



## Linking HRM and HRD to Employee Performance: The Mediating Effects of Motivation and Empowerment

Indah Wahyu Utami<sup>1\*</sup>, Ilham Sentosa<sup>2</sup>, Ihsan Kandung Adirangga<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Kuala Lumpur Business School Malaysia

**Corresponding Author:** Indah Wahyu Utami [indah\\_wahyu@udb.ac.id](mailto:indah_wahyu@udb.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

The hospitality sector is a labor-intensive industry and thus requires the performance of employees to achieve the quality of service and customer satisfaction. applied to test employee's motivation and empowerment as mediating variables using SmartPLS 4.0. Proportional sampling was done to gather data of 285 frontline employees in three- to five-star hotels. The results show that performance can be positively influenced by career development, and HRM factors have a strong impact on the performance via motivation and empowerment. Interestingly, role ambiguity also has a positive impact on performance when mediated by motivation indicating that controlled ambiguity can work to improve performance. These findings provide a combination of practical suggestions to hotel managers and add to the theoretical knowledge on HR practices in hospitality.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Employee performance is a person's ability to be responsible for carrying out their work (Munawar et al., 2022). Performance as a practical implication of human resource management (HRM) to improve employee productivity in business organizations (S. A. Qalati et al., 2022). Continuous employee engagement affects efficiency, organizational performance, and environmental performance (Ángeles López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). Organizational performance in running a company will not be optimal if it only relies on production machines (Hughes, 2019), but also depends on increasing the productivity of the performance of its employees (S. Qalati et al., 2019). Employee performance is decisive in determining success (Rahmi et al., 2020). This is because employee commitment is the driving force in organizational productivity (Massoudi, 2018). HR management management can increase the effectiveness of the company, to maintain the efficiency of the business organization (Alqudah et al., 2022). This includes optimizing employee performance in tourism.

Tourism is an industry that has a multidimensional impact on tourist destinations (Wachyuni & Kusumaningrum, 2020). Local community development encourages stakeholders to take responsibility in a growing industry (Nana & Otoo, 2019). Social impacts will also be positively impacted by tourism such as the expansion of hotels, road and air transportation, , electricity, internet, banking, and other infrastructure (Alamineh et al., 2023). The results suggest that tourism sector of the economy contributes to promoting sustainability-oriented innovation in all areas (Rodríguez-Espíndola et al., 2022). The Tourism Industry during the pandemic had experienced a decline due to limitations in mobility and access for tourists (Gössling et al., 2021).

A business organization that requires optimal employee performance is the tourism industry, especially hospitality (Ibua, n.d.). This industry has the potential to increase its role in supporting the national and world economy (Rodríguez-Espíndola et al., 2022). The tourism industry in Indonesia is at the core of business (Ernawati, 2019). The expansion of the tourism industry contributed to an increase in the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 5.5 percent, and 13 million people work in the industry (Tiwari & Choudhary, 2022). Tourism development expands employment opportunities and business opportunities and can encourage the activities of other economic sectors (Alamineh et al., 2023). The hospitality industry often faces problems especially limited human resources (HR) and lack of employee motivation in professional services (Khalid et al., 2021).

When the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a heavy blow to the hospitality industry, as it resulted in millions of employees being laid off (Tu et al., 2021). Sustainability of hospitality business organizations, corporate social responsibility practices and the business actors that play a role in them (Yang et al., 2024). This also affects employee commitment to stay at work (Filimonau et al., 2020). Hoteliers due to the Covid-19 pandemic are experiencing uncertainty in the management of this industry (Reidhead, 2020). There is a decrease in the enthusiasm and motivation of hotel employees, because the business provides services for consumers (Shah et al., 2021). Employee engagement in providing

the best service is an important strategy for the success of tourism and hospitality organizations (Zhu et al., 2023). The role of employees, especially frontliners, is at the forefront of customers (Al-graibah et al., n.d.). Frontliners interact with customers, influencing the level of satisfaction (Grobelna, 2020). So that management and development are needed to improve the performance of frontline employees (Bhardwaj\* et al., 2019). They are at the forefront of customer service (Agarwal, 2021). The support from hotel owners and employers during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a motivation for frontliners (Sobaih et al., 2021).

One of the tourist cities in Indonesia is Surakarta, which is located in Central Java Province. Surakarta provides hospitality accommodation, which ranges from non-star to five-star hotels. Post-pandemic, the hospitality industry in Surakarta City has slowly started to improve, especially the frontline hotel services (Alotaibi & Khan, 2022). Hotel frontliners provide direct services to customers, so it is expected to increase their work productivity in supporting the performance of the hospitality business (Tu et al., 2021), (Alotaibi & Khan, 2022). Strategic management functions that should be carried out by hoteliers in human resource management (HR) (Asriati et al., 2022). Employee engagement and dedication by implementing a total reward system (Le & Le, 2023). In addition to rewards, the importance of task commitment, career development, and training, can influence employee performance (Liu et al., 2019), (Wang & Shaheryar, 2020). These factors are expected to improve the front-line performance of the hospitality business (Filimonau et al., 2020). Ultimately reducing the insecurity and discomfort of hotel frontline employees (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021).

Frontline employees in hospitality businesses can influence customer empowerment and service motivation (Rivera, 2020). This field of research is about how to manage human resource management in the tourism sector, which is one of the drivers of the national economy (Ashton, 2018). The focus of this research study is the factors affecting the performance of frontline hotel service employees in 3- to 5-star hotels in Surakarta City, Indonesia. As hotel frontline employees are at the frontline and deal with customers, their performance must be improved (Elkhwesky, 2022).

Although the literature on employee performance is increasing in the hospitality industry, other past studies have focused on the HRM and HRD as independent variables and not as a system. Practically though, organizational performance is influenced by the interplay between the managerial policies (reward systems, task commitment) and the developmental ones (career development, role clarity). In addition to that, psychological processes like employee motivation and empowerment are not taken into consideration yet they are very important in translating HR practices into better performance outcomes. This gap suggests the necessity of a more elaborate model which presents structural and behavioral aspects of the employee performance especially in service-based industries such as hospitality.

As such, this paper presents a combined approach through integrating the HRM and HRD viewpoint in the presence of employee motivation and empowerment as mediating factors. This study will help to amass empirical evidence on the interaction between these factors in a post-pandemic environment by targeting frontline workers in three- to five-star hotels in Surakarta. The results will not only help in advancing the theoretical aspects of human resource management but will also provide practical information to the hotel managers to help them develop better strategies to improve the performance and quality of services provided by the employees.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***HRM Theory***

The global hospitality industry involves many workers in the business (Rivera, 2020). When there is insecurity at work, anxiety and depression of hotel employees, it greatly affects the performance of employee tasks (Azizi et al., 2021). Employee resilience has a moderating effect as it reduces the negative effect on anxiety-induced depression during the previous COVID-19 pandemic (Aguilar-Quintana et al., 2021). The management of human resource management (HRM) adopted by hotels during COVID-19 is full of uncertainties (Agarwal, 2021). The resilience of hospitality business organizations after the pandemic has been a challenge for all employees, especially hotel frontliners (Filimonau et al., 2020). The stressful work demands of the hospitality industry, efforts to maintain the morale and emotions of hotel employees are very important (Datta & Singh, 2018). Hotel frontliners can choose emotional work strategies under pressure and targets (Wu et al., 2023). Employee commitment in facing all changes in the situation is a positive thing in improving performance (Alqudah et al., 2022). The current conditions have created many challenges for business organizations, including how to maintain business continuity, low employee mobility, remote working, and unemployment (Alamineh et al., 2023).

Employee performance is necessary to anticipate changes in business organizations (Ren et al., 2018). One of them is through organizational culture which will increase employee commitment to business organizations (Alqudah et al., 2022). Relevant task significance results in performance optimization, supported by employee empowerment (Ángeles López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). Hotel employees are responsible for enhancing individual creativity and innovation in their continuous career development efforts (Ben Moussa & El Arbi, 2020). Employee performance management enables organizations to grow (Arokiasamy et al., 2023), due to the placement of employees in positions that match their interests, needs, and career goals (Hatari & Obuba, 2021). Employee performance as a corporate planning strategy is integrated with the management of human resource management in line with HRM theory, Armstrong (1987). HRM practices, the intermediation of employee knowledge about their duties, and the influence of employee motivation at work, encourage the need to apply HRM theory and innovation management (Le & Le, 2023). It is relevant to HRM theory (Armstrong, 1987) is still relevant to support the human resource management system as an integrated system. The system becomes a concept of

sustainability in the development of approaches to employees as part of HRM practices (Wedaningsih et al., 2021).

The HRM practices in the hospitality industry should be dynamic and responsive to changes in the environment. This is where strategic HRM practices like reward systems, task allocation and performance evaluation will be necessary to make sure that employees are productive and engaged. In service industries, especially, HRM is of utmost importance in influencing the behaviour of employees, the quality of services delivered and customer satisfaction. As such, organizations must constantly be innovative in their HRM strategies to ensure that employees competencies are in line with organizational objectives.

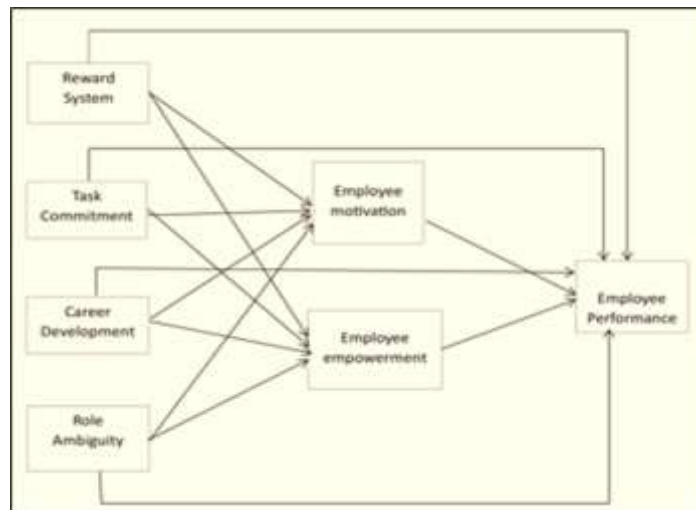
Moreover, successful HRM implementation does not only consider administrative efficiency but also the well-being of employees and their long-term growth. Fair payment, life-long training and promotion prospects are some of the practices that will help in employee satisfaction and retention. In this respect, HRM is a strategic instrument that balances organizational goals with those of the employees and eventually results in sustainable performance in the organization. This view supports the significance of combining HRM practices with people-oriented strategies to improve the total performance in the hospitality industry.

### ***Attitude and Behavior Theory***

HRM theory considers that human resources are an integrated system in achieving organizational goals. The theory is related to the theory of work attitude and behavior by Triandis (1980). Through attitude and behavior theory, the organization mediates between HRM and employee performance (Vu, 2022). HR development is carried out consistently with a long-term perspective in mind (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Thus, there is a relationship between high involvement HRM practices and innovation capability mediated by knowledge sharing (Le & Le, 2023). HRM theory and work attitude and behavior theory are related to improving employee performance. Both theories are also supported by Alderfer's (1973) motivation theory which discusses three needs in more depth: existential needs, related needs, and growth needs. Alderfer's theory becomes a theory of motivation, supporting the achievement of employee motivation, reward systems, career development, and employee empowerment variables (Rodríguez-Espíndola et al., 2022). ERG theory will have a greater impact on work motivation, as it is still relevant especially for lower-level employees (Alqudah et al., 2022). All three theories are relevant to support the achievement of employee performance.

In the attitude and behavior theory, individual perceptions, beliefs, and emotional reactions to the work environment will be a significant factor in the performance of employees. Employees that feel that they are supported in the organization, treated fairly and that they can understand their jobs are likely to develop positive attitudes, which consequently improve their motivation and job performances. On the other hand, unfavorable attitudes like lack of role clarity or appreciation can result in reduced involvement and performance. Thus, the comprehension of the staff attitudes is one of the crucial steps in the formulation of the successful HR strategies. Moreover, the combination of attitude and behavior theory with motivation theories like ERG provide understanding that it is important to satisfy the hierarchical needs of employees at work. The more employees existence, relatedness, and growth needs are satisfied, the more these employees are prone to exhibit greater levels of commitment, creativity, and performance. This means that, besides structural HRM practices, organizations need to consider psychological and behavioral issues in order to realize the best performance results. Therefore, the interplay of HRM practices, employee attitude and motivation is a holistic structure on how to enhance employee performance in hospitality industry.

### *Hypotheses*



**Figure 1. Research Framework**

- H1 : Rewards System to Employee Performance
- H2 : Task Commitment to Employee Performance
- H3 : Career Development to Employee Performance
- H4 : Role Ambiguity to Employee Performance
- H5 : Employee motivation between Rewards System to Employee Performance
- H6 : Employee motivation between Task Commitment to Employee Performance
- H7 : Employee motivation between Career Development to Employee Performance
- H8 : Employee motivation between Role Ambiguity to Employee Performance

- H9 : Employee empowerment between Rewards System to Employee Performance
- H10 : Employee empowerment between Task Commitment to Employee Performance
- H11 : Employee empowerment between Career Development to Employee Performance
- H12 : Employee empowerment between Role Ambiguity to Employee Performance

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Nature / Paradigm***

Quantitative research involves documents numerical data and examines it through statistics to gauge and acquire research results through questionnaires. The case study in this research is in three to five star hotels of Surakarta city Indonesia to test the proposed concept. In 2024, Hotel information was collected at the Surakarta Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and the number of three to five star hotels in the Surakarta city was 33, which was used to analyze the hotel information. Primary data collection was done using structured questionnaires that contained questionnaires on hotel frontline staff. SEM (structural equation modeling) was used to test several causalities in the model. After that, the results were explained using SEM application and implementation of Smart PLS version 4.0.B. Population and Sample.

### ***Population and Sample***

All frontline workers of 3 to 5 star hotels in the city of Surakarta were the study population. The number of 1,163 employees was compiled out of the total frontline employees of 3, 4 and 5 star hotels in Surakarta City. One hundred and thirty three- to 5-star hotels, comprising of 19 three-star hotels, 11 four-star hotels and 3 five-star hotels. The research population was the frontline of three-, four- and five-star hotels in the city of Surakarta, Central Java. The population size was 1124 people. The sample computation is based on the provisions of Krijie Morgan (1970) where the provisions are based on the population of 1,100 respondents (285 samples) and 1,200 (291 samples). The sample of this study 1,124 falls within the 1,100-1200 meaning that the sample of respondents is 286, which is between 285 and 291. The total population of front employees of three-star hotels is 542 and the sample is 137, four stars has a total population of 425 and a sample of 108 hotels and five stars has total population of 157 and a sample of 41. Thus there were 285 individuals in the sample.C. Data Collection Method.

### ***Data Collection Technique***

Primary sources of information are sources of information to the researchers directly whereas secondary data sources are sources of information to the researchers indirectly, through other people or data. Moreover, interviews, literature reviews, questionnaires and observations may be applied as the methods of data collection (Sugiyono, 2012: 193-194).D. Data Analysis Method.

### ***Data Analysis Technique***

The SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis tool was used to analyze the results of the questionnaire filled in by sample respondents via the SMART PLS version 4.0 analysis tool. This SEM analysis technique was used to test the proposed research hypotheses. The data were analyzed through the use of SEM structural equation model after which triangulation was conducted which involved the data of focus group discussions, interviews and field observations and additional data validation, its enrichment and depth. The step of data analysis, including pretest, trial and final analysis using a large population sample. The data of the SMART PLS version 4.0 analysis was analyzed with the help of Armstrong HRM Theory and the Work Attitude and Behavior Theory. The test results of SMART PLS version 4.0 provide Cronbach's alpha values that vary from 0 to 1. A coefficient of over 0.60 or even higher would indicate that credible results derived out of opinions and thoughts gathered through the questionnaires are acceptable.

### **RESEARCH RESULT**

SMART PLS Version 4.0 analysis can show the positive significance of the variables of HRM and HRM mediated by employee motivation and empowerment. Data analysis to determine path coefficients, t-test value statistics, and p-values will test the significance of individual paths, which are hypothesized relationships. Statistics for testing hypotheses are calculated using the bootstrapping method in SMART PLS version 4.0 analysis. Hypotheses 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 were empirically found to be significant. This means that H3, H 5, H 8, H 9, and H 10. have a p value  $<0.05$ , resulting in a positive and significant effect. Hypothesis H3 with the variable part of the HRD variable, namely career development, contributes positively and significantly by 0.0012 (p-value  $<0.05$ ) to employee performance. Hypothesis H5, when the reward system as part of the HRM variable is mediated by the employee motivation variable, gives positive and significant results of 0.0165 (p-value  $<0.05$ ) on employee performance. While the results of the H8 hypothesis with Role Ambiguity as part of the HRD variable which is mediated by the employee motivation variable, obtained positive and significant results of 0.0000 (p-value  $<0.05$ ) on employee performance. Hypothesis H9 with the reward system as part of HRM variables mediated by employee empowerment variables has positive and significant results of 0.0061 (p-value  $<0.05$ ) on employee performance. The last hypothesis H10 with task commitment as part of HRM variables mediated by employee empowerment variables has a positive and significant contribution of 0.0002 (p-value  $<0.05$ ) to employee performance.

## DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that employee performance in the hospitality industry is not solely determined by direct HRM practices but is strongly influenced by psychological mechanisms such as motivation and empowerment (Ángeles López-Cabarcos et al., 2022; Le & Le, 2023). Career development emerges as the most influential direct factor, emphasizing the need for structured employee growth programs in service-oriented organizations (Hatari & Obuba, 2021; Ben Moussa & El Arbi, 2020).

The significant mediating roles of motivation and empowerment indicate that HR practices become more effective when they enhance employees' internal engagement and sense of ownership (Wang & Shaheryar, 2020; Liu et al., 2019). The positive effect of role ambiguity through motivation suggests that flexible job roles, when properly managed, can stimulate adaptability and performance rather than hinder it (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2023).

These results support HRM and behavioral theories, which emphasize that organizational performance depends on the alignment between managerial strategies and employee psychological responses (Alqudah et al., 2022; Vu, 2022). Therefore, hospitality organizations should adopt integrated HRM-HRD approaches to improve both employee performance and service quality in the post-pandemic context (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Espíndola et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper constructs and experiments an integrative model of the performance measurement of frontline employees in hospitality sector through synthesis of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD). A Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach (with SMART PLS 4.0) revealed that some of the HRM and HRD variables could greatly affect the employee performance, particularly when mediated by employee motivation and empowerment.

The hypothesis test results show that:

1. HRD includes career development (H3), which positively and significantly directly affects employee performance.
2. Reward system (H5 and H9) mediated by motivation and empowerment has a positive impact on performance.
3. Task commitment (H10) mediated by empowerment also has a positive and significant effect.
4. Role ambiguity (H8) mediated by motivation provides a positive impact on performance, which means that role ambiguity may be a problem that creates a work enthusiasm when managed correctly.

However, some other variables such as reward system and task commitment directly, as well as some other mediation paths do not show a significant effect on performance. Comprehensively, this research does affirm that HR management strategies that are combined with HR development, and effective mediation, in the form of motivation and empowerment, has a significant impact on better performances of the employees in the hospitality industry, and in this particular case, the star hotels in Surakarta. This becomes

more important in the post-COVID-19 setting, to help revive and enhance the competitiveness of the local hospitality industry.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This study has significant theoretical implications on the discipline of Human Resource Management (HRM), especially the aspects of employee performance in the hospitality industry. The research strengthens and builds on previous HRM theories of motivation, leadership, training, and organizational support by analyzing the performance drivers of the star-rated hotels in Surakarta. It emphasizes that the effectiveness of HR practices can be influenced by contextual factors, including the local work culture, management practices, and industry demands. Moreover, the research confirms the contingency view of HRM, which implies that it is advisable to comprehend the performance of employees by taking a more personalized approach based on aligning HR strategies with the particular environment of operations. These lessons help in developing the theoretical discourse of HRM in terms of situational relevance in designing and applying performance-enhancing practices.

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