

Empowering Employees through Green HRM: Fostering Eco-Friendly Tourism in Semarang Regency

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Abstract . This study examines the role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) in increasing employee awareness and participation in eco-friendly tourism management in Semarang Regency. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research analyzes the implementation of GHRM practices, evaluates the level of employee awareness and participation, tests the influence of GHRM on employee awareness and participation, and identifies factors affecting GHRM effectiveness. The results show that GHRM practices, especially green training and development and green employee involvement, significantly predict employee awareness and participation levels in environmentally friendly practices. However, the implementation of GHRM in the Semarang Regency tourism industry is still not optimal and faces various challenges. A more contextual, participatory, and integrated approach is needed to optimize the role of GHRM in supporting sustainable tourism. Practical implications of this research include the need to integrate sustainability principles into all HR functions, design relevant training programs, involve employees in GHRM initiatives, align reward systems with sustainability goals, and develop an organizational culture that supports sustainability. This study provides valuable insights into the role of GHRM in realizing sustainable tourism and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords : Green Human Resource, Management, Sustainable Tourism, Environmental Awareness, Employee Participation.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing industries and makes a significant contribution to global economic growth. According to data from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2019, the tourism sector creates 1 in 10 jobs worldwide and contributes 10.3% to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (UNWTO, 2019). However, behind the large economic contribution, rapid tourism development also negatively impacts the environment. Tourism activities contribute to increased carbon emissions, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity (Lenzen et al., 2018). A study by Lenzen et al (2018) shows that the global tourism sector generates 8% of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions, and this figure is expected to continue to rise along with the growth of the tourism industry. The negative impact of tourism on the environment has led to the emergence of the concept of environmentally friendly tourism or ecotourism as a more sustainable alternative.

Eco-friendly tourism aims to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment while providing socio-economic benefits to local communities (Wearing, S., & Neil, 2014). This concept is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN), specifically Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production, and Goal 13 on climate action (United Nations, 2015).

Semarang Regency, as one of the tourist destinations in Central Java, Indonesia, has great potential for developing environmentally friendly tourism. Semarang Regency is endowed with extraordinary natural beauty, ranging from mountains, waterfalls, to stunning lakes and reservoirs. In addition, Semarang Regency is also rich in local culture and traditions that are tourist attractions. This enormous tourism potential has attracted domestic and foreign tourists to visit Semarang Regency. Data from the Semarang Regency Tourism Office shows that in 2019, Semarang Regency was visited by 1,547,853 tourists, an increase of 7.2% from the previous year (Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Semarang, 2020). The increase in the number of tourists has a positive impact on the regional economy, such as an increase in regional original income (PAD) and employment in the tourism sector. However, the increase in the number of tourists in Semarang Regency also has the potential to have a negative impact on the environment if not managed properly. Some environmental issues identified in Semarang Regency tourist destinations include suboptimal waste management, environmental degradation due to uncontrolled tourism activities, and lack of awareness of tourists and local communities about the importance of preserving the environment (Dinas Lingkungan Hidup Kabupaten Semarang., 2021). These issues indicate the need for more systematic and integrated efforts in developing environmentally friendly tourism in Semarang Regency.

Management of environmentally friendly tourism requires the active participation of various stakeholders, including government, tourism industry, local communities, and employees involved in the tourism sector (Roxas et al., 2020). Employees are key actors in implementing environmentally friendly practices in the tourism industry, as they directly interact with tourists and carry out day-to-day operations (Kim et al., 2019)(Octafian & Nugraheni, 2020). The role of employees becomes increasingly important in the context of environmentally friendly tourism, as they are not only required to provide good service but must also have awareness and competence in implementing environmentally friendly practices.

However, several studies show that employees in the tourism industry often lack awareness and motivation to behave in an environmentally friendly manner in the workplace. A study conducted by Luu (2018) in the Vietnamese hotel industry found that only 32% of employees consistently apply environmentally friendly behaviors, such as saving energy and

water, and proper waste management. This is due to various factors, such as lack of employee knowledge and skills related to environmentally friendly practices, and lack of support and appreciation from management (Luu, 2018). Similar findings were also found in a study conducted by Pham et al (2019) in the hotel industry in the Czech Republic, where employees showed a low level of environmental awareness and were reluctant to participate in environmentally friendly initiatives launched by the company.

The phenomenon of lack of employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly practices is also seen in the Semarang Regency tourism industry. Based on initial observations made by researchers in several hotels and tourist attractions in Semarang Regency, it was found that most employees have not consistently implemented environmentally friendly behaviors, such as waste sorting, energy and water saving, and the use of environmentally friendly products. Some employees admitted that they did not understand the importance of environmentally friendly practices and felt that it was not their responsibility. In addition, the lack of training and guidance from management regarding sustainability issues is also an obstacle in increasing employee awareness and participation (Maria et al., 2022; Palupiningtyas et al., 2024).

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is an approach that can be used to overcome the problem of low employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly practices. GHRM is the integration of environmental issues into human resource management functions, such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and employee relations (Renwick et al., 2016). The main objective of GHRM is to create a workforce that has the awareness, competence, and motivation to contribute to the achievement of the organization's sustainability goals (Yong et al., 2019). Several empirical studies have shown the effectiveness of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly practices (Palupiningtyas et al., 2024; Palupiningtyas & Wahono, 2023). For example, a study conducted by Guerci et al (2016) in Italian companies found that the implementation of GHRM practices, such as environmental training and performance-based reward systems, significantly increased pro-environmental employee behavior. Similar findings were also found in a study conducted by (Paillé et al., 2014) in Canadian companies, where GHRM practices were shown to increase employee commitment to sustainability issues and encourage them to engage in environmentally friendly initiatives in the workplace.

Although research on GHRM has developed in recent years, most studies focus on the manufacturing and services sectors in general (Ren et al., 2018). Research that specifically

examines the role of GHRM in the context of the tourism industry, especially in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management, is still limited (Nisar, Haider, et al., 2021). In fact, the tourism industry has different characteristics from other sectors, such as high dependence on natural and cultural resources, and direct interaction between employees and tourists (Baum, 2019). These characteristics require a more specific and contextual GHRM approach to be effectively applied in the tourism industry.

In addition, previous research on GHRM has been mostly conducted in developed countries, while empirical studies in developing countries, such as Indonesia, are still rarely found (Rawashdeh, 2018). In fact, developing countries often face different challenges in implementing GHRM practices, such as limited resources, lack of management awareness and commitment, and complex socio-cultural issues (Ren et al., 2018). Therefore, research that examines the implementation of GHRM in the context of developing countries can provide new insights and contribute to the development of GHRM theory and practice that is more inclusive.

Based on this background, this research seeks to fill the research gap by examining the role of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management in Semarang Regency. Specifically, this research aims to: (1) analyze the implementation of GHRM practices in the Semarang Regency tourism industry; (2) evaluate the level of employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management; (3) test the effect of GHRM practices on employee awareness and participation; and (4) identify factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM implementation in increasing employee awareness and participation. Thus, this research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of GHRM and sustainable tourism literature, as well as practical contributions to human resource management in the tourism industry in supporting the achievement of sustainable development goals.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management in Semarang Regency. The research design used is an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this design, the research is conducted in two stages: the first stage uses quantitative methods to collect and analyze numerical data, and the second stage uses qualitative methods to deepen and elaborate on the findings from the first stage. The

population in this study is all employees working in the Semarang Regency tourism industry, which includes hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and tourist attractions. Given the large population and limited time and resources, this study uses a representative sampling technique.

In the quantitative stage, the sample is taken using a stratified random sampling technique, where the population is divided into several strata based on the type of tourism business, and random samples are taken from each stratum proportionally. Determination of sample size refers to the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5% (Ryan, 2013).

In the qualitative stage, the sample is selected using a purposive sampling technique, where participants who are considered most relevant and informative to answer the research questions are deliberately selected (Patton, 2014). Participants in this stage include employees, human resource managers, and other stakeholders in the Semarang Regency tourism industry.

Data Collection Techniques:

1. Quantitative Stage:

- Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire is used to collect data on the implementation of GHRM practices, the level of employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management, and the factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM. The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review and adapted to the research context.
- Observation: Direct observation is carried out in several hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions to observe the implementation of environmentally friendly practices and pro-environmental behavior of employees.

2. Qualitative Stage:

- Semi-Structured Interview: In-depth interviews are conducted with selected participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and opinions about the role of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation, as well as factors that affect its effectiveness. The interview guide is developed based on findings from the quantitative stage.
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD): FGD is conducted with groups of employees and managers to discuss issues that emerge from the previous stage and generate collective insights about the implementation of GHRM and environmentally friendly tourism.
- Document Analysis: Relevant documents, such as GHRM policies, sustainability reports, and training materials, are collected and analyzed to complement data from questionnaires, interviews, and FGD.

Data Analysis Techniques:

1. Quantitative Stage:

- Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, are used to describe the characteristics of the sample and research variables.
- Factor Analysis: Exploratory factor analysis is performed to identify the main dimensions of GHRM practices and factors that affect employee awareness and participation.
- Regression Analysis: Multiple regression analysis is used to test the effect of GHRM practices on employee awareness and participation, controlling for relevant demographic and organizational variables.

2. Qualitative Stage:

- Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis is carried out to identify patterns, themes, and relationships that emerge from interview data, FGD, and documents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process includes coding the data, grouping codes into themes, and interpreting themes in relation to the research questions.
- Triangulation: Triangulation of data sources and data collection methods is used to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings (Patton, 2014).

Integration of Results:

The results from the quantitative and qualitative stages are integrated into a discussion of research findings. Integration is carried out using a "merging" approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), where findings from both stages are compared, contrasted, and synthesized to produce a more complete and nuanced understanding of the role of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management. This research will follow the principles of research ethics, such as informed consent, anonymity, and data confidentiality. Before data collection, this research will obtain ethical approval from the relevant ethics committee. By using a rigorous mixed-methods approach, this research is expected to produce valid, reliable, and meaningful findings to answer the research questions and make a significant contribution to the development of GHRM theory and practice in the context of sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

1. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Results:

1. Implementation of GHRM Practices in the Semarang Regency Tourism Industry:

- The results of factor analysis show that GHRM practices in the Semarang Regency tourism industry consist of four main dimensions: (1) green recruitment and selection, (2) green training and development, (3) green performance appraisal and compensation, and (4) green employee involvement. These findings are consistent with the GHRM conceptualization proposed by (Renwick et al., 2013) and (Yong et al., 2019).
- The level of implementation of GHRM practices varies among dimensions and types of tourism businesses. Overall, GHRM practices are still implemented at a moderate level ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.87$). These results are consistent with previous findings on suboptimal GHRM adoption in developing countries (Roscoe et al., 2019).
- Hotels and tourist attractions show a higher level of GHRM implementation compared to restaurants and tour operators. These differences can be explained by factors such as scale of operation, capital ownership, and strategic orientation (Yusoff et al., 2020).

2. Level of Employee Awareness and Participation in Environmentally Friendly Tourism Management:

- The level of employee awareness of environmental issues and sustainable tourism is moderate ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.79$). Employees with higher levels of education and longer tenure tend to have higher awareness. These findings support previous research showing the role of education and experience in shaping environmental awareness (Jiang et al., 2020).
- The level of employee participation in environmentally friendly practices is also moderate ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.92$). Employee participation is higher in practices directly related to their work, such as energy and water conservation, compared to more general practices, such as the use of environmentally friendly transportation. This highlights the importance of designing practices that are relevant to the employee's work context (Kim et al., 2019).

3. The Influence of GHRM Practices on Employee Awareness and Participation:

- The results of regression analysis show that GHRM practices significantly predict the level of employee awareness ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and participation ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) in environmentally friendly tourism management. These findings are consistent with

previous research showing a positive relationship between GHRM and pro-environmental employee behavior (Pham et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2019)- Among the dimensions of GHRM, green training and development ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$) and green employee involvement ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$) have the strongest influence on employee awareness and participation. These results emphasize the important role of training and employee involvement in changing employee attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability (Pinzone et al., 2019).

4. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of GHRM:

- Thematic analysis of qualitative data reveals several factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM, including: (1) commitment and support from top management, (2) integration of GHRM with business strategy, (3) clear communication and socialization, (4) relevant and applicable training, (5) reward and recognition system, and (6) organizational culture that supports sustainability. These factors are consistent with previous research findings on enablers and barriers in GHRM implementation (Guerci et al., 2016; Longoni et al., 2018)
- Barriers to GHRM implementation include: (1) resource constraints, (2) lack of awareness and understanding of GHRM, (3) resistance to change, and (4) lack of external pressure and incentives. These barriers need to be addressed through a comprehensive and collaborative approach (Ren et al., 2018).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research also indicate the need for a more contextual and participatory approach in implementing GHRM in the tourism industry. Given the diversity of tourism businesses and employee characteristics, GHRM practices should be tailored to the specific context of each organization (Yusoff et al., 2020). Involving employees in designing and implementing GHRM initiatives can enhance their sense of ownership and commitment to sustainability goals (Kim et al., 2019)(Palupiningtyas et al., 2024; Palupiningtyas & Wahono, 2023). This research contributes to the GHRM and sustainable tourism literature by exploring the implementation of GHRM in the context of the tourism industry in a developing country. However, this study has some limitations. First, this study was conducted in only one regency, so generalization of findings needs to be done carefully. Second, this study uses a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal research can

provide deeper insights into the dynamics of GHRM implementation over time (Kim et al., 2019).

These research findings provide empirical support for the role of GHRM in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management. GHRM practices, especially green training and development and green employee involvement, have been shown to be effective in promoting pro-environmental behavior among tourism industry employees (Pham et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2019). These results are in line with previous research showing that HR practices that focus on sustainability can improve employee attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to environmental issues (Dumont et al., 2017; Rawashdeh, 2018).

However, the level of GHRM implementation in the Semarang Regency tourism industry is still not optimal. More systematic and integrated efforts are needed to integrate sustainability principles into all human resource management functions (Roscoe et al., 2019). This requires commitment and support from top management, as well as close collaboration between the HR department and other departments (Longoni et al., 2018). Previous research emphasizes the importance of top management support and integration of GHRM with business strategy in the successful implementation of GHRM (Muduli et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020). The factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM, as identified in this study, need to be the main consideration in designing and implementing GHRM initiatives. Management must create an environment conducive to GHRM implementation, including providing adequate resources, communicating clear vision and goals, providing relevant and applicable training, and aligning the reward system with sustainability goals (Guerci et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2018). Previous studies also highlight the role of organizational culture that supports innovation and learning in encouraging the adoption of GHRM practices (Jabbour et al., 2020; Mousa & Othman, 2020).

These findings also show the need for a more contextual and participatory approach in the implementation of GHRM in the tourism industry. Given the diversity of types of tourism businesses and employee characteristics, GHRM practices must be adapted to the specific context of each organization (Yusoff et al., 2020). Involving employees in designing and implementing GHRM initiatives can increase their sense of ownership and commitment to sustainability goals (Kim et al., 2019). Previous research also emphasizes the importance of a bottom-up approach and employee participation in the successful implementation of GHRM (Anwar et al., 2020; Nejadi et al., 2020; Octafian & Nugraheni, 2020).

This research contributes to the GHRM and sustainable tourism literature by exploring the implementation of GHRM in the context of the tourism industry in a developing country. However, this study has some limitations. First, this study was conducted in only one regency, so generalization of findings needs to be done carefully. Second, this study uses a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal research can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of GHRM implementation over time (Ren et al., 2018). Third, this study focuses on employee perceptions, so future research can integrate the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as managers and customers, to get a more holistic picture of the effectiveness of GHRM (Pham et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2020). Despite these limitations, this study offers important insights into how GHRM can be applied in the context of the tourism industry to encourage pro-environmental behavior of employees and support sustainable tourism. These research findings also provide a foundation for future research to further explore the antecedents, consequences, and contextual factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM in the tourism industry (Nisar, Prabhakar, et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that GHRM plays an important role in increasing employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly tourism management. GHRM practices, especially green training and development and green employee involvement, significantly predict the level of employee awareness and participation in environmentally friendly practices (Pham et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2019)

However, the implementation of GHRM in the Semarang Regency tourism industry still faces various challenges, such as limited resources, lack of awareness and understanding of GHRM, and resistance to change. More systematic and integrated efforts are needed to integrate sustainability principles into all human resource management functions, taking into account the factors that affect the effectiveness of GHRM (Guerci et al., 2016; Roscoe et al., 2019).

This research highlights the need for a more contextual and participatory approach in the implementation of GHRM in the tourism industry. Close collaboration between the HR department, top management, and other stakeholders is crucial to create an environment conducive to GHRM implementation and achieve sustainable tourism goals (Longoni et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2020).

The practical implications of this research include: (1) integrating sustainability principles into all HR functions, (2) designing relevant and applicable training and development programs, (3) involving employees in designing and implementing GHRM initiatives, (4) aligning the reward system with sustainability goals, and (5) developing an organizational culture that supports sustainability (Pinzone et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2018).

Future research can investigate the implementation of GHRM in the tourism industry in a broader context, using longitudinal and multi-site research designs. Research can also explore the relationship between GHRM, environmental performance, and organizational performance more comprehensively, and identify contingency factors that moderate these relationships (Ren et al., 2018; Yong et al., 2019).

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the role of GHRM in realizing sustainable tourism and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. By effectively implementing GHRM practices, the tourism industry can reduce its negative impact on the environment, improve the welfare of employees and local communities, and maintain the sustainability of tourist destinations for future generations (United Nations, 2015; Wikhamn, 2019).

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