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An Extension of Social Exchange Theory and Green Human Resource Management to Explain Employee In-Role Green Performance: A Mediated Model in the Vietnamese Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

The hospitality industry plays a crucial role in economic and social development by creating jobs and promoting economic structural transformation in many countries, including Vietnam. However, despite these significant contributions, the hospitality industry also negatively impacts the environment, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable development within this sector. This study emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership and green human resource management (GHRM) in fostering employee green behavior and in-role green performance to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the hospitality industry. A research model extending social exchange theory and GHRM was developed to examine employee in-role green performance. A self-administered survey was conducted with 573 employees working in four- and five-star hotels in Vietnam. The findings validate the application of social exchange theory in examining the effects of GHRM policies on employee green behavior and in-role green performance. Additionally, this study provides recommendations for hotels to enhance their policies toward achieving SDGs.

Keywords: Ethical leadership, Green human resource management, Employee green behavior; Employee in-role green performance; Hospitality industry.

Introduction

Goal 13 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for urgent measures to address climate change and its effects. This goal aims to enhance human and institutional capacities and establish mechanisms that support effective environmental management (United Nations, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2021, Isaksson R. 2019, Rosvall M., 2023). Over the past

few decades, the environmental impact has become a significant concern for organizations and governments (Ahmad et al., 2021). Organizations face pressure from governments, customers, markets, and international regulations to implement substantial changes that ensure safety and environmental friendliness in business activities (Siraj et al., 2022). These pressures are extensively discussed in research on the hospitality sector (Pham et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2021). Sustainable development in this sector has become a crucial topic that has garnered significant attention from researchers (Aboramadan & Karatepe, 2021; Abualigah et al., 2023). The hospitality industry consumes substantial resources (e.g., energy, electricity, water) and generates considerable environmental waste (Pham et al., 2021). This situation underscores the urgent need to create “green” organizations and “green” behaviours that engage in more environmentally responsible activities. GHRM is considered a key solution to foster change in the industry, helping organizations become more environmentally responsible. GHRM plays an important role in driving transformation and achieving organizational sustainability goals in the hospitality industry. However, GHRM needs to be implemented through the behavioral transformation of employees within the organization, where the transition to green behaviors during work performance is crucial for attaining SDGs. Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of GHRM on environment-related citizenship behavior (Luu, 2019) and green performance in the workplace (Anwar et al., 2020). Nonetheless, Ahmad et al. (2021) identify gaps in research concerning the promotion of green and environmentally friendly behaviors within organizations. GHRM and Green Employee Behavior (EGB) are at the core of policies to help organizations achieve SDGs. But they cannot be successful without considering the role and influence of leadership within the organization (Ahmad et al., 2021). Leaders are responsible for their actions and decisions through the implementation of GHRM policies to influence and create EGB transformation in the organization. In a highly competitive marketplace, hospitality leaders recognize that focusing on environmental preservation and encouraging eco-friendly behaviors among employees are crucial indicators of a company’s commitment to environmental sustainability (Karatepe et al., 2022). Therefore, research on ethical leadership (ELD) is vital to achieving these sustainability goals (Ahmad et al., 2021). ELD is emphasized because it is a universally recognized style of organizational leadership (Ahmad et al., 2021), wherein leaders take responsibility for the impact of their actions and decisions on the natural environment and society as a whole (Islam et al., 2021).

Vietnam is one of the ten countries with the highest tourism growth rate over the past five years (Vo et al., 2022). Renowned as a captivating tourist destination, Vietnam welcomed 18.1 million international tourists in 2019 (i.e. before the Covid crisis), surpassing Indonesia’s 16.1 million. This achievement placed Vietnam fourth in Southeast Asia, following Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, which had 19.1 million arrivals. The tourism sector significantly contributes to the economy, accounting for over 9.2% of the GDP and generating 2.9 million jobs, including 927,000 direct jobs, in 2019 (VNAT, 2021, Tuan, 2020). According to the World Tourism Organization, Vietnam ranked sixth among the top ten countries with the fastest tourism growth globally (Tuan, 2020).

The Vietnamese hospitality market has generated revenue of USD 2.69 billion in the current year and is projected to achieve a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14% over the forecast period. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the recovery of global tourism has been slower than anticipated, particularly in Asia, due to ongoing economic and political fluctuations. Despite these challenges, Vietnam’s tourism sector has actively implemented numerous strategies, resulting in significant contributions to the country’s economic recovery. In 2022, Vietnam received approximately 3.5 million international visitors. The World Economic Forum’s 2022 report indicates that Vietnam’s Travel and Tourism Development Index in 2021 ranked 52nd, an

improvement of eight positions since 2019, placing Vietnam among the top three countries with the greatest improvement globally. With the easing of restrictions in various regions, local hotels and resorts initiated promotional campaigns, thereby revitalizing the national tourism industry. The resurgence of tourism activities has created new opportunities for foreign investment in the hospitality and tourism sectors. With significant contributions and development potential in the forthcoming period, promoting sustainable development within organizations in the hospitality industry is crucial for ensuring sustainable economic, cultural, and social development at both local and national levels. To achieve sustainable goals, leaders play pivotal roles in building and implementing strategic goals and policies implementation in hospitality organizations. This study aims to clarify the impact of Ethical Leadership (ELD), GHRM, and EGB on employee in-role green performance (INPE) in the hospitality sector in Vietnam.

The present paper is structured as follows. Section 1 presents the theoretical background and construct definitions. Section 2 elaborates on hypotheses. Section 3 introduces the methodology. Section 4 presents the research results, Section 5 considers implications for management and Section 6 points to some limitations and opportunities for further research.

1. Theoretical background and construct definitions

1.1. Social exchange theory

Homans (1958) introduced a paradigm of social behavior centered on exchange, defining social exchange as the exchange of activities, materials or intangibles, and rewards between at least two parties. Blau (1964) elaborated on this concept, describing social exchange as voluntary behaviors motivated by expected returns. This foundational principle gave rise to a more formal psychological framework for understanding social exchange, emphasizing that relationships may dissolve due to insufficient reinforcement or an imbalance between incentives and costs. Conversely, behaviors that yield positive outcomes are more likely to be repeated and rewarded (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The Social Exchange Theory (SET) has become a critical model for analyzing workplace behavior (Cook et al., 2013). In the context of SET, social exchange refers to the reciprocal exchange of value between an organization and its employees. Implementing SET fosters an environment where employees are more inclined to reciprocate by displaying behaviors that the organization values. For instance, when employees recognize their organization's commitment to environmental sustainability, they are likely to engage in green behavior voluntarily, reflecting their acceptance of the organization's goals. Researchers suggest that employees engage in such behaviors based on norms of reciprocity, feeling encouraged by organizational support (Boiral et al., 2015).

The literature on green practices within firms often draws on SET, which posits that employee-organization reciprocity is fundamental. According to SET, employees are more inclined to participate in green behavior if they perceive environmental protection as a significant organizational goal and feel supported by the company. This sense of reciprocity motivates employees to align their behaviors with the organization's environmental and economic objectives (Khan et al., 2021). Furthermore, SET suggests that the social exchange process creates a bond between employees and employers that transcends purely economic considerations (Blau, 2017). This broad concept of social exchange has been applied in early works by Choi et al. (2015) and Qi et al. (2019) to explain how inclusive leadership fosters extra-role behaviors such as creativity. An inclusive leader promotes a workplace environment of justice, trust, respect, and collaboration, thereby encouraging employees to engage in behaviors beyond their formal job requirements.

Inclusive leaders support their employees, including in matters not covered by legal contracts, which encourages employees to reciprocate by providing additional support and engaging in creative activities.

1.2. Construct definitions

1.2.1. Ethical leadership (ELD)

Ethics is a fundamental concept that is prevalent in all professions, including business and management. According to Ciulla (2014), ethics involves differentiating between what is right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to human actions, intentions, and character. Ethics are the foundation of all human relationships, and as such, they are crucial to the relationship between leaders and followers. In the wake of various corporate scandals in recent years, the importance of ethical leadership has gained considerable attention (Treviño et al., 2003). According to Brown (2007), ethical leadership (ELD) involves demonstrating morally appropriate behavior through personal actions and relationships and fostering such conduct in followers through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. Khan et al. (2022) define ELD as the exhibition of a behavior that aligns with normative standards through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, as well as the encouragement of such behavior among followers via two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making processes. ELD refers to the display of a behavior that aligns with accepted moral standards through one's personal actions and interactions with others. It also involves encouraging such behavior among followers by engaging in open communication, providing reinforcement, and making ethical decisions (Brown et al., 2005; Ahmad et al., 2021).

1.2.2. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM)

Interest in GHRM has grown over the past decade, as it is recognized as a potential green management strategy that can help a company reduce its environmental impact and enhance sustainability (Yong et al., 2020). GHRM encompasses the human resource aspects of environmental management (Renwick et al., 2012). In more detail, GHRM involves the policies, practices, and systems that encourage employees to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors for the benefit of individuals, society, the natural environment, and the business (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). GHRM refers to “HRM activities, which enhance positive environmental outcomes” (Kramar, 2014, p. 1075). It significantly contributes to enhancing environmentally sustainable behaviors by integrating various practices, including green training, green performance appraisal, and green reward systems. (Dumont et al., 2017; Abualigah et al., 2023). Recently, researchers have increasingly studied three key components of Green HRM, which are (1) developing green abilities through green training, (2) motivating employees for green activities via green performance management, and (3) creating green opportunities through green employee involvement (Masri & Jaaron, 2017).

1.2.3. Employee green behavior (EGB)

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among researchers in examining green workplace behavior (Dumont et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2021). This focus on EGB stems from the necessity for environmental protection and the prudent use of resources (Kura, 2016). Ones & Dilchert (2012) define EGB as “scalable actions and behaviors that employees engage in that are

linked with and contribute to or detract from environmental sustainability”. The aim of EGB is to minimize the negative effects of one’s actions that harm the environment (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). This eco-friendly behavior of employees adds value to organizations by enhancing their environmental performance (Kim et al., 2019). To extend the definition, EGB at work is defined as a broad set of environmentally responsible activities such as training to learn more about the environment, developing and applying ideas for reducing the company’s environmental impact, developing green processes and products, recycling and reusing, and questioning practices that hurt the environment (Graves et al., 2013)

1.2.4. Employee in-role green performance (INPE)

In-role Performance refers to the actions delineated in an employee’s job description, which are mandated, evaluated, and rewarded by the organization. These established rules and procedures ensure predictability in work behavior, facilitating the coordination and control of fundamental organizational tasks to achieve overall goals (Janssen & Yperen, 2004). Within the context of environmental sustainability, INPE encompasses activities related to environmental protection that are specified and required by the organization, as outlined in the employee’s job description, and are monitored, mandated, and rewarded by the firm (Pham et al., 2020).

2. Hypothesis development

2.1 Ethical leadership and Green Human Resource Management in the hospitality industry

Leaders play a vital role in developing effective strategies, acquiring and utilizing essential resources, and guiding employees toward achieving sustainable goals and performance (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021). To achieve sustainable performance and competitive advantage, leaders must exhibit and promote sustainability ideas that can stimulate employees’ behavioral intentions toward environmental conservation (Rubel et al., 2021). One of the essential tasks for achieving SDGs within organizations in the hospitality industry is the implementation of GHRM. This necessitates the establishment of a GHRM system designed to create policies and procedures that promote environmentally friendly behaviors among employees. By doing so, organizations can progressively work towards SDGs in the hospitality sector. However, there is a significant lack of research exploring the influence of leadership, particularly ethical leadership, on GHRM practices. However, a few studies indicate that HRM plays a crucial role in implementing organizational leaders’ directives. For example, Kim et al. (2019) noted that HR’s role is to communicate the strategic vision of corporate executives to employees and help them understand this vision. When leaders inspire their followers to achieve organizational goals, HRM supports this by providing necessary training to equip employees with the required skills (Zhu et al. 2005). Similarly, Haddock-Millar et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of having the “right leader” who can provide a clear direction for achieving these initiatives. They found that while organizations may express a commitment to environmental sustainability, the extent to which they actively implement green practices is questionable.

Hypothesis 1: ELD positively influences GHRM in the hospitality industry.

2.2. Ethical leadership and employee green behavior in the hospitality industry

Employee green behavior (EGB) aims to minimize the adverse environmental impacts of one's actions (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). Employees' eco-friendly behaviors enhance organizational value by improving environmental performance (Kim et al., 2019). Piccolo et al. (2010) explored the relationship between ELD and components of the job characteristics model, such as task significance and job autonomy. Their findings indicate that ELD positively influences followers and subordinates by incorporating their input in decision-making and using rewards to encourage ethical behavior. Ahmad & Umrani (2019) asserted that people expect ethical leaders to promote environmentally friendly policies and practices within their organizations. However, their research did not provide evidence to support this claim. Thus, the current study examines the influence of ELD on promoting green behavior in the workplace. This research draws on the responsibility and sustainability orientation of ELD (Eisenbeiss, 2012). Eisenbeiss (2012) argued that responsibility and sustainability orientation specifically involve the leadership component of setting goals and making strategic decisions, reflecting the leader's concern for long-term success, community welfare, and environmental protection. He noted that social scientific approaches to ELD have rarely considered responsibility and sustainability aspects. Ethics addresses the consequences of one's actions on the welfare of future generations (Eisenbeiss, 2012). ELD ensures the protection of future life on our planet and promotes eco-ethical living by conserving the natural environment through judicious and equitable use of resources. Based on these perspectives, it is argued that ELD positively influences EGB through its commitment to achieving collective good by engaging in eco-ethical and sustainable practices.

Hypothesis 2: ELD positively influences EGB in the hospitality industry.

2.3. Green HRM and employee in-role green performance in the hospitality industry

According to SET, there are established norms guiding behavior, and individuals adhering to these norms are expected to reciprocate (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory posits that when employees perceive benefits from their firm's policies, they feel an obligation to reciprocate, often leading to increased motivation and effort in their job performance (Jiang et al., 2012). In this context, if employees have positive perceptions of HRM policies, such as green training and development, green performance, and green rewards, they are likely to exhibit greater affective commitment, which in turn influences their workplace performances (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). This can enhance overall employee performance. Moreover, effective environmental training programs can enhance employees' green knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Jabbour et al., 2010), as well as help them identify and address environmental issues (Pham et al., 2020). Consequently, employees are likely to reciprocate by working harder and performing environment-related tasks more effectively, leading to improved INPE.

Hypothesis 3: GHRM positively influences INPE in the hospitality industry.

2.4. Employee green behavior and employee in-role performance in the hospitality industry

EGB is defined as employee actions during work performance that contribute to environmental protection (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). These behaviors can be explicitly outlined in job descriptions to guide specific actions during task performance (Pham et al., 2020). According to SET, environmentally friendly actions performed by employees should be encouraged by the organization through the process of evaluating in-role performance (INPE). Furthermore, when employees recognize the organization's sustainable development goals related to environmental

protection, they are more likely to voluntarily commit to implementing green behaviors, thereby enhancing individual and organizational performance in achieving sustainable development goals (Boiral et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 4: EGB positively influences INPE in the hospitality industry.

2.5. Green HRM and employee green behavior in the hospitality industry

The concept of GHRM enhances the crucial role of Human Resource Management (HRM) by integrating ecologically sustainable business practices (Yusliza et al., 2019). Traditionally, HRM encompasses a set of strategies and practices designed and implemented to ensure that employee performance and behaviors align with and contribute to the achievement of business objectives (Becker et al., 2005). The incorporation of the term “green” into HRM pertains to activities and behaviors aimed at preserving the natural environment, such as minimizing pollution and conserving water.

GHRM specifically involves the selection and development of environmentally conscious employees, the provision of environmental training, and the formal recognition and rewarding of eco-friendly behaviors through performance evaluations and incentives (Kim et al., 2019). For instance, Anwar et al. (2020) discovered that environmental training programs enhance employees’ awareness of environmental issues and help them develop skills essential for energy conservation and resource preservation, such as water conservation. GHRM practices offer incentives to employees who save energy and frequently align unique opportunities with environmentally responsible behavior and performance (Kim et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2021). To improve a company’s environmental footprint, it is therefore crucial to examine the impact of GHRM on employees’ green behaviors.

Hypothesis 5: GHRM positively influences INPE in the hospitality industry.

The above hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1 below.

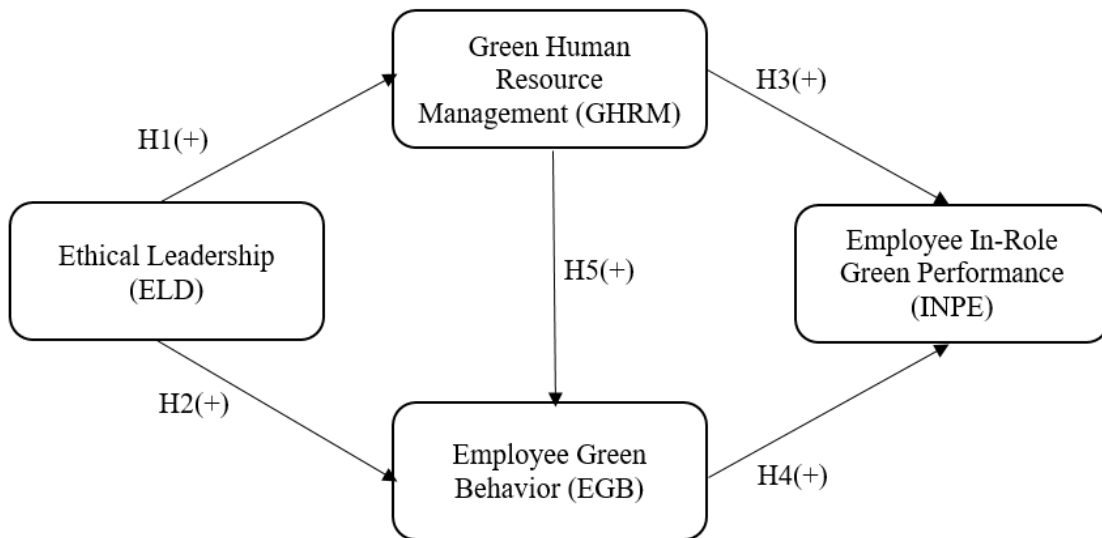


Figure 1: Proposed research framework

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurements

Ethical leadership (ELD) measurement scale (10 items) was adopted from Brown et al. (2005); Ahmad et al. (2021), and Islam et al. (2020). The measurement scale of GHRM (6 items, 1 was discarded – see below) was adapted from the studies of Dumont et al. (2017), Ahmad et al. (2021), and Gyensare et al. (2024), measuring major functions of GHRM such as green selective staffing, training, performance management, rewards, and employee involvement. Meanwhile, six items (1 was discarded – see below) were selected for the employee green behavior (EGB) measurement scale from the studies of Bissing-Olson et al. (2013) and Ahmad et al. (2021). Finally, the employee in-role green performance (INPE) measurement scale was composed of three items integrated into the green context based on the studies of Janssen & Yperen (2004) and Pham et al. (2020).

3.2. Research design and data collection

The data was collected from both managerial and non-managerial employees working in four and five-star hotels in Vietnam. Participants were selected from various departments, including the front office, administration (or HR), food and beverages, maintenance, and housekeeping. Respondents were required to be closely involved in environmental practices and familiar with the hotel's environmental policies to ensure that we would receive valid, coherent and reliable responses.

The research focused on the Vietnamese context for several reasons: (i) The government and local authorities impose stringent environmental protection requirements on three to five-star hotels; (ii) Four and five-star hotels cater to customers with high expectations for eco-friendly practices in hotel operations; (iii) These hotels have sufficient resources to implement sustainable business activities that meet environmental protection standards; (iv) Despite growing environmental concerns, Vietnam faces barriers in implementing effective environmental management systems, such as weak infrastructure, ineffective environmental legislation, and illogical policies (Pham et al., 2020). Employees in four and five-star hotels were chosen for the study because they are typically more engaged in environmental management systems, ensuring that respondents can provide accurate feedback on environmental policies. Previous research by Pham et al. (2020) supports the notion that three to five-star hotels carefully consider environmental policies.

The original questionnaire, which utilized a five-point Disagree-Agree Likert scale, was initially developed in English. It was translated into Vietnamese by two native bilingual researchers and then back-translated into English to ensure accuracy and consistency. The questionnaires and cover letters were made available in both printed and online versions for distribution to respondents. We approached four-and five-star hotels across Vietnam to obtain permission to conduct the surveys, in the end 54 hotels consented to participate.

The survey covered three main regions of Vietnam, including the North (Hanoi, Sapa, and Quang Ninh), Central-East (Da Nang, Hoi An, Hue, Nha Trang, Quang Binh, Phan Thiet), and the South (Ho Chi Minh City, Phu Quoc, and Vung Tau). The survey was conducted from January 2024 to May 2024, with 597 participants. After reviewing the survey responses, 24 forms were excluded from the analysis due to missing or duplicate information.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 573)

Characteristics	Number of respondents	N	%
Gender	Male	218	38.05%
	Female	355	61.95%
Age	18–24	232	40.49%
	25–35	176	30.72%
	36 -45	116	20.24%
	46 -55	37	6.46%
	Over 55	12	2.09%
Education	Vocational school &College	298	52.01%
	Bachelor	254	44.33%
	Postgraduate	21	3.66%
Working Experience	Under 1 year	25	4.36%
	1 year – 5 years	287	50.09%
	5 years – < 10 years	176	30.72%
	> 10 years	85	14.83%

4. Research results

4.1. Evaluation of the measurement model

4.1.1. Factor loading

Hair et al. (2017) asserted that the outer loading factor needs to be greater than or equal to 0.708 for an observed variable to be considered of quality. According to Hair et al. (2017), researchers consider an observed variable to be of quality if the parent latent variable explains at least 50% of the variation in that observed variable. Hair (2011) recommended that all standardized factor loadings be above 0.70. In our study, items GHR5 and EBG2 were eliminated with factor loading lower than 0.70. Table 2 shows the results of factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha and rho_A, and average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs. Cronbach's alpha and rho_A above 0.7 indicate internal consistency reliability. AVE values above 0.5 support convergent reliability. Table 2 shows the details.

Table 2. Results of factor loadings, internal consistency, and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Loading	CA	Rho-A	CR	AVE
ELD	ELD1	0.845	0.953	0.953	0.959	0.703
	ELD2	0.857				
	ELD3	0.840				
	ELD4	0.842				
	ELD5	0.856				
	ELD6	0.840				
	ELD7	0.795				

	ELD8	0.863				
	ELD9	0.827				
	ELD10	0.817				
GHRM	GHR1	0.934	0.944	0.946	0.957	0.817
	GHR2	0.876				
	GHR3	0.923				
	GHR4	0.917				
	GHR5	0.565				
	GHR6	0.868				
EGB	EBG1	0.912	0.951	0.952	0.963	0.838
	EBG2	0.633				
	EBG3	0.902				
	EBG4	0.941				
	EBG5	0.887				
	EBG6	0.934				
INPE	INPE1	0.933	0.922	0.925	0.951	0.865
	INPE2	0.941				
	INPE3	0.916				
Note: CA = Cronbach's Alpha; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted						

4.1.2. Reliability test

Upon analyzing the scale using Cronbach's Alpha index, the author observed that all variables utilized in the study exhibited Cronbach's Alpha indices ranging from 0.922 to 0.953, each exceeding 0.7 (Hair, 2011). Consequently, all research variables demonstrate reliability. Chin (1998) suggested that in exploratory research, C.R should be 0.6 or higher. For confirmatory studies, a threshold of 0.7 is considered appropriate for the CR index (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). Bagozzi & Yi (1988), also agree that 0.7 is the proper assessment threshold for most cases and Cronbach's Alpha should be ≥ 0.7 , and Bagozzi & Yi (1988) assert that C.R should be ≥ 0.7 . In this research, C.R ranged from 0.951 to 0.963, meeting the aforementioned requirements.

4.1.3. Evaluation of convergence

Convergence evaluation on SMART PLS relies on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index. According to Hock & Ringle (2010), a scale demonstrates convergent validity if its AVE reaches 0.5 or higher. The measurement results presented in Table 2 indicate that all AVE coefficients surpass 0.5, ensuring convergent validity for the scales in the model.

4.1.4. Discriminant evaluation

According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), discrimination is assured when the square root of the AVE for each latent variable exceeds all correlations between the latent variables. Garson (2016) used the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) index, suggesting that discrimination between two latent variables is guaranteed when the HTMT index is less than 1. Fornell and Larcker (1981) further recommend that discrimination is ensured when the square root of the AVE for each latent

variable is greater than all correlations between the latent variables, which are hidden from each other.

Table 3. HTMT results for discriminant validity assessment (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	EGB	ELD	GHRM	INPE
EGB	0.915			
ELD	0.846	0.838		
GHRM	0.728	0.749	0.904	
INPE	0.669	0.654	0.604	0.930

According to the results shown in Table 3, the first number in each column is the square root value of the AVE (0.915, 0.838, 0.904, 0.930), and the number in the bottom row represents the correlation between the latent variables (0.669, 0.654, 0.604, 0.930). The results indicate that the square root value of AVE for each latent variable is higher than the correlations between the latent variables.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) indicators

	EGB	ELD	GHRM	INPE
EGB				
ELD	0.837			
GHRM	0.765	0.789		
INPE	0.713	0.695	0.643	

According to Kline (2016), the HTMT index should be less than 0.85. The data processing results shown in Table 4 indicate that the HTMT index of correlation between variables in the model is less than 0.85, ensuring the distinction between variables in the model.

4.2. Hypothesis testing results

To test the proposed hypotheses, we ran an SEM analysis. The path coefficient results after Bootstrap analysis are shown in Table 5. According to the table, the p-values (compared to the significance level of 0.05) of all relationships are less than 0.05, which proves that the latent variables in the SEM model have a significant impact on the relationships among variables. Table 5 shows the details.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis (Relationship)	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1: ELD → EGB	0.685	0.683	0.041	16.559	0.000	Supported
H2: ELD → GHRM	0.749	0.749	0.024	31.661	0.000	Supported
H3: GHRM → INPE	0.249	0.251	0.053	4.699	0.000	Supported
H4: EGB → INPE	0.488	0.488	0.051	9.548	0.000	Supported
H5: GHRM → EGB	0.215	0.217	0.045	4.742	0.000	Supported

INPE variable was affected by EGB and GHRM, with standardized regression coefficients of 0.488 and 0.249, respectively. Meanwhile, the EGB variable was affected by ELD and GHRM, with standardized regression coefficients of 0.685 and 0.215, respectively. The GHRM variable was affected by ELD, with a standardized regression coefficient of 0.749.

The f-squared coefficient indicates whether the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is strong or weak. Cohen (1988) proposed the index to evaluate the importance of independent variables as follows:

- $f^2 < 0.02$: The impact level is extremely small or has no impact.
- $0.02 \leq f^2 < 0.15$: Small impact, such as the impact of GHRM on EGB ($f^2 = 0.077$) and GHRM on INPE ($f^2 = 0.056$)
- $0.15 \leq f^2 < 0.35$: average impact level, as in the impact between EGB and INPE ($f^2 = 0.214$).
- $f^2 \geq 0.35$: strong impact, such as the impact of ELD on EGB ($f^2 = 0.781$) and ELD on GHRM ($f^2 = 1.276$).

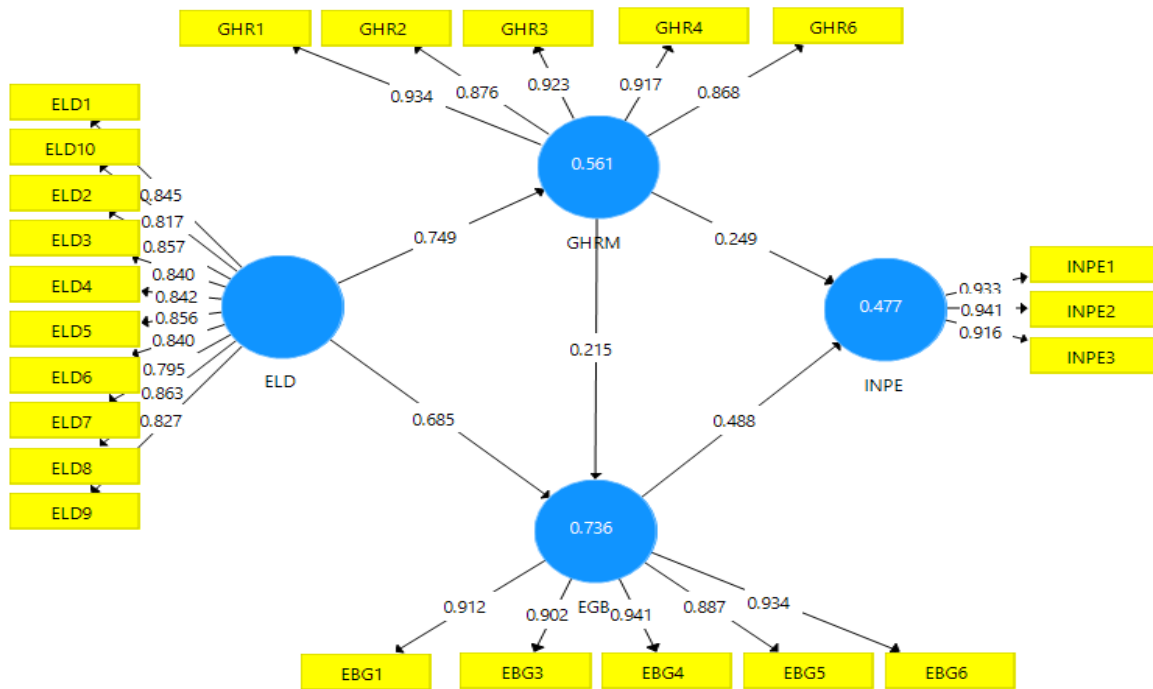


Figure 2. SEM results

5. Discussion and implications

Leadership plays an increasingly vital role in organizations, particularly in promoting sustainable development by integrating organizational growth with environmental protection (Tian et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021). Given this significant role, leaders must prioritize the development of “green” policies to enhance organizational value and promptly adjust employee behavior. The results of this research, conducted in Vietnam’s hospitality sector, contribute significantly to sustainable development with both theoretical and practical implications.

5.1. Theoretical implications

First, previous studies have demonstrated the direct and strong impact of ELD on EGB among all survey participants, including both direct and indirect workers in the hospitality industry. The results of this research validate the application of Social Exchange Theory in studying leadership behavior. This theory posits that ethical leadership fosters a reciprocal relationship, thereby enhancing the ethical behavior of employees within the organization. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Ahmad & Umrani (2019) and Ahmad et al. (2021).

Secondly, the study not only highlights the impact of ELD on EGB but also reveals the direct impact of ELD on GHRM in the hospitality industry. These results are consistent with Ahmad et al. (2021). Furthermore, the study confirms the contribution of GHRM to the SDGs of organizations in the hospitality industry, as examined by Abualigah et al. (2023). Achieving these SDGs requires the determination of organizational leaders and the implementation of GHRM as a strategic tool.

Thirdly, the direct impact of EGB on INPE demonstrates the validity of Social Exchange Theory, as green behaviors performed by employees yield positive results at work. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Tanveer et al. (2024), which underscores the importance of compensation and benefits in GHRM to guide employee actions. It also supports the findings of Pham et al. (2019), who highlighted the impact of green training on INPE. Previous studies have shown the general impact of GHRM on EGB but have not detailed its effect on INPE and overall job performance. Therefore, this study contributes by confirming the impact of GHRM on both INPE and EGB on INPE.

5.2. Practical implications

Firstly, the relatively low impact of GHRM on EGB indicates that the results of GHRM implementation, with the behavioral transformation of employees, have not met expectations. Hopefully, GHRM typically has a direct and strong impact on EGB, bringing value to the organization and rewards to employees within the hospitality sector. However, this study reveals a direct but not strong impact on EGB. Thus, GHRM policies in the organization's operations may not have been effectively communicated or have failed to create changes in awareness necessary to alter employee behavior in the hospitality sector. As EGB is central to the involvement and commitment of employees who in the end are the ones who ensure the success, or failure, of the management's policies, it is of prime importance that the management concentrates its efforts on a clear communication of the stakes for sustainability so that every employee at every level in the organization is well aware of these stakes and can make his or her behaviour change and evolve to ensure the success of the sustainability policies. Such attitude by the management should be an ongoing process of explanations and training starting with any new employee, as soon he or she joins the company, and maintained on a quasi-continuous basis, and evaluated at regular intervals. In this way, on the one hand the management can control the quality of its communication and training systems and move forward on the road of excellence, and on the other hand the employees know how they progress in their green behaviours so that the Social Exchange Theory works smoothly and effectively.

Secondly, related to the GHRM-EGB relation, the direct but not strong impact between GHRM and INPE, which suggests that GHRM has not significantly motivated or instigated core changes in job evaluation requirements associated with green criteria among workers in the hospitality industry, must encourage the management to find the right incentives to increase the in-

role performance of employees. One significant reason for that may be that a part of employee income does not come directly from payments associated with job positions but from other income sources paid by customers. Consequently, GHRM policies should devise a reward system which takes into consideration green behaviour and also publicize green behaviour among customers so that the latter can also contribute more willingly to the employee's reward system. Additionally, considering the fact that GHRM policies, in their practical implementation, take some time, for example because of organizational rigidities and psychological resistance, and a lack of understanding of what green policies mean for the performance and survival of the organization, before employees fully perceive their importance, must be another incentive for the management to set up a continuous communication and training system leading to changes in behavior and in-role performance.

Thirdly, the strong impact of ELD on GHRM and EGB reflects the importance of ELD in the hospitality industry when aiming for sustainable development. ELD involves implementing corrective actions in operations to build policies and orient environmentally friendly actions, thereby creating trust among customers and shareholders toward the goal of sustainable organizational development. Such action of leadership needs to be carried out within a framework of continuous improvement of a PDCA type to be effective.

6. Research limitations and further research direction

Despite the contributions and implications, the present study has several limitations that can inspire future research directions. A relatively small sample size and a convenient sampling method is one limitation. Moreover, this study does not clarify the differences between direct and indirect work in the hospitality sector. The characteristics of direct work differ significantly from those of indirect work; therefore, when implementing a general GHRM policy, the impact needs to be assessed separately for each employee type. It may also be that there are differences between genders. The hospitality industry is significantly over-represented by female workers. Moreover, female workers and male workers tend to belong to different job categories. Reception (both front and back office), catering services, cleaning services are female dominated, whereas maintenance, gardening, driving are male dominated. Due to psychological gender characteristics, green behaviours may be globally more easily adopted by one gender or another. Age must not be ignored either. Hospitality employees in Vietnam are mostly in an 18-45 band. Younger people may have different behaviours from more senior ones. It is also suggested that further studies be conducted to test the mediating/moderating role of EGB in the relationship between GHRM and in-role performance and identify additional mediating/moderating factors to enhance the relationship between GHRM and EGB.

Conclusion

Green management and behaviours involve fundamental ethical issues, and hospitality is an economic sector where the role of human beings remains central and cannot be overlooked. The essence of hospitality activities is the human relationships between actors, even if nowadays a number of tasks can be automated. Therefore, ethical leadership is essential for cultivating a sustainable culture inside firms, which has a substantial impact on green human resource management (GHRM) practices and encourages environmentally friendly behaviors among employees. Ethical leaders establish the framework for the values of an organization, directing human resource management policies that promote environmentally conscious conduct and

improve employees' performance in environmentally friendly tasks (Ahmad, 2015). Integrating ethical considerations into leadership practices enables firms to develop a staff that is environmentally aware, conscientious and dedicated to attaining sustainability objectives (Renwick et al., 2012). The alignment of leadership, GHRM (Global Human Resource Management), and green behavior is crucial for achieving long-term organizational success in today's economy where environmental challenges condition its survival and that of economic actors (Martin J., Baccarani C., Brunetti F., 2024). The combination of these aspects ultimately generates a sustainable company culture that fosters ongoing progress in green performance, guaranteeing that employees make significant contributions to environmental sustainability (Pham et al., 2019), enjoy well-being in their lives and guarantee the well-being of customers. Future research will provide a more thorough understanding of employee in-role green performance in emerging countries such as Vietnam.

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