

A Strategic Framework of Green Human Resource Management Practices for Enhancing Employee Green Crafting Behavior and Environmental Performance in the Hotel Industry

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700312>

Received: 26 November 2025; Accepted: 02 December 2025; Published: 31 July 2026

ABSTRACT

The 5-star hotel sector in China is expanding rapidly, and consumers are paying increasing attention to sustainability, creating pressure on hotels to balance environmental preservation with commercial objectives. Research on green human resource management (Green HRM) remains limited in explaining how such practices, through employee green crafting behavior (EGCB), improve the sustainable consumption of resources and reduce environmental degradation in the hotel sector. Thus, this conceptual paper proposes an integrated framework to assess the influence of Green HRM practices on the environmental performance of hotels, with EGCB acting as a mediating factor in this relationship. Drawing on Social Identity Theory, Job Design Theory, and Conservation of Resources Theory, the paper constructs a conceptual model that clarifies the relationships between Green HRM and improved environmental outcomes in the 5-star hotel sector in China. It contributes to the literature on sustainable practices by proposing a strategic framework and offering theoretical and practical implications for promoting environmental responsibility within the hotel sector.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, Employee Green Crafting Behaviour, Environmental Performance, Hotel Industry

INTRODUCTION

The hotel sector is under greater concern about adopting sustainable practices due to environmental problems such as resource depletion, carbon emissions, and waste generation. Hotels are major players in the tourism industry, and creating strategies that strike a compromise between environmental preservation and commercial objectives is crucial (Abbass et al., 2022; Shaffril et al., 2020). High energy consumption and the hotel business producing too much garbage significantly affect the environment (Papallou et al., 2024; Yousaf et al., 2021). However, some argue that the cost associated with implementing sustainable practices can be prohibitive for many hotels, particularly small establishments that may struggle to absorb the initial investment. Additionally, there is a concern that focusing too heavily on sustainability might detract from the overall guests' experience, as certain eco-friendly measures could be perceived as less convenient or luxurious. Adopting sustainable strategies becomes essential, not a choice, for ensuring long-term operations can continue and satisfy stakeholder expectations (Moallemi et al., 2020; Rassiah et al., 2024; Zhang, Cui, et al., 2025). This shift necessitates a careful balance between eco-friendly initiatives and the maintenance of high service standards. The evolution of eco-friendly practices within the hospitality industry has transformed from a mere choice to an essential component of sustainable long-term operations and stakeholder satisfaction.

Currently, research on Green HRM is in its early stages, with most studies concentrating on its conceptualization (Alreahi et al., 2022; Borowski et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2017). A recent study demonstrated that Green HRM practices improve the sustainable consumption of resources by implementing ideas, methods, and HR policies

that reduce environmental degradation (Begum et al., 2022). Researchers are currently studying different methods to encourage environmentally friendly actions in the hotel industry (Alreahi et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2017). Researchers have requested further investigation into specific Green HRM practices that are associated with environmental performance and the promotion of green behaviors and employee motivation within the hotel industry (Afsar et al., 2020; Begum et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2019).

Green HRM techniques have increased in popularity as a main approach to guarantee that HR policies satisfy environmental objectives (Adu Sarfo et al., 2024). One of the most crucial approaches to consider is how to include sustainability in hiring, training, job reviews, and initiatives that involve staff members. These instruments inspire employees to apply environmentally friendly practices and foster a society of earth preservation. However, corporate initiatives alone may not have the desired environmental impact. The adoption of these regulations depends much on the actions and behaviors of the employees since they greatly affect the outcomes. One such behavior is employee green crafting behavior (EGCB).

Workers with EGCB are aggressively switching their employment to incorporate greener approaches (Elshaer et al., 2023; Tuan, 2021). Emphasizing that it requires personal choice for reaching sustainability objectives, this concept links the strategies of companies with their actual performance. Investigating the link between Green HRM, EGCB, and environmental performance is crucial as the 5-star hotel sector in China is expanding rapidly, and consumers are paying more attention to their surroundings. Hence, the proposed strategic conceptual framework is developed to respond to the two main research questions:

RQ1: What are the direct effects among Green HRM practices, employees green crafting behaviour and the environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China?

RQ2: What are the mediating effects of green crafting behaviour between Green HRM practices and environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China?

These questions are both relevant and essential. Therefore, this paper aims to develop a strategic conceptual framework that allows individuals working in the 5-star hotel sector in China to comprehend these developments and acquire insightful knowledge related to the influence of green human resource management (Green HRM) practices on the environmental performance of hotels, with employee green crafting behavior (EGCB) acting as a mediating factor in this relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Underpinning Theories

There are three main theories complement the development of the conceptual framework of the proposed future study, which are Social Identity Theory (SIT), Job Design Theory (JDT) and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. Together, these theories provide a multidimensional foundation for explaining how Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices influence Employee Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB) and environmental performance within the hotel sector.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed Social Identity Theory (SIT), which holds that social groups shape self-concept. The employees' perception about the environmentally friendly orientation of their organization affects their intentions to internalize those principles and behave accordingly (Ali et al., 2022). These practices might help employees develop a strong environmental identity and contribute to the company's sustainability goals. The perception of green practices, which shows shared identity, enhances environmental commitment and green crafting. Therefore, SIT explains how employees' identification with a green organizational culture leads to meaningful environmental action (Khan et al., 2023; Liu, 2021).

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Design Theory (JDT) highlights how work structure affects employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance. In line with job design theory, job characteristics, including task importance, autonomy, and feedback, refer to the work's meaningfulness. Green job roles, environmental training, and eco-performance evaluations improve employees' impression of their work as purposeful and

connected with environmental goals (Shoaib, 2022). As a result, this relationship motivates and enhances proactive activities like EGCB. JDT supports the notion that environmentally friendly job design increases intrinsic motivation and sustains performance (Liu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, to explain more about the proposed relationships, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, presented by Hobfoll (1989), states that people seek, maintain, and protect valuable resources, tangible or intangible, that are essential to well-being. GHRM practices focusing on green training, leadership support, and recognition protect and enhance employees' perception of psychological and professional resources (Brohi et al., 2024).

These theories collectively establish a comprehensive framework for elucidating the influence of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices on Employee Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB) and environmental performance in the hotel industry. The social identity theory (SIT) explains identification and shared values, the job design theory (JDT) describes work roles' structure and motivation, and the conservation of resources (COR) theory indicates resources' role in engagement and performance. Therefore, by incorporating these theories into the formulation of the strategic conceptual framework for the forthcoming study, the literature will be enriched and will seek to tackle issues pertaining to hospitality human resource practices, sustainability, and employee behavior.

Conceptual Framework Development

The proposed conceptual framework includes Employee Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB) as a mediator to explore the role of Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) practices in improving environmental performance (EP) in the hotel industry. Recent research indicates that human resource management policies, employee behavior, and sustainability outcomes are interconnected elements within this conceptual model, which aims to enhance environmental performance (Jabbour, 2011; Pham et al., 2019).

The current scholarship is based on previous research, which found that by incorporating environmental values into the workforce, green HRM policies, such as green recruitment, training, and performance management, significantly support sustainability initiatives (Adu Sarfo et al., 2024; Brohi et al., 2024). According to empirical studies, organizations that used Green HRM approaches generate less waste, make better use of resources, have lower waste generation, and have better compliance with environmental law (Buriro et al., 2018). Moreover, organizations that use structured Green HRM systems gain a competitive advantage in areas related to sustainability, such as hotel operations, where stakeholders prefer environmentally friendly operations (Muisyo & Qin, 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

Previous studies have demonstrated that Green HRM initiatives by themselves cannot ensure success unless employees actively participate in sustainable-oriented activities (Renwick et al., 2013). Employees' willingness to change their working habits determines the effectiveness of these policies; hence, EGCB is included as a primary mediator in this model (Zafar et al., 2023; Elshaer et al., 2023). Green HRM offers the institutional framework for sustainability; EGCB acts as the psychological mechanism by which workers absorb and carry out green projects (Luu, 2019; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). With high organizational job autonomy and environmental awareness, employees typically engage in green building activities, including waste reduction, energy conservation, and environmentally friendly task adjustments (Khan & Khan, 2021). Research indicates that companies encouraging a culture of psychological empowerment and leadership support had better rates of EGCB acceptance (Sutarmin et al., 2023). The suggested conceptual framework explains structural as well as behavioral elements affecting environmental performance by putting EGCB as a mediator.

In sustainability literature, the correlation between Green HRM, EGCB, and environmental performance is quite significant. Companies that effectively adopt Green HRM practices and promote EGCB achieve better results on sustainability, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder confidence (Alyahya & Agag, 2025). Studies suggest that organizations that implement employee-driven sustainability initiatives into operational planning show reduced carbon footprints, higher energy efficiency, and more customer loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2021; Smith & Jacques, 2022). Figure 1 displays the integrated theoretical framework that incorporates the three main underpinning theories for the investigation in future study.

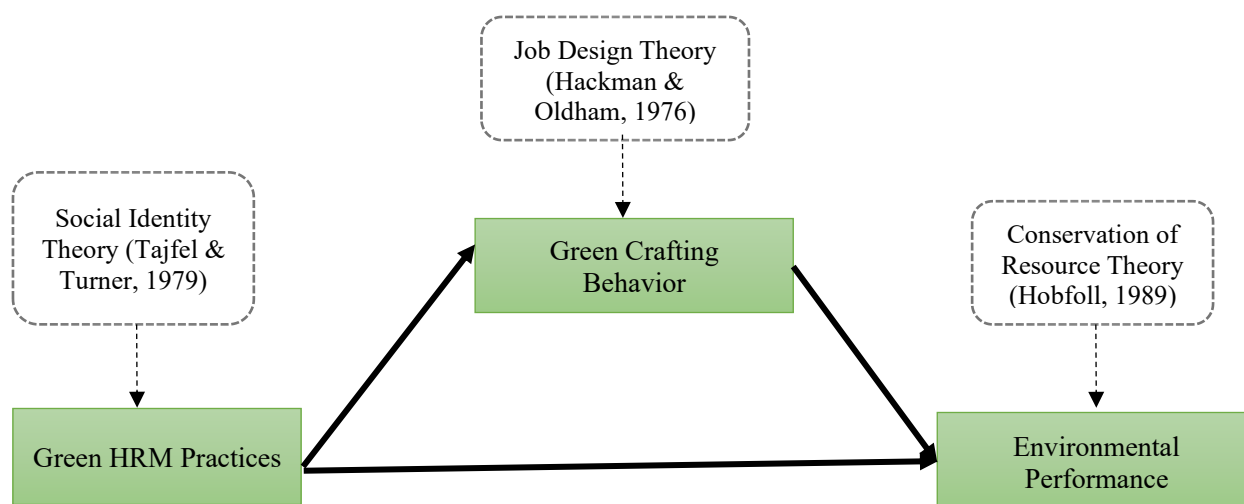


Figure 1: The Integrated Theoretical Framework

The discussions of the key variables and their relationships in the integrated conceptual framework are elaborated in the following sections.

Green HRM Practices

Green HRM approaches involve environmental goals in human resource activities including performance management, training, recruitment and other spheres of influence (Alreahi et al., 2022). These practices motivate employees to engage in environmentally friendly activities, therefore enhancing the environmental performance of the company (Renwick et al., 2013). Jabbour (2011) emphasizes the need to include sustainability in HR policy since it helps staff members to grow responsible and ecologically aware. Mauledy et al. (2023) underline the need for green hiring in drawing applicants with strong environmental values, thereby matching organizational goals with personal ambitions.

Shoaib et al. (2022) expand on their study by providing tangible data that demonstrate through precise measures and rewards, how green performance management systems effectively encourage sustainable actions. Darvishmotevali & Altinay (2022) also argue that aligning HRM practices with environmental goals boosts organizational commitment and long-term sustainability.

Recent studies by Brohi et al. (2024) found that green HRM practices help management and employees build trust, which improves the adoption of environmental projects. Pham et al.'s (2019) research indicated that organizations that use Green HRM experience improved employee morale, which later helps to minimize turnover rates. According to Arulrajah et al. (2015), implementing Green HRM practices benefits both ecological sustainability and stakeholder confidence, and it strengthens market reputation. These results indicate that adopting Green HRM practices enhances a company's reputation among stakeholders, thereby fostering its long-term success and market competitiveness. As a result, businesses may project a positive image while simultaneously achieving their sustainability objective. Muisyo & Qin (2021) argue that Green HRM practices provide a strategic advantage in competitive industries such as the hotel industry, where sustainability is increasingly crucial.

Employee Green Crafting Behaviour (EGCB)

Employee green crafting behavior (EGCB) is the intended modification of job duties and responsibilities to meet environmental goals (Tuan, 2021). Elshaer et al. (2023) emphasize job crafting, which they define as an individual's proactive efforts (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) to change their work to better align with either personal aspirations or organizational goals, in their study of EGCB as a primary mediator between organizational policies and environmental outcomes. This phenomenon emphasizes the importance of employees' activities in aligning business works with environmental goals, implying that such proactive activity

can have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of organizational policies in attaining beneficial environmental outcomes. As a result, promoting EGCB can lead to a more sustainable workplace and better performance.

The findings of Zafar et al. (2023) reveal a clear link between employees who engage in green design and their tendency to propose creative ideas meant for the resource economy. In line with this, the Luu (2019) study demonstrates a direct correlation between green building practices and reduced waste as well as increased operating efficiency. Morton et al. (2018) found that workers who believe their roles contribute significantly to environmental goals are more likely to engage in ESIS activities. These crafting efforts frequently involve innovative problem-solving and the development of new approaches that are consistent with the organization's sustainable goals. As a result, organizations that develop an environmentally responsible culture may not only increase employee engagement but also generate major improvements in resource management practices.

Khan & Khan (2021) emphasize the importance of psychological empowerment in enabling EGCB, recommending that firms develop environments in which employees feel valued and free to influence change. A study by Cheng et al. (2016) found that leadership has crucial roles defined in supporting green building practices, in recognition and support. These findings indicated that a supportive workplace culture and the presence of environmentally conscious colleagues can considerably influence the adoption of eco-friendly building practices. Thus, cultivating these factors is critical for promoting sustainability in the organization and its national operation and business.

Environmental Performance

Environmental performance is a measure of how well a firm accomplishes sustainability goals such as natural resource conservation and carbon emissions reduction (Aftab et al., 2023). Studies by Delmas and Toffel (2008) show a relationship between strong environmental performance and better financial results, implying that companies might attain competitive advantages by means of cost cuts and increased reputation standing (Adu Sarfo et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Attaining improved environmental performance requires the development of an inventive culture (Aggarwal & Agarwala, 2023). Their findings also found that organizations are much improved by personnel who have the freedom to investigate sustainable approaches. Xu et al. (2023) demonstrate that cross-functional cooperation within companies contributes to waste reduction and resource efficiency enhancement.

Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2021) highlight the influence of external stakeholders, such as consumers and legal authorities, on the development of environmental performance measures. Companies that employ transparent reporting systems and properly engaged stakeholders are more likely to accomplish their sustainability goals and objectives. Alyahya & Agag (2025) found that stronger corporate environmental performance is associated with improved financial performance and higher customer satisfaction, underscoring the economic case for aligning organizational goals with environmental needs.

According to Smith & Jacques (2022) companies that implement environmental policies are more likely to be resilient to regulatory changes and market conditions. A study by Javaid et al. (2022) stresses the importance of technology adoption as a key component in enhancing environmental performance, allowing businesses to efficiently reduce their environmental impact.

DISCUSSIONS

The discussions are based on the two research questions established for the future study. Hypothesis related to each of the discussion is established to indicate the relationship between the direct and indirect effects of the path in the proposed integrated conceptual framework.

Research Question 1: What are the direct effects among Green HRM practices, employees green crafting behaviour and the environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China?

There are three direct effects path among the key variables in the proposed framework that elaborated in the following sections.

The Direct Effect between Green HRM Practices and Environmental Performance

The Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) explains how employees' identification with a green organizational culture leads to meaningful environmental action (Khan et al., 2023; Liu, 2021). The perception of green practices indicated that shared identity enhances environmental commitment, which the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory by Hobfoll (1989) stated that people seek, maintain, and protect valuable resources such as green training in GHRM practices, would enhance employees' perception of psychological and professional resources (Brohi et al., 2024). Studies reveal that employees who regard themselves as essential members of a company with environmental consciousness are more motivated to actively assist the environmental performance of their company (Khan et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). This emphasizes the need to develop a strong environmental identity inside the employees since it will increase their involvement in environmentally friendly behaviours. This alignment between individual identity and organisational values can lead to employees taking a more proactive role in supporting sustainability initiatives, fostering an environmentally conscious workforce.

Particularly with respect to environmental performance, the body of current research offers thorough proof of how human resource (HR) policies affect different organizational results. Promoting sustainable practices among employees is crucial to green HRM strategies, which incorporate environmental considerations into human resource tasks. Aiming to match employees' values with the sustainability goals of the company, the policies cover green recruitment, training, and performance management (Alyahya et al., 2023; Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022; Muisyo & Qin, 2021). These strategies contribute to reducing waste output and increasing resource efficiency. Studies from the past have shown that environmental performance goes up when employees feel like they have control over sustainable efforts and are involved in them. Clark et al. (2022) found that hotel food service teams that took part in sustainability workshops were more likely to plan menus that had less of an effect on the environment and reduce waste. In the same way, Zafar and Suseno (2024) stated that programs to save energy and carbon are more likely to work when they match employee incentives with environmental goals. Therefore, strong green HRM systems help companies to noticeably improve environmental performance measures, including waste and energy consumption reduction (Jabbour, 2011). Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is being looked at more as a key link between business strategy and environmental results (Molina-Azorín et al., 2021). Thus, the first direct effect proposition or hypothesis is derived for the study.

Proposition 1: Green HRM practices positively influence the environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China.

Green HRM Practices and Employees Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB)

In line with Job Design Theory (JDT) developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), which described how work structure affects employee motivation, including green job roles that supported by the Social Identity Theory (SIT) would improve employees' impression of their work as purposeful and connected with environmental goals (Shoaib, 2022). This relationship motivates and enhances proactive activities like EGCB. JDT supports the notion that environmentally friendly job design increases intrinsic motivation and sustains performance (Liu et al., 2021).

Particularly in respect to EGCB, the application of green HRM techniques greatly affects employee actions. Green HRM helps people to empower themselves to redefine their job roles in line with environmental objectives using training programs, more sustainable practices, incentive provision for environmentally friendly initiatives, and employee participation in the decision-making processes concerning environmental issues (Chen et al., 2025; Garg & Arora, 2025; Sutarmin et al., 2023; Zafar et al., 2023). Employees might, for example, use plans meant to improve energy efficiency or cut waste in their regular operations. This proactive involvement helps one to develop responsibility for sustainability (Luu, 2019). Therefore, the second proposition or hypothesis for the study is developed.

Proposition 2: Green HRM practices positively influence employee green crafting behaviour in 5-star hotels in China.

Employee Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB) and Environmental Performance

Job Design Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and Conservation of Resource Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) elaborated that EGCB as a necessary link between it and the final organizational results. From these theoretical standpoints, there has been a suggestion implying that the acceptance of green crafting, encompassing resource efficiency, waste reduction, and the application of other environmentally friendly practices, could improve environmental performance (Elshaer et al., 2023). Green crafting behavior taken place when workers decide to change their job activities so that they can be more environmentally friendly at work, in their social lives, and in their personal goals (Tuan, 2018). This behavior is often encouraged when workers see that their HR systems are constantly sending them messages about being environmentally friendly (Renwick et al., 2013). The adoption of creative techniques for resource conservation, the encouragement of waste reduction, and the improvement of operational efficiency all defines these behaviors (Chen et al., 2025; Garg & Arora, 2025). Studies indicate that companies with high EGCB values usually have better environmental results, mostly because their staff members participate actively in grassroots sustainability projects (Luu, 2019). The third proposition or hypothesis of investigation is based on the findings of this literature.

Proposition 3: Employee green crafting behaviour positively influences the environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China.

Mediating Role of Employee Green Crafting Behavior (EGCB)

While EGCB is responsible for translating green human resource management practices into measurable outcomes, green HRM practices are responsible for establishing the essential structural and motivational foundation for sustainability (Sopiah et al., 2024). This could mean coming up with new green ways to do things, reducing the amount of trash they make in their daily lives, or getting their coworkers to do the same. (Tuan, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). Green crafting behavior as a mediator shows that having strong structures and a good mindset are not enough; what turns purpose into action is proactive, individual behaviour. As these behaviours accumulate, they produce quantifiable improvements in environment performance measures. In this way, the paradigm sees EGCB as an important way to change the hotel sustainability process, not just an end result. The employees who exhibit involvement and empowerment through the implementation of green human resource management are more likely to proactively shape their jobs in accordance with environmental goals (Zafar et al., 2025). Renwick et al. (2013) and Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) argue that the mediating link facilitates the effective translation of organizational initiative into improved environmental performance. Therefore, the fourth proposition or hypothesis of this study is developed.

Proposition 4: Employee green crafting behaviour mediates the relationship between Green HRM practices and environmental performance of 5-star hotels in China.

The four propositions or hypotheses are exhibited in Figure 2 that indicated the path between variables in the proposed integrated conceptual framework. The direct path between key variables indicated in the black bold arrow for hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. While the indirect path with the dotted arrow (H4) indicating the mediating effect in the proposed integrated conceptual framework.

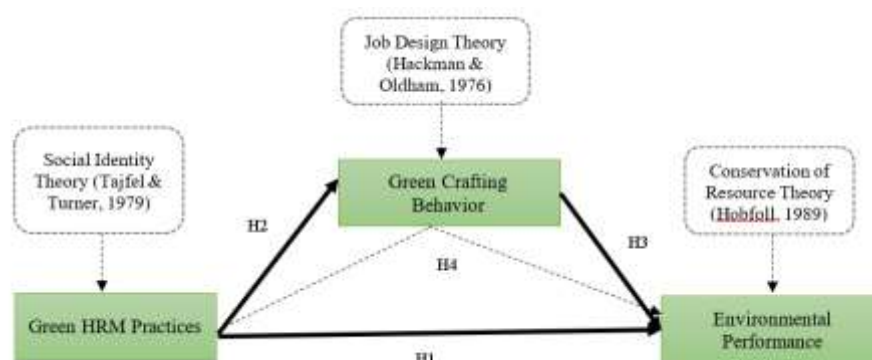


Figure 2: The Proposed Integrated Conceptual Framework with Underpinning Theories

Theoretical Implications

The proposed integrated conceptual framework was developed from the contributions of past researchers who concentrated differently on several facets of the variables to be investigated in future study. The underpinning theories to guide the study are Social Identity Theory, Job Design Theory, and Conservation of Resource Theory, which formed the theories supporting the development of this framework. These theories provide a solid foundation for elucidating the links indicated in the integrated conceptual framework. This conceptual paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the role of EGCB as a mediator in the relationship between green HRM practices and environmental performance. By merging insights from the three underpinning theories with research on organizational sustainability, the framework emphasizes the importance of hotel employees in the process of implementing organizational policy. According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the findings contribute to a better understanding of how human resource management methods can transcend traditional practices and incorporate environmental concerns, establishing them as an integral component of the sustainability conversation.

Within the context of sustainability, this proposed framework focuses even more on the importance of job design theory (JDT). The conventional link between work crafting and the development of employee engagement and enjoyment is enlarged by its application to environmental goals, thus adding a new dimension to the theory (Luu, 2019). This approach connects EGCB directly to environmental goals. This study positions EGCB within the larger context of human resource management and sustainability literature by filling current gaps and laying the groundwork for future empirical research. It also promotes sustainability in particular. Furthermore, the integrated conceptual framework is adaptable to a wide range of industries, making it a versatile tool for investigating the relationship between environmental performance, employee behavior, and human resource management in various organizational settings.

Practical Implications

Green HRM strategies must be incorporated in organizational structures to improve environmental performance, particularly in sectors like the 5-star hotels, where their environmental impact is much under observation. By including environmental goals in HR processes such as training and recruitment, companies can establish a team that promotes sustainability (Renwick et al., 2013). For example, hotels have the choice to incorporate environmental awareness criteria into their employment practices so that new employees support business sustainability goals. Moreover, providing employees with specific training on environmentally friendly practices, like waste management and energy saving, helps them develop the skills needed to participate in sustainable activities (Jabbour, 2011).

Reward programs are critical for motivating employees to participate in environmental projects. Organizations can motivate employees to use green building techniques by applauding and acknowledging environmentally friendly efforts, including innovative approaches to resource conservation (Luu, 2019). Giving staff members public acknowledgement or financial assistance for environmental efforts, for instance, will significantly boost their motivation and help to enhance organizational performance. In this regard, the participation of leaders is crucial. Leaders should demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability within themselves. This approach promotes trust and teamwork, enabling staff members to spearhead environmental efforts (Chen et al., 2025).

Monitoring and evaluation techniques considerably determine how successful Green HRM policies and EGCB are in delivering environmental outcomes. Regular assessments create useful information that guarantees compatibility with the environmental objectives of the company and aids in enhancing its strategies (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Hotels can monitor numerous metrics, including energy use, waste reduction, and assistance in environmental initiatives, to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. Including these elements in operational systems helps hotels to maintain a competitive edge in a market gradually influenced by customer demand for sustainable practices and simultaneously boost their environmental performance. The implications demonstrate the strategic relevance of Green HRM and EGCB in allowing long-term sustainability in the 5-star hotel sector in China.

CONCLUSION

The results of this proposed strategic framework emphasize the necessity for conceptualizing green human resource management (Green HRM) strategies in terms of promoting environmental performance by means of employees' green crafting behavior. The proposed framework offers a basis for further empirical studies and pragmatic techniques to address hotel environmental strategies. Clarifying the role that EGCB plays as a mediator in the process establishes this strategy. More studies should be done to validate these claims across a range of cultural and organizational settings, thereby improving their generalizability.

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