



Mediating Role of Environmental Participation on the Relationship between Green Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Green Behavior

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Abstract

Green human resource management (GHRM) practices are recognized for their pivotal role in promoting sustainability by fostering environmentally responsible behaviors. This study examined the mediating effect of environmental participation (EP) on the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green behavior (EGB) among higher education institutions in Digos City, Philippines. A non-experimental quantitative approach was employed, using structured questionnaires to collect data from 300 employees of different HEIs. The analysis revealed high levels of GHRM practices, EGB, and EP. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between GHRM practices and EGB, demonstrating that robust GHRM practices within organizations positively influence employees' environmentally responsible behaviors. Additionally, environmental participation was found to partially mediate the relationship of the two variables. These findings validated the Social Exchange Theory which posits that employees are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors when they perceive that the organization is investing in environmentally friendly HR practices. The high levels of EGB observed in this study indicated that employees reciprocate the organization's commitment to sustainability by adopting green behaviors, validating the reciprocal nature of the relationship between employees and the organization. The study recommended that HEIs develop comprehensive GHRM strategies to increase employee environmental participation, which can serve as global models for enhancing sustainability and fostering an environmentally conscious culture.

Keywords

green human resource management practices; employee green behavior; environmental participation; higher educational institution employees, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The intricate connection between organizations' dedication to environmentally sustainable practices and the extent to which employees exhibit eco-friendly behaviors (Raza & Khan, 2022) has become a matter of significant concern in modern human resource management research (Bombiak, 2019). This concern stems from the realization that organizations play a crucial role in fostering environmentally responsible behaviors among their employees (Zhu et al., 2021). The extent to which green human resource management (GHRM) practices influence employee green behavior (EGB) remains a vital question in the pursuit of sustainable business practices (Jackson et al., 2019; Ahmed et al., 2020). Meanwhile, environmental participation (EP) is a key factor in understanding how individuals engage in environmentally sustainable behaviors within organizations. Environmental participation (EP) involves active participation in environmental initiatives, such as volunteering for eco-friendly projects or joining green committees (Kiss et al., 2022). The significance of EP in mediating the relationship between GHRM practices and EGB is a subject that warrants thorough investigation.

Existing literature shows a growing interest in understanding the interplay between GHRM practices, EGB, and EP (Fawehinmi et al., 2020b). Studies have examined the direct connection between GHRM practices and EGB (Ansari et al., 2021) and the role of EP as a potential mediator in this relationship (Hameed et al., 2020). In China, a study (Yang, Chen & Wei, 2024) discovered that green HR practices positively influenced employee involvement in environmental initiatives and highlighted the critical role of environmental self-regulation as a mediating factor in this connection. Furthermore, Ababneh (2021) identified a positive link between green HR practices and employee green behavior in Jordan and emphasized the significant mediating effect of environmental participation on this relationship. The study suggests that organizations should focus on implementing green HR practices to enhance environmental awareness among employees and, in turn, encourage them to adopt more environmentally responsible actions.

Moreover, a study (Faeni, 2024) reported that to encourage employees to act in an environmentally responsible manner, organizations in Netherlands were cautioned in prioritizing the implementation of green HR practices and increase employees' environmental awareness and attitudes. Nisar et al. (2021) found that environmental participation partially mediates the connection between green HR practices and employee green behavior. Recognizing the importance of environmental awareness in promoting efficient and environmentally responsible behavior among employees in the Philippines suggests that

incorporating green HR practices can help raise employee environmental consciousness.

Some higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines have initiated sustainability efforts, but these are often disjointed and not fully integrated into the curriculum and operations of the institution (Wilp, Sfeir-Yunis & Tavanti, 2022). Several challenges to institutionalizing sustainability in HEIs in the Philippines exist, including a lack of political will, insufficient funding, and a limited understanding of sustainability among key stakeholders (Galang, 2010). The implementation of environmental management systems in Philippine HEIs is still in its early stages, and most HEIs lack the resources and technical expertise to fully establish such systems (Hernandez, 2020). While several studies have started tackling this topic, a comprehensive understanding of the mediating effect of EP in the GHRM-EGB relationship is still evolving. This research aims to fill this gap by delving into the intricate relationship between GHRM practices, EGB, and EP, thus contributing to a more holistic understanding of how GHRM practices impact environmentally responsible behaviors among employees.

Research Objective

This study aimed in establishing the relationship between green human resource management practices of higher education institutions and employee green behavior as mediated by environmental participation. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine the level of green human resource management practices of higher education institutions.
2. To assess the level of employee green behavior of higher education institutions.
3. To ascertain the level of environmental participation of higher education institutions.
4. To determine the significance of the relationship between green human resource management practices, environmental participation, and employee green behavior.
5. To test if environmental participation significantly mediates (in partial or in full) the relationship between green human resource management practices and employee green behavior.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the correlational method. The implementation of the correlational research design in this study aimed to evaluate the relationship between variables and determine the nature and direction of this relationship (Guetterman, 2019). This method offered a systematic way of exploring the interdependence of variables and establishing the degree and direction of their correlation (Newman & Ridenour, 2008).

Additionally, the study employed the mediation analysis technique as outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to determine if environmental awareness significantly mediated the relationship between green human resource management practices and employee green behavior. The research designs employed in this study were appropriate for its purpose of analyzing the relationship between the three study variables and determining the significance of environmental awareness as a mediating factor in the relationship between green human resource management practices and employee green behavior. The objective was to establish the impact of environmental awareness on the association between GHRM practices and employee green behavior.

Population and Sample

The study encompassed employees of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Digos City, the capital of Davao del Sur, Philippines. The pool of respondents included both teaching and non-teaching staff members among three institutions in Digos City, irrespective of their age and employment status. However, this study excluded employees who are employed outside the location of this study. Furthermore, respondents who opted not to participate in the study were allowed to withdraw at any time and discontinue their participation without penalty. The researchers used Yamane's (1973) formula, utilizing proportionate-to-size random sampling. Researchers garnered 53 qualified respondents from School X, 110 from School Y and 137 from School Z with a total population of 300. This study used stratified random sampling to represent a group as a whole to guarantee that the results should generally correspond to what would have been gathered if the complete population had been measured.

A total of 300 employees were involved based on a computed sample size from the total population of the HEIs and distributed in terms of school, gender, employment status, and job status. The distribution of ages indicated that the largest proportion, at 33.3%, fell

within the 31-35 years old category, followed by 21.3% in the 26-30 years old group, 16.3% in the 41-45 years old group, and smaller percentages in the older age brackets. In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents from HEIs were married, making up 47.66% of the sample, while single individuals accounted for 45.66%. When it came to educational attainment, 48.6% had tertiary education, 25.6% held a master's degree, 11% had a doctorate, 10.6% had secondary education, and only 4% had primary education. Among the sample, 64% were non-teaching staff, and 36% were teaching staff. The employment status of the majority of the population was categorized as regular (60%), while 33.3% chose to label their status as "others" due to confidentiality reasons, 5.3% were on probation, and 1% were trainees.

Instruments

The study employed an adapted survey questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The first section included information about the participants' profiles as well as instructions on how to answer the questions. The second section contained questions about green human resource management (GHRM) practices, which included six indicators: management of organizational culture, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and appraisal, reward and compensation, and employee empowerment and participation.

The green HRM practices questionnaire was adapted from the study by Masri (2016). The third section of the questionnaire included five (5) specific questions about employee green behavior (EGB) which was taken from the study of Malsha, Arulrajah and Senthilnathan (2020). The fourth section of the questionnaire included specific questions about environmental awareness encompassing three indicators: environmental participation in terms of waste management, environmental participation in terms of resource conservation, and environmental participation in terms of initiatives. The instrument for this variable was taken from the study of Lualhati (2019). The data garnered from the questionnaire responses was analyzed through the utilization of a five-point Likert scale.

Data Collection

The researchers formally commenced the conduct of the study by administering first the try-out of the survey questionnaire for pilot testing, followed by the actual survey (both online and face-to-face). On both occasions, consent of participating HEI employees was sought. In the online data collection, the researchers sent messages to the employees via a Google Form link approved for dissemination by their respective school presidents. For the

face-to-face data collection which supplemented the online surveys, the researchers scheduled personal visits to the schools, personally approaching the employees in their respective faculty rooms/lounges to request the response to the paper survey questionnaire. The researchers also ensured that the respondents fully understood the content of the survey questionnaires, assuming that they can relate with the questions based on their experiences as HEI employees. After the surveys, accomplished questionnaires were collated and encoded in spreadsheet software while responses in the online survey were extracted. Both files were merged in preparation for data analysis involving with appropriate statistical tools. Afterwhich, results and conclusions were drawn and recommendations were articulated grounded on the findings of the study.

Statistical Tools

The data collected through the questionnaires were tallied and treated by means of the statistical tools stated below:

Mean. This was utilized to determine the descriptive levels of green human resource management practices, environmental participation, and employee green behavior of higher education institutions.

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The tool was used to examine the extent of correlation between green human resource management practices, environmental participation, and employee green behavior.

Sobel z test. These were used to establish if environmental participation significantly mediates the relationship of green human resource management practices and employee green behavior of MSME owners in both statistical and graphical manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Green Human Resource Management Practices of Higher Education Institutions

The descriptive statistics results in Table 1 reveal the assessment of green human resource management practices within higher education institutions in Digos City, as evaluated by the employees of these institutions. As depicted in the table, the average rating for the overall level of green human resource management practices among higher education institutions in Digos City is 3.93 (SD=0.51). This rating falls into the "High" category, indicating that employees at HEIs in Digos City actively demonstrate and support Green Human Resource Management practices. The combined mean scores of the following indicators are

what led to these results: management of organizational culture ($\bar{x}=4.35$, $SD=0.58$), training and development ($\bar{x}=4.16$, $SD=0.57$), performance management and appraisal ($\bar{x}=4.00$, $SD=0.63$), employee empowerment and participation ($\bar{x}=3.79$, $SD=0.62$), recruitment and selection ($\bar{x}=3.78$, $SD=0.66$), and reward and compensation ($\bar{x}=3.48$, $SD=0.87$). It can be deemed that among the domains, management of the organizational culture had the highest mean; meanwhile, reward and compensation had the lowest rating compared to other domains. Nonetheless, all domains had high mean ratings.

Table 1. *Level of green human resource management practices of HEIs as perceived by employees*

Indicators	\bar{x}	SD
management of organizational culture	4.35	0.58
recruitment and selection	3.78	0.66
training and development	4.16	0.57
performance management and appraisal	4.00	0.63
reward and compensation	3.48	0.87
employee empowerment and participation	3.79	0.62
Overall	3.93	0.51

The findings of this study align with the concept of Alzyoud (2021), who argued that Green HR practices, including aspects like green analysis, recruitment, environmental training, and performance evaluation, significantly contribute to sustainable organizational performance. In essence, organizations cannot achieve such performance without implementing suitable green HRM practices. Dimitrov (2021) discovered that the adoption of green practices in businesses can lead to enhanced performance, improved organizational culture, cost savings, efficient resource utilization, and an enhanced company reputation. Similarly, the study of Fawehinmi et al. (2020a) emphasized the crucial need for organizations, especially HEIs, to embrace green practices, highlighting the pivotal role of green HRM, particularly in emerging economies. Collectively, these studies offer compelling evidence for the significance of green human resource management practices in the academic and higher education sectors.

Level of Employee Green Behavior of Higher Education Institutions in Digos City

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for assessing the level of employee green behavior within higher education institutions in Digos City. The data indicates an overall mean score of 3.79 ($SD=0.62$), which is characterized as high. These findings align with previous research conducted by Mohamed, Noor and Sing (2020), which emphasized the significance

of employee behavior in controlling environmental degradation and promoting green environmental performance within higher education institutions. Moreover, it is worth noting that employee green behavior can provide organizations, including educational institutions, with a competitive edge in terms of their environmental performance, as highlighted by studies like Kim et al. (2019). These studies collectively underscore the importance of employee green behavior in higher education institutions, as it can impact knowledge management, employee empowerment, and commitment.

Table 2. Perceived level of green behavior among employees of higher education institutions

Indicators	Mean	SD
Employee Green Behavior	3.79	0.62

Level of Adaptation to Change of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Owners in Davao City

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics to evaluate the level of environmental participation within higher education institutions in Digos City. The data suggests that there is a high degree of environmental awareness in the workplace, with an overall mean score of 3.86, indicating that HEI employees are conscious of the natural environment and make choices that benefit it. These conclusions are drawn from the mean scores of specific indicators, including environmental participation in resource conservation ($\bar{x}=4.00$, $SD = 0.76$), environmental participation in initiatives ($\bar{x}=3.83$, $SD = 0.63$), and environmental participation in waste management ($\bar{x}=3.76$, $SD = 0.70$). Among these domains, resource conservation had the highest mean score, while waste management had the lowest, although all domains received high mean ratings.

Table 3. Perceived level of environmental participation of employees of HEIs

Indicators	Mean	SD
environmental participation in terms of resource conservation	4.00	0.76
environmental participation in terms of initiatives	3.83	0.63
environmental participation in terms of waste management	3.76	0.70
Overall	3.80	0.60

These findings are consistent with the findings of Suyanto et al. (2021), who discovered that environmental participation and education have a favorable effect on the development of environmental attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Furthermore, Handoyo, Astina and Mkumbachi (2021) emphasized the importance of measures such as providing complimentary filtered water stations and offering cafeteria discounts to mitigate plastic pollution.

Additionally, fostering active environmental engagement is essential for encouraging eco-friendly behaviors within higher education institutions (HEIs).

Correlation between Variables

Table 4 displays the results of the correlation analysis involving the independent variable (green human resource management practices), the dependent variable (employee green behavior), and the mediator variable (environmental participation). The bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson's r was used to examine the relationships between these variables. The statistical analysis indicated significant positive associations among them.

Table 4. Correlation matrix of the variables

Pair	Variables	r_{xy}	p -value	Decision on H_0
IV and DV	green human resource management practices and employee green behavior	0.839	<0.000	Rejected
IV and MV	green human resource management practices and environmental participation	0.588	<0.000	Rejected
MV and DV	environmental participation and employee green behavior	0.552	<0.000	Rejected

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Specifically, there is a moderate positive correlation between green human resource management practices and employee green behavior ($r=0.839$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that when an organization emphasizes green HRM practices, there is a higher likelihood of employees exhibiting environmentally responsible behavior. These findings align with Priyashantha and Priyanga (2022), which highlighted those aspects of GHRM, such as green recruitment, selection, and training, can play a substantial role in cultivating environmentally friendly attitudes in employees, especially in developing countries like Sri Lanka. Harasudha and Subramanian (2020) also emphasized the importance of employee attitudes within GHRM activities, suggesting that effective GHRM practices can lead to positive and significant outcomes in terms of employee commitment and green behavior in the workplace.

In the following bivariate correlation analysis, it is evident that there is a significant positive relationship between green human resource management practices and environmental participation ($r=0.588$, $p < .01$). Moreover, it is discernible that green human resource management practices are observable within HEIs, and their manifestation appears to be potentially influenced by environmental participation. These findings align with the research conducted by Sathasivam, Abu Bakar and Che Hashim (2021), which highlighted

those various aspects of green HRM practices, including employee involvement, rewards, training, and orientation, were frequently implemented because they played a crucial role in fostering employees' commitment to environmental participation. Furthermore, Veerasamy, Joseph and Parayitam (2024) suggest that the adoption of green HRM practices can contribute to the development of "green companies" and, ultimately, "green economies." This, in turn, ensures that future generations have access to vital resources. They also emphasize the importance of raising awareness about employee participation in environmental initiatives alongside improving the workplace environment.

The third correlation analysis, which examined the relationship between environmental participation and employee green behavior, revealed an r -value of 0.552 ($p < .01$). This indicates a moderate positive correlation between these two variables. In simpler terms, when an organization promotes environmental participation, there is a higher likelihood of employees engaging in environmentally friendly behavior. Furthermore, establishing both formal and informal communication channels that clearly convey the organization's environmental values and intentions, while also encouraging employee involvement in decisions related to environmental matters, can stimulate active participation in environmental initiatives. This can lead employees to share knowledge with their peers, take proactive environmental actions, and embrace innovative approaches when addressing various environmental challenges (Ababneh, 2021).

Tests of Mediating Effect between the Variables

Table 5 on the succeeding page was analyzed using the Sobel z-test to determine the mediating effect of environmental participation as a mediator variable on the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green behavior. The direct effect of GHRM practices and employee green behavior is still significant after bootstrapping procedure was applied ($z=4.95$, $p < 0.001$). However, the strength of this relationship decreased when the mediating variable was considered, going from 0.491 to 0.150. The mediation results revealed a statistically significant partial mediation effect of environmental participation (z -value = 12.59, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, green human resource management practices demonstrated both direct (z -value= 4.95, $p < 0.001$) and indirect effects (z -value=9.99, $p < 0.001$) on environmental participation and employee green behavior, with a high level of confidence.

Table 5. Mediation analysis of environmental participation, green HRM practices and environmental participation

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% C.I.		Z	P	% Mediation
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	a x b	0.341	0.0341	0.2740	0.408	9.99	<.001	69.4
Direct	c	0.150	0.0303	0.0907	0.210	4.95	<.001	30.6
Total	c + a x b	0.491	0.0390	0.4146	0.567	12.59	<.001	100.0

* $p < 0.05$

Shown in Figure 1 is the path plot (medgraph) of the three variables, revealing the results of the direct effect of the mediating variable using linear regression analysis. The result indicates a direct effect of green human resource management practices (IV) on employee green behavior (DV), with an estimated value of 0.599, signifying a significant relationship between these two variables.

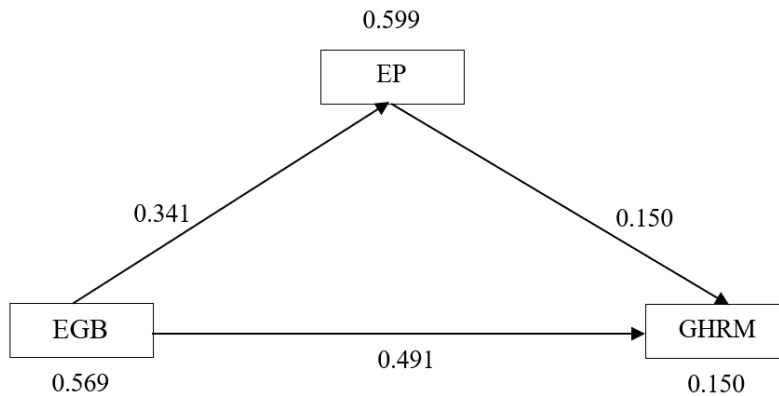


Figure 1. Path plot of green human resource management practices, employee green behavior, and environmental participation as mediator

This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Zhang et al. (2019), which demonstrated that green HRM practices have a direct impact on both in-role and extra-role green workplace behaviors of employees. Consequently, HRM plays a role in cultivating an atmosphere and environment where employees willingly participate in green behavior (Sabokro, Masud & Kayedian, 2021). Furthermore, the direct impact of green human resource management practices (IV) on environmental participation (MV) is noteworthy, with an estimated value of 0.150, signifying its significance. Green HRM practices inspire employees by instilling confidence in their ability to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors, as they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

This, in turn, elevates their environmental awareness and fosters innovation in environmental participation (Munawar et al., 2022). In addition, the direct influence of

environmental participation (MV) on employee green behavior (DV) is substantial, with an estimated value of 0.569. This implies that employees with strong intrinsic motivation for environmental participation tend to develop more pro-environmental habits and maintain positive environmental attitudes, consequently enhancing their task-related employee green behavior (Sabbir & Taufique, 2022). Conversely, the indirect effect of green human resource practices on employee green behavior, mediated by environmental participation, demonstrates an estimated value of 0.341, illustrating that environmental participation serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between green human resource practices and employee green behavior.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate whether environmental participation serves as a significant mediator, either partially or fully, in the correlation between green human resource management (GHRM) practices and employee green behavior. The results revealed a considerable presence of GHRM practices, high employee green behavior, and high environmental participation among employees in higher education institutions in Digos City. Moreover, a statistically significant correlation was observed between GHRM practices and employee green behavior. However, the connection between GHRM practices and environmental participation indicated a relatively weaker association. Nevertheless, a positively significant relationship was found between environmental participation and employee green behavior.

When environmental participation functions as a mediator in the relationship between GHRM practices and employee green behavior, it does so partially, exerting impacts both directly and indirectly. These findings validated the Social Exchange Theory which posits that employees are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors when they perceive that the organization is investing in environmentally friendly HR practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Human Resource Department of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Digos City may utilize the study's findings to enhance their organizational programs. Despite receiving high ratings in various areas, there are specific areas that require improvement, particularly in providing rewards and compensation to employees, which received the lowest mean rating of 3.48 among all means. It is recommended for HEI institutions to strengthen their commitment to green HRM practices. This can be achieved by implementing focused training programs

and establishing clear environmental objectives to further motivate employees to engage in environmentally responsible actions. It is crucial to prioritize promoting environmental involvement by creating both formal and informal channels for employees to participate in environmental decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership in green initiatives, and acknowledging and rewarding eco-friendly behaviors.

Furthermore, the HR Department can concentrate on boosting employees' intrinsic motivation for participating in environmental initiatives. Regular communication about the benefits of green actions and their positive impacts on the workplace environment is essential in this regard. Additionally, it is recommended that HEI top management considers conducting long-term studies to monitor the sustained effects of their green HRM practices. Implementing feedback mechanisms for ongoing improvement and producing sustainability reports to transparently communicate achievements and future sustainability goals can be beneficial.

Moreover, it is highly recommended for top management in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to actively involve employees in the identification and implementation of environmentally friendly practices. Establishing and enforcing eco-friendly workplace policies is crucial in fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and sustainability within the organization. By engaging employees in the process, HEIs can enhance their commitment to green initiatives and promote a sense of shared responsibility. Finally, future researchers may explore similar studies in different industries using alternative methodologies and tools, potentially yielding diverse results.

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