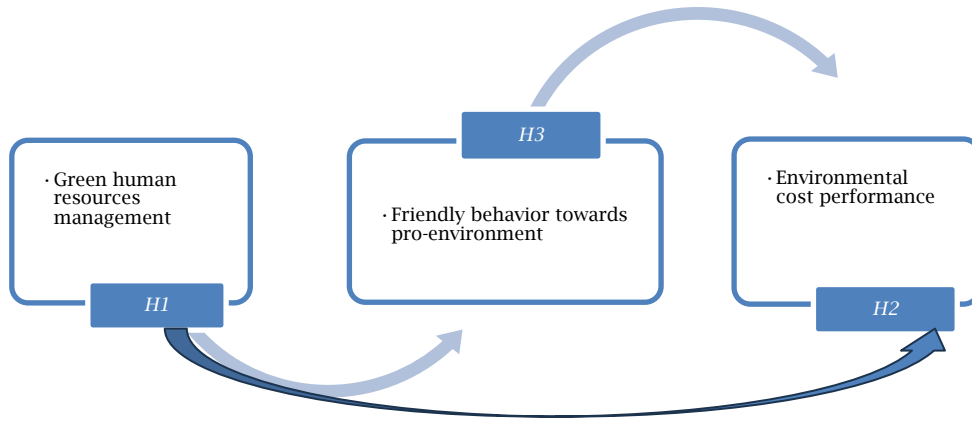
Source: Authors' elaboration.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research scale is presented in Table 1. This scale is mainly inherited from Orlitzky and Swanson (2006) and Kim et al. (2019); besides, it is adjusted to suit the research context in hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Table 1. Construction of scales for research variables

Code	Variables	Definition	Source
Green human resource management (GHRM)			
QT1	Training program	The hotel has a training program to encourage pro-environmental stewardship as a core value of the organization.	Orlitzky and Swanson (2006)
QT2	Evaluate the results	Hotels consider how environmentally friendly their employees are as part of their performance evaluations.	
QT3	Rewarding environmentally friendly behavior	The hotel offers rewards/bonuses for the environmentally friendly behavior of its employees.	
QT4	Recruitment	Hotels consider the fit between personal identity and environmental management when recruiting and selecting personnel.	
QT5	Employee perceptions	Employees are fully aware of the company's environmental policies.	
QT6	Encourage employees	Honor and reward outstanding environmental behavior of the year by employees.	
Environmentally friendly behavior of employees			
HV1	Turn off electrical equipment	Before leaving work, employees turn off electrical equipment such as computers, and televisions.	Kim et al. (2019)
HV2	Turn off the lights	Employees turn off the lights when leaving an unoccupied room.	
HV3	Waste sorting	Employees sorting waste at work.	
HV4	Save	Employees save on workplace items.	
HV5	Reuse	Employees reuse items in the workplace.	
HV6	Reduce waste	Staff reduce water waste in the restroom.	
HV7	Pay attention to places where water may leak	Staff pay attention to places where water may leak.	
HV8	Periodic cleaning of the workplace	Staff periodically clean the workplace (office, meeting room, warehouse, etc.).	
HV9	Use personal items	Employees use personal water bottles to limit the purchase and use of plastic and paper cups.	
HV10	Limit plastic bags	Employees limit the use of plastic bags and use backpacks and cloth bags to maximize space for personal belongings.	
Environmental performance of hotels			
HQ1	Reducing waste	The hotel has reduced its waste.	Kim et al. (2019)
HQ2	Water saving	The hotel has saved on water usage.	
HQ3	Energy saving	The hotel has saved energy.	
HQ4	Reduced purchase of components	Your hotels have reduced the use and purchased less of non-renewable raw materials, components, and chemicals.	
HQ5	Reduced cost	The hotel has reduced the total cost of the hotel.	
HQ6	Improving position	The hotel's GHRM system has helped improve the hotel's position in the market.	

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The questionnaire was designed with three parts, in addition to the supplementary parts for respondent information, the questionnaire focused on three main contents: GHRM in hotels, friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment, and environmental cost performance of hotels. The questionnaire was designed on a Likert scale, including five levels from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree".

During the data collection process, 271 employees, including housekeeping, lobby, and staff, were surveyed. After screening, 250 observations were included in the analysis. First, the authors used Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. Second, the authors used the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Third, the structural equation model (SEM) was used. Compared with multivariate regression, using SEM is more advantageous because it can calculate measurement error and will avoid multicollinearity when there is an intermediate variable in the model (Tho, 2011).

Alternative methods such as the study used a quantitative strategy based on the studies of Paillé et al. (2014) and Abdelwahed et al. (2024). Or using SmartPLS4 to confirm a significant positive effect of GHRM on the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment (Purwanto et al., 2024).

4. RESULTS

4.1. The research sample

The study used a primary survey sample collected from 250 room or lobby managers and staff of three to five-star hotels operating in Hanoi, Vietnam using a non-random convenience sampling method. According to Hair et al. (2010), when the proposed research model has 22 observed variables, the sample size must be doubled five times, with a minimum of 110. The minimum sample size is 100 for models with five or fewer concepts, each concept is observed by at least three measured variables, and each measured variable is highly correlated with all other measured variables (from 0.60 or more). Table 2 shows tourism activities in Hanoi as of December 31 each year.

Table 2. Activities of tourism in Hanoi

Reference	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Amount of hotels, guest houses	Hotel, guest house	738	716	690	690	685
Tourists						
Visitors to Hanoi's hotels	Times thousands	17,091	2,708	1,161	2,611	5,109
Of which foreign visitors	Times thousands	1,803	875	215	1,251	3,398

Source: General Statistics Office (2024).

Table 2 shows that the survey rate is 250 out of a total of 685 acting hotels as of the end of 2023, accounting for 36.5%.

The research sample has 34% of respondents working in three-star hotels, 38% working in four-star hotels, and 28% working in five-star hotels. In the research sample, nearly one-third of the surveyed subjects are working as room and lobby managers (32%), and the rest are employees. The number of female respondents accounts for 60%. The survey was only sent to employees with two years of experience or more, of which nearly half of the surveyed subjects have three years or more of working experience.

4.2. Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis results

In Table 3, the reliability test results using Cronbach's alpha coefficient showed that all observed variables in the study had coefficients greater than 0.6 and no variable had a correlation less than 0.3. Therefore, the observed variables continued to be included in the EFA.

Table 3. EFA analysis

Observation variable	Definition	Group of factors		
		1	2	3
HV5	Reuse	0.925		
HV2	Turn off the lights	0.868		
HV8	Clean your workplace regularly	0.772		
HV6	Limit waste	0.732		
HV7	Watch out for water leaks	0.705		
HV4	Save	0.704		
HV1	Turn off electrical appliances	0.652		
HV9	Use personal items	0.640		
HV3	Separate waste	0.538		
QT4	Recruitment		0.705	
QT5	Employee awareness		0.666	
QT2	Evaluating results		0.656	
QT3	Rewarding green behavior		0.625	
QT1	Training programs		0.615	
QT6	Employee incentives		0.573	
HQ2	Save water			0.826
HQ1	Reduce waste			0.674
HQ4	Reduce parts purchases			0.662
HQ5	Reduce costs			0.568
HQ3	Save energy			0.563

Note: Total variance extracted: 62.062%.
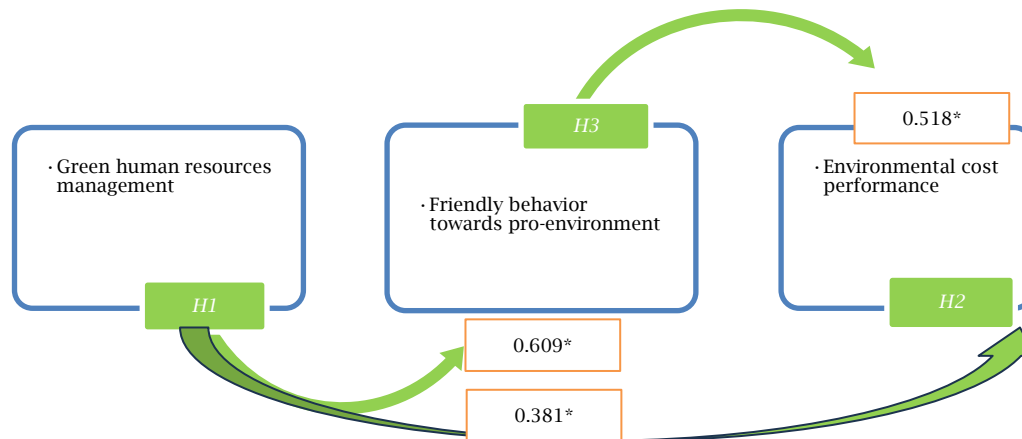*Source: Authors' elaboration.*

The factor extraction method used was principal axis factoring with Promax rotation. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) coefficient was $0.913 \geq 0.5$; and the p-value of Bartlett's test = 0.000. The total variance extracted was 62.062%, indicating the extracted factor explained 62.062% of the model. The EFA results in Table 3 showed that there were three factors with 20 observed variables extracted. Variables *HV10* and *HQ6* were removed because they had factor loadings less than 0.5.

The first factor is called environmentally friendly behavior with nine observed variables. The second factor is GHRM with six observed variables and the third group of factors is called business performance.

4.3. The structural equation model analysis

The results of estimating the correlation between the research concepts show that they are all significant. The SEM results show that the impacts are all statistically significant at 1%. In addition, the estimated weights show that the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables in the model is all positive. Therefore, all three initial hypotheses are accepted. Figure 2 shows SEM analysis results.

Figure 2. The SEM analysis

Note: * 99% significance level.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

The SEM estimation results show that GHRM has a positive influence on the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment, as shown by the coefficient of 0.609 with a significant level of 99%. The GHRM can explain 48.3% of the variation in the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment ($R^2 = 0.483$).

In addition, the SEM analysis results also show that the GHRM and the hotel's environmental cost performance have a positive relationship with an impact weight of 0.381, 99% reliability. This means that environmental cost performance can be enhanced through the hotel's application of appropriate GHRM. The GHRM can explain 62% of the variation in the hotel's environmental cost performance factor ($R^2 = 0.620$). This result is also consistent with the findings of previous studies like Jabbour (2015), Kim et al. (2019), or Roscoe et al. (2019) with the conclusion that GHRM has a positive influence on the environmental cost performance of the enterprise.

In addition, Figure 2 also shows that the factor of employee's friendly behavior towards pro-environment is positively related to the environmental cost performance of the hotel and the estimated coefficient is 0.518 at the 99% significant level. Therefore, *H3* is supported which means that if employee environmental behavior is improved, it will lead to an improvement in the environmental cost performance of the hotel. This result further reinforces the assertion of Kim et al. (2019) that employee's friendly behavior towards pro-environment can positively affect the performance of companies pursuing environmental goals.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, when hotel employees' awareness of GHRM is enhanced, their friendly behavior towards the pro-environment will be better. It can be seen that the psychological correlation between the hotels and the employees is an important factor leading to the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment. This conclusion is consistent with the "social identity" theory because the theory states that individuals (employees) will behave in a way that they believe that members of the group (hotels that practice GHRM) should behave. This conclusion is also consistent with the study of Saeed et al. (2018) that the green behavior of employees has been positively improved in companies that practice. Chaudhary (2019) also found that GHRM has an impact on the friendly behavior of employees towards pro-environment not only as a task but also as a voluntary action.

When employees are aware of the hotel's GHRM and understand that the hotel focuses on activities that contribute to environmental protection, such as selecting environmentally friendly personnel or rewarding employees who have suggestions for improving the environment, it will help motivate employees to perform friendly behaviors towards pro-environment at work such as paying more attention to saving energy or recycling items or avoiding wasting resources.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine the impact of GHRM on employees' friendly behavior towards the pro-environment and the environmental cost performance of hotels. The SEM was the main analytical method used to analyze the survey of 250 employees at three to five-star hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. Future studies should expand the survey sample to obtain broad conclusions for regions in Vietnam.

The quantity results showed that GHRM has a positive impact on employees' environmental behavior. GHRM of enterprises such as policies, recruitment processes, training, reward systems, etc. have the ability to encourage employees' environmental behavior. The results also show that GHRM measures also contribute to encouraging the environmental cost performance of hotels (decrease energy consumption, and waste, reduce energy costs, stimulate the reputation of the hotel, etc.). This result is also similar to some previous studies like Kim et al. (2019), Jabbour (2015), and Roscoe et al. (2019). The study points out the positive impacts of GHRM on both the individual and organizational levels, thereby demonstrating the role of GHRM in the sustainable growth and success of hotels.

In addition, statistical evidence shows that if employees' environmental behavior is improved, it will also help hotels improve their environmental cost efficiency. These results also partly reinforce the national identity theory when used to analyze the impact of GHRM on businesses such as the results of Kim et al. (2019), Saeed et al. (2018), and Chaudhary (2019). In general, statistical evidence from this study shows that hotels should prioritize GHRM over other environmental management measures and apply them appropriately. This not only helps strengthen employees' commitment to the organization but also encourages environmentally friendly behaviors, leading to many good results in the environmental work of these organizations. In addition, the study also encourages managers to establish core corporate values associated with environmental stewardship while developing their GHRM.

The environmental values of the organization should be emphasized. For example, during the recruitment process, managers should consider selecting employees who have a good awareness of environmental values and love environmental protection. In addition, managers should implement pro-environmental training, focusing on stimulating employees to be proud of a green hotel and increase their level of friendly behavior towards pro-environment. In addition, managers can consider praising and recognizing employees' active participation in environmental activities through spiritual, material awards, or additional support appropriate to each business.

This study also provides an original contribution by providing empirical data from Hanoi hotels in Vietnam. The study explored the relationship between green HR, GHRM, and employee's friendly behavior towards pro-environment and environmental cost performance of hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. Using the SEM analysis, the findings confirmed the significant positive influence of GHRM on friendly behavior towards pro-environment and environmental cost efficiency in hotels in Hanoi, Vietnam. This article faces the research gap by providing a solid theoretical framework integrating GHRM, friendly behavior towards pro-environment, and environmental cost efficiency in an organization.

The limitation of the paper is that it is not possible to expand the survey sample size. It is possible to survey provinces and cities in Vietnam to have empirical results to prove the causal relationship between GHRM and the friendly behavior of employees towards the pro-environment and environmental efficiency of activities in hotels in Vietnam.

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