

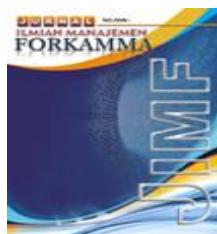
Understanding the Role of Human Resource Attributions in Shaping Employee Creativity: A Qualitative Study of Hotel Employees in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Abstract. This study aims to explore how hotel employees in Yogyakarta interpret human resource management (HRM) practices and how these perceptions influence their creativity at work. Using the concept of HR attributions, it examines the personal and organizational meanings employees assign to HR efforts and their impact on creative behavior. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 hotel employees. Thematic analysis revealed that both individual factors, such as motivation and personal values, and organizational factors, including leadership support and team culture, shape employees' creativity. Findings indicate that employees' perceptions of the sincerity and relevance of HR practices significantly affect their willingness to innovate beyond formal roles. This research offers valuable insights for future studies on the emotional and contextual aspects of HRM and creativity, particularly in service industries like hospitality.



A. INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) has increasingly been recognized as a critical driver of employee creativity, which is essential for organizational innovation and long-term success (Lee et al., 2019). In particular, the hospitality industry demands high levels of creativity from employees to enhance customer experience and differentiate service offerings in a competitive market. Creativity in the workplace refers to the ability to generate novel and useful ideas that improve processes, services, or products (Amabile, 2018). Thus, understanding how HRM can effectively foster such creativity is crucial for hotels aiming to maintain and strengthen their competitive advantage (Muisyo et al., 2022).

Despite the growing body of research emphasizing the link between HRM and creativity, empirical findings remain inconclusive. While some studies highlight positive effects of HRM practices on employee creative outcomes (Jiang et al., 2024), others report inconsistent or even negative relationships (Nehles et al., 2017). These conflicting results suggest that the mere implementation of HRM policies is not sufficient; instead, employees' subjective perceptions of these HRM initiatives might shape their creative behavior more profoundly.

The concept of human resource (HR) attributions has emerged to explain this phenomenon by focusing on how employees interpret the intentions and purposes behind HRM practices (Hu & Oh, 2022). HR attributions encompass employees' beliefs about why certain HR activities are introduced whether for genuine development, control, or compliance (Yang & Arthur, 2021). These attributions influence employee motivation, trust, and engagement, all of which are important antecedents of creativity (Hewett, 2021).

While the importance of HR attributions has been acknowledged in various sectors, there is a paucity of research investigating this concept within the hospitality industry, especially in Indonesia (Burgess et al., 2020). The unique cultural, economic, and organizational contexts of Yogyakarta's hotel sector provide a fertile ground for exploring how hotel employees make sense of HRM practices and how these meanings affect their creative actions (Boediherwanto et al., 2024). Such qualitative insights are necessary to deepen our understanding beyond quantitative correlations.

This study aims to address this gap by conducting an in-depth qualitative investigation into the lived experiences of hotel employees in Yogyakarta. Using semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis, the research explores how employees perceive HRM practices and how these perceptions interact with individual motivation, organizational culture, and leadership support to foster creativity (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach allows for capturing the complex, nuanced ways in which HR attributions operate in a real-world service environment (Peel, 2020).

Initial findings from this study highlight the dynamic interplay between individual factors, such as employees' intrinsic motivation and personal values, and organizational factors, including leadership style and team climate (VU et al., 2021). Employees who perceive HRM practices as sincere efforts to support their development and well-being are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving and proactive behaviors (Villajos et al., 2019). Conversely, when HRM is seen as merely bureaucratic or control-oriented, creativity tends to be stifled (Medori, 2020).

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of contextual and emotional factors in shaping HR attributions and creative responses (Tran Huy, 2025). Factors such as trust in management, perceived organizational support, and opportunities for autonomy play crucial roles in how employees interpret and respond to HRM initiatives. These insights point to the need for HR managers to consider the deeper meanings and emotional resonances of their practices, rather than focusing solely on procedural compliance (Hewett et al., 2018).

This study also examines the conditions under which employees' perceptions of HRM practices might encourage or hinder their creativity. Specifically, it investigates HRM practices as an extrinsic motivator that has produced mixed findings regarding its relationship with creativity through the lens of HR attributions (Tran Huy, 2025). For instance, employees' attributions related to leadership support, recognition, and opportunities for autonomy can influence their intrinsic motivation and willingness to engage in creative behaviors (Amabile, 2018). In this study, HRM

practices are therefore understood in terms of the meanings employees assign to these organizational efforts rather than the practices themselves (Aukhoon et al., 2024).

This research aims to explore the intersection between HR attributions and employee creativity among hotel workers in Yogyakarta. The central research question guiding this study is: what are the meanings and experiences of hotel employees' creativity and their attributions of HRM practices? By addressing this question, the study seeks to provide deeper insight into how employees interpret HR initiatives and how these interpretations relate to their creative expressions within the hospitality context (Ajmal et al., 2025).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

HRM practices as extrinsic motivators shaping employees' creativity

Human resource management (HRM) practices serve as extrinsic motivators that can significantly shape employees' creative behaviors in organizations (Das & Shree, 2024b). HR attributions refer to employees' interpretations of the underlying intentions behind HRM practices implemented in their workplace (Hu & Oh, 2022). These attributions influence how employees perceive organizational support, fairness, and trust, which in turn affect their motivation to engage in creativity. In the context of hotel employees, where service innovation and adaptability are crucial, understanding HR attributions helps clarify why similar HR practices may result in varying levels of creative output among individuals (Das & Shree, 2024).

HRM systems are often categorized into two orientations: commitment HRM and traditional HRM (Lepak & Snell, 2024). Commitment HRM practices focus on fostering employee involvement, autonomy, and development to encourage innovation and creativity. Conversely, traditional HRM practices tend to emphasize control, efficiency, and compliance, which may suppress employees' intrinsic motivation and creative potential (Hewett, 2021). Prior research suggests that the effectiveness of HRM in promoting creativity depends largely on the extent to which employees perceive these practices as supportive rather than controlling (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). This distinction is critical in hospitality settings, where employees' discretionary efforts and creative problem-solving enhance service quality and customer satisfaction.

Despite the growing interest in the link between HRM and creativity, there remains a gap in understanding how HR attributions mediate this relationship, especially in service industries such as hotels (Santiago-Torner, 2023). Most empirical studies focus predominantly on the positive effects of commitment HRM practices while overlooking how traditional HRM practices may deter creativity (Sanders & Yang, 2016). By exploring both types of HRM practices and their interpretations by hotel employees in Yogyakarta, this study aims to uncover the conditions under which HRM serves as either a facilitator or barrier to creativity. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how organizational culture, leadership, and individual perceptions interact to shape creative behaviors in a culturally unique hospitality environment (Abdul Ghani Azmi & Hashim, 2022).

Human Resources Management systems and its relationship with creativity

Human resource management (HRM) practices are widely recognized as important factors that influence employee creativity, which is vital for organizational innovation and competitiveness. Previous research indicates that HRM systems designed to foster employee involvement, skill development, and autonomy tend to enhance intrinsic motivation and encourage creative behaviors (Amabile, 2018). In the hospitality industry, where service quality and innovation are critical, creative employees contribute significantly to improving customer satisfaction and operational efficiency (Karatepe et al., 2020).

However, empirical findings on the relationship between HRM practices and creativity remain mixed. Some studies report positive effects of high-commitment HRM on creativity, while others suggest that rigid or controlling HRM systems may suppress creative expression (Kehoe & Collins, 2017). This inconsistency points to the importance of understanding not just the formal HRM practices themselves but also how employees perceive and interpret these practices. Such perceptions, referred to as human resource (HR) attributions, shape employees' motivation, trust, and engagement, which ultimately influence their creative behaviors (Hewett, 2021).

HR attributions are employees' beliefs about the underlying intentions behind HRM initiatives, such as whether these practices aim to genuinely support their growth or primarily serve organizational control (Basnyat & Lao, 2020). These attributions can mediate the effect of HRM on creativity by affecting employees' psychological states and willingness to go beyond prescribed roles (Tran Huy, 2025). In sectors like hospitality, where interpersonal interactions and discretion are frequent, understanding HR attributions becomes even more crucial to fostering an environment conducive to creativity and innovation (Wang et al., 2020).

Despite the theoretical importance of HR attributions, limited research has explored this concept in the context of hotel employees, particularly within the Indonesian setting. Yogyakarta's hospitality sector presents a unique cultural and organizational landscape that may influence how employees make sense of HRM practices (Respati et al., 2024). This study seeks to fill this gap by qualitatively investigating hotel employees' lived experiences and interpretations of HRM practices and their influence on creative behavior. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for HR practitioners aiming to design more effective and meaningful HRM strategies in service-oriented organizations (Bhoir & Sinha, 2024).

The role of Human Resources attribution

The attribution theory offers a valuable perspective for understanding how employees make sense of human resource management (HRM) practices in their organizations. It explains how individuals interpret the reasons behind organizational actions and how these interpretations influence their attitudes and behaviors at work (Hewett, 2021). Within this framework, the concept of human resource attributions has received increasing attention. These attributions reflect employees' beliefs about the intentions behind HRM initiatives, such as whether they are meant to support employee well-being or simply enforce control. Research has shown that these interpretations can significantly affect outcomes like job satisfaction, emotional commitment, task performance, and even creative behavior (Mohammed et al., 2023).

Alfes et al., (2021) identified two key types of HR attributions. Commitment focused attributions occur when employees perceive that HR practices are implemented to promote service quality and support employee development. These are often associated with positive attitudes, stronger engagement, and a higher sense of trust in management. In contrast, control focused attributions arise when employees believe HRM efforts are intended mainly to cut costs or monitor behavior. Such perceptions tend to produce negative emotional responses and limit employee contribution (Nguyen et al., 2024). While studies have explored how these attributions influence various work outcomes, the specific connection between HR attributions and creativity, especially in service sectors like hospitality, remains underexamined (Tran Huy, 2025).

Most existing research on HR attributions has relied on quantitative approaches, with limited exploration of employees' lived experiences and contextual interpretations. For example, a recent study by Mohammed et al., (2023) found no direct relationship between HR attributions and creativity, suggesting that the influence may depend heavily on context. This indicates the need for a qualitative approach that can capture the nuances in how employees interpret HR practices and how those interpretations influence their willingness to engage creatively at work (Smith, 2021). In response, this study aims to explore how hotel employees in Yogyakarta understand HRM initiatives and how their personal attributions relate to their creativity on the job (Bhoir & Sinha, 2024). Such insight can help organizations design HR strategies that are not only structurally sound but also meaningfully interpreted by their people.

C. METHODS

Given the limited research exploring the intersection between human resource attributions and employee creativity, this study employed a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights into how hotel employees in Yogyakarta interpret HRM practices and how these interpretations relate to their creative behavior. This qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of complex and subjective employee experiences without being limited by predefined variables (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research relied on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 hotel employees working in various hotel types and departments in Yogyakarta. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore four key themes: employees' perceptions of HRM practices, their motivations, organizational support, and experiences of creativity at work. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Data analysis was conducted inductively to allow patterns and themes to emerge from the participants' narratives. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and participants gave informed consent. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly upheld throughout the research process.

Sample and data collection

This study involved 20 hotel employees from various types of hospitality establishments across the city of Yogyakarta. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy that enabled the selection of individuals most likely to provide rich and relevant insights into how human resource attributions influence workplace creativity (Amabile, T. M., Pratt, 2016). The sample included employees from diverse roles and departments, such as front office, housekeeping, food and beverage, and middle management. This diversity allowed for a deeper understanding of how HRM practices are interpreted across different job functions and how those interpretations may shape creative behavior (Montazerifar & Sargolzaei, 2020). The hotels represented in the sample ranged from budget to mid-scale establishments, providing a varied organizational context for the study.

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in Indonesian, the participants' native language. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face at the participants' respective workplaces to allow for a natural and comfortable setting. An interview protocol was used to guide the conversation and ensure consistency across participants, while still allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes. The protocol included 15 open-ended questions focusing on employees' experiences with HRM practices and their personal expressions of creativity at work (Das & Shree, 2024). All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy.

Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was employed in this study to explore how hotel employees in Yogyakarta interpret human resource management (HRM) practices and how these interpretations relate to their creative behaviors at work. Following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2019), the analysis involved a step-by-step process of familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and refining themes, and producing a coherent narrative. Given the limited prior research on the intersection between HR attributions and creativity in the hospitality sector, an inductive approach was used to allow themes to emerge organically from participants' lived experiences. This method provided the flexibility needed to capture the complex and subjective meanings participants assigned to HRM practices, resulting in rich, grounded insights into the ways employees perceive and respond to organizational efforts that may influence their creative engagement.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified four major themes based on the interview responses of 20 hotel employees in Yogyakarta. These themes reflect how employees interpret HRM practices and how such interpretations relate to their creativity at work. The themes were constructed around four guiding question areas: (1) perceptions of HRM practices, (2) attributions behind those practices, (3) the expression of creativity in daily tasks, and (4) the organizational environment that supports or hinders creativity. The analysis revealed that HR attributions are deeply connected to how employees evaluate fairness, motivation, and the sincerity of managerial actions in the hotel workplace (Aldabbas et al., 2025). Although each participant had a unique experience, patterns emerged that helped us understand the contextual and emotional aspects that shape creative behavior.

Theme 1: “We understand the limitations, that’s why we try harder.”

Many hotel employees explained that their relatively low salaries and limited benefits were largely due to external economic challenges facing the hospitality sector in Yogyakarta. They viewed these constraints as consequences of market volatility, competition, and the ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than poor management decisions. This perspective helped employees frame their dissatisfaction within a broader context, reducing direct blame on hotel leadership. As expressed by Participant 1,

“Our salary might not be high, but we know the hotel is working hard to recover after these tough times.”

This acknowledgment fostered a sense of understanding and tempered frustration, allowing employees to remain committed despite financial difficulties.

Beyond recognizing these external factors, many participants reported that this awareness motivated them to contribute creatively to the hotel’s success. Rather than feeling discouraged by low remuneration, they described a willingness to support the business through innovative ideas and extra effort.

For instance, Participant 9 remarked,

“Because we understand the hotel’s situation, we want to help by coming up with new ideas to attract more guests.”

This shared sense of challenge and cooperation appeared to strengthen employees’ emotional connection to their workplace and encouraged creative problem-solving, illustrating how external attributions can positively influence employee engagement and creativity even in difficult circumstances.

Theme 2: “Support from supervisors makes us feel confident to be creative”

A recurring theme in the interviews was the importance of supportive leadership in enabling creativity at work. Many hotel employees shared that when supervisors were approachable, attentive, and open to new ideas, they felt more empowered to suggest improvements or take initiative beyond their assigned roles. This theme reflects a commitment focused HR attribution, where employees interpret HR related behaviors such as managerial openness or encouragement as a sign of trust and investment in their development (Rimi & Yusoff, 2013). Participants consistently emphasized how emotional safety and recognition from their superiors created a workplace climate that stimulated creativity.

Participant 2 expressed this sentiment clearly:

“When our manager listens and gives feedback, we feel more confident to try new things. It’s like we’re trusted to think and not just follow orders.”

Participant 6 explained :

“Sometimes I propose small changes, like how we organize the breakfast area. When my supervisor says, ‘That’s a good idea,’ it motivates me to keep thinking of better ways.”

Meanwhile, Participant 14 emphasized the long term effect of such support:

“If our ideas are taken seriously, it makes us proud, and it makes us want to do more, not just what’s written in our job description.”

These narratives highlight how employees' interpretations of managerial behavior viewed as part of HRM can enhance psychological safety and directly influence their willingness to engage in creative work.

Although the main purpose of this study was to uncover the confluence between HR attributions and employee creativity, the qualitative findings also highlighted how individual elements such as employees' sense of belonging and organizational factors like supportive leadership play an essential role in shaping creativity in the workplace. In the context of hotel employees in Yogyakarta, managerial practices emerged as a significant organizational component that fosters creative behavior. Theme 2, in particular, illustrates how employees' interpretations of supervisor support contribute to their confidence, motivation, and willingness to generate innovative ideas in their daily roles.

Theme 3: "We need space to think, not just instructions"

Another prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of autonomy and flexibility in encouraging creativity among hotel employees. Several participants shared that rigid work procedures and overly strict supervision often limited their ability to propose new ideas or experiment with alternative approaches. On the other hand, when employees felt they had room to make decisions or adjust certain tasks based on real-time guest needs, they were more likely to engage creatively with their work. This reflects an internal HR attribution in which employees see HR-related practices, such as task delegation and freedom in execution, as intentional efforts by management to promote growth and innovation.

Participant 5 noted,

"Sometimes we know how to solve a guest's problem faster, but if we always have to wait for approval, it slows things down. When we're trusted to act, we feel smarter and more useful."

Participant 11 echoed this by saying,

"I enjoy my job more when I can use my own way to make guests comfortable. It makes me feel like I contribute something unique."

Meanwhile, Participant 18 added,

"Our manager used to be very strict, but now gives us more room. Since then, I've come up with ideas to make room arrangements more efficient, and they listened."

These responses illustrate how autonomy, when perceived as part of managerial intent, reinforces employees' sense of competence and triggers proactive, creative behaviors.

The findings from this theme suggest that when employees perceive autonomy as an intentional part of HR practices rather than accidental or situational, they are more likely to attribute positive meaning to their roles and feel empowered to act creatively. This interpretation highlights the significance of perceived managerial trust and strategic HR intent in shaping workplace behavior (Tran Huy, 2025). In the hospitality context, where employees regularly interact with guests and make real time service decisions, the ability to exercise discretion becomes a key factor in fostering innovation. Thus, the perception that autonomy is granted deliberately by management, not merely tolerated, can serve as a powerful intrinsic driver of creativity among hotel employees (Nili & Tasavori, 2022).

Theme 4: "We feel more creative when our ideas are heard"

Another strong theme that surfaced from the interviews was the importance of being heard and acknowledged. Many hotel employees described how their motivation to think creatively and offer suggestions grew when their ideas were not only welcomed but also considered or implemented by their supervisors. This perception of being valued went beyond material rewards. It was rooted in how seriously their contributions were treated by the organization. Employees who received positive responses to their suggestions tended to develop stronger confidence and became more engaged in solving problems or proposing service improvements.

Participant 4 stated,

"Even if my idea is simple, when the manager says, 'That's a good point,' I feel appreciated and want to think of more things to improve."

Participant 6 recalled,

"I once suggested rearranging the towel display in the room, and they actually tried it. Since then, I've been thinking more creatively."

Participant 9 shared,

"Our opinions are not always used, but at least they ask. That means a lot."

Participant 12 added,

"When someone takes your suggestion seriously, it's like they see your potential."

Meanwhile, Participant 19 reflected,

"I used to keep my ideas to myself, but after one of mine was applied, I became more confident to speak up."

These experiences suggest that creativity in the workplace is closely linked to perceived recognition. When employees feel that their suggestions are heard and respected, they are more likely to take ownership of their roles and go beyond routine expectations. This can be interpreted as a commitment focused HR attribution, where employees believe that management is genuinely interested in supporting their growth and participation.

Such attributions create a positive feedback loop. The more employees feel acknowledged, the more willing they are to invest cognitive and emotional effort into their work. This reinforces the idea that creativity is not just about individual capability, but also about the environment and interactions that support it. In the hospitality sector where service innovation is essential, simple acts of listening and recognizing employees' ideas can lead to meaningful improvements in both performance and workplace morale (Zhou & Shalley, 2024).

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight the important role that employees' attributions about human resource management practices play in shaping their creativity in the hotel industry of Yogyakarta. Consistent with prior research on HRM and creativity (Lee et al., 2019), employees who understood the financial constraints faced by their hotels tended to interpret low remuneration as an external issue rather than managerial neglect. This external attribution fostered patience and commitment, encouraging employees to invest more effort in creative problem solving despite limited financial rewards (Saks, 2022). Such findings underscore the value of transparent communication from management regarding economic realities, which can positively influence employee attitudes and creative engagement. In addition to external attributions, this study found that perceptions of autonomy and empowerment are crucial in facilitating creativity among hotel workers. Employees who felt trusted and granted the freedom to make decisions were more motivated to innovate in guest services. This aligns with motivation theories emphasizing the need for competence and autonomy as intrinsic drivers of creativity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). When autonomy was perceived as a deliberate managerial strategy rather than incidental, it reinforced positive HR attributions, strengthening employees' sense of ownership and responsibility (Yamin et al., 2024). These insights suggest that HRM systems should consciously cultivate autonomy-supportive practices to boost creative behaviors in service settings.

Another critical aspect revealed by the data was the significance of employees feeling heard and recognized. When hotel workers perceived that their ideas and suggestions were genuinely valued by supervisors, their confidence and willingness to engage in creative efforts increased (Köle, 2021). This theme resonates with commitment-focused HR attributions, where employees sense that management supports their growth and input (Alam et al., 2024). The social environment of the workplace, including open communication and responsive leadership, thus plays a synergistic role in nurturing creativity. Encouraging dialogue and implementing employee ideas can create a positive feedback loop that reinforces engagement and innovation (Shin et al., 2022).

Lastly, the interplay of individual perceptions and organizational factors emerged as key to understanding creativity in this context. Employees' attributions of HR practices were influenced by their experiences with managerial behavior and organizational culture. Supportive managers who fostered collaboration, trust, and recognition helped employees build positive attitudes toward HRM, which translated into greater creative output. These findings echo previous studies highlighting the social and psychological environment as essential in unlocking employee creativity (Amabile, 2018). For hotels in Yogyakarta, integrating HRM practices that emphasize

relational support and empowerment can enhance creativity critical for competitive service delivery.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of how HR attributions shape creativity by illuminating the contextual realities of hotel employees in Yogyakarta. It suggests that beyond formal HR policies, the meanings employees attach to these practices, influenced by communication, autonomy, recognition, and managerial support, are pivotal (Das & Shree, 2024). Future research could quantitatively test these relationships across different hospitality contexts to generalize the findings. Meanwhile, hotel managers are encouraged to foster transparent communication, empower employees, and genuinely engage with their ideas to cultivate a creative workforce (Peng et al., 2024).

Contributions

This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the role of human resource attributions in shaping employee creativity in the hospitality industry, specifically among hotel employees in Yogyakarta. While prior research has predominantly focused on HRM and creativity in Western or Asian corporate contexts, this study offers valuable insights into a Southeast Asian service sector context, which has been less examined. By focusing on hotel employees, this research expands the scope of creativity studies to service-oriented industries where employee creativity plays a crucial role in customer experience and competitive advantage (Amabile, 2018).

The research highlights the importance of considering contextual factors such as local economic conditions and cultural values when examining the relationship between HRM practices and creativity. Our findings suggest that external economic challenges, such as fluctuating tourism demand and financial constraints of hotels in Yogyakarta, influence employees' HR attributions and their motivation to be creative. This implies that "one size fits all" HRM approaches cannot be effectively applied across diverse hospitality contexts, and tailored strategies are needed to reflect the unique pressures and realities faced by local hotel employees.

Cultural context emerged as a significant factor shaping employees' perceptions of HR practices (Aycan et al., 1999). In this study, employees emphasized the value of strong interpersonal relationships, trust, and mutual respect in their workplace, reflecting collectivistic cultural tendencies common in Indonesia. These social bonds were found to enhance employees' willingness to contribute creatively, suggesting that HRM practices which nurture collaboration and harmony are essential for fostering creativity in the hotel sector. This extends prior research on collectivism in organizational behavior by demonstrating its relevance in hospitality settings (Lim & Lu, 2024).

From a methodological standpoint, this study is among the first qualitative inquiries to examine HR attributions in relation to employee creativity within the hotel industry. By using in-depth interviews and reflexive thematic analysis, the research captures rich, nuanced understandings of how employees interpret HR practices and how these interpretations influence their creative behaviors (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This qualitative approach complements the predominantly quantitative HRM-creativity literature, encouraging further qualitative and mixed-methods research in service industries.

Theoretically, the study advances creativity research by integrating attribution theory with the interactional model of creativity. It identifies external HR attributions, such as perceptions of financial constraints beyond managerial control, as important individual-level factors that influence the effectiveness of HRM practices in stimulating creativity. This expands the interactional approach by showing how employees' subjective meanings attached to HR practices shape their creative engagement.

In addition, the findings contribute to the application of social exchange theory in hospitality HRM by illustrating that employees' positive reciprocation, in the form of creativity, depends not only on the actual HRM practices but also on employees' interpretations of management intent and organizational support. This highlights the necessity for managers to communicate transparently and foster supportive relationships to strengthen positive HR attributions and creative motivation.

Finally, the study provides practical implications for hotel managers in Yogyakarta and similar contexts. It suggests that beyond formal HR policies, fostering open communication,

recognizing employee contributions, and cultivating a culture of trust and collaboration are critical for enhancing creativity. Managers should be mindful of employees' attributions about HR practices and strive to address economic and cultural realities, thereby creating an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to innovate.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study offers valuable insights into the role of human resource attributions in shaping employee creativity within the hotel industry in Yogyakarta, several limitations should be acknowledged. To begin with, the qualitative nature of the research, while enabling an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size of 20 hotel employees, although sufficient to reach thematic saturation, represents a specific group within a particular cultural and economic context. Future research could expand the sample across multiple regions or countries to validate and extend these findings.

Moreover, this study focused exclusively on employees' perspectives and did not include insights from hotel managers or HR professionals. Since HR attributions involve perceptions of organizational intent and practice, incorporating managerial views could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how HRM strategies are designed, communicated, and received within hospitality organizations. Future studies might employ multi-stakeholder approaches to explore alignment or gaps between management intentions and employee interpretations.

In addition, while the study uncovered the influence of cultural and economic factors on HR attributions and creativity, it did not systematically measure or compare these variables using quantitative methods. Subsequent research could adopt mixed-methods designs to assess how cultural dimensions such as collectivism or economic indicators moderate the relationship between HR attributions and creativity. Quantitative data would also enable testing of causal relationships and the development of predictive models in this domain.

Lastly, this research centered on general HR attributions and their effect on creativity but did not explore in detail specific HR practices or types of creativity (e.g., incremental versus radical creativity). Future research could investigate how different HR practices, such as training, rewards, or performance management, are attributed differently by employees and how these distinctions influence various forms of creative output. Exploring these nuances would help organizations tailor HRM practices more effectively to foster desired creative behaviors.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that hotel employees' interpretations of human resource management (HRM) practices, referred to as HR attributions, play a crucial role in shaping their creative behavior at work. The findings suggest that it is not merely the existence of HRM policies that fosters creativity, but the perceived sincerity, purpose, and contextual relevance of these practices that inspire employees to think creatively and go beyond their formal roles. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on HR attributions by highlighting their influence within the hospitality sector, particularly in a collectivistic cultural setting like Indonesia. It also introduces new insights into how individual perceptions and organizational dynamics interact to drive creativity. Theoretical implications include the need to incorporate sociocultural and emotional dimensions into existing HRM and creativity models. Practically, the findings urge hotel managers to implement culturally sensitive HR strategies, foster open communication, and actively support employees' ideas. Future research may expand on these results through quantitative or mixed method approaches and by exploring mediating or moderating variables such as organizational culture or personality traits to deepen understanding of the HRM and creativity linkage.

Recommendations for Managers in Hotel Settings Similar to Our Study's Context

Employees benefit greatly when managers maintain transparent communication about the hotel's financial and operational challenges. By explaining the external factors that limit salary increases and resource availability, employees tend to better understand these constraints and feel less frustrated. This openness builds trust and patience, encouraging employees to stay motivated and contribute creatively despite economic difficulties.

Building on this foundation, fostering strong interpersonal relationships within the team enhances employees' sense of belonging and support. Managers who promote collaboration and a harmonious work environment enable staff to feel valued, which in turn encourages them to share innovative ideas and engage more deeply with their roles.

Moreover, creating formal and informal channels where employees can express their creativity and contribute suggestions signals that their input is respected and desired. Encouraging open dialogue and recognizing creative contributions helps cultivate a culture of innovation, motivating employees to take initiative in problem-solving.

Managers should also emphasize HR practices that prioritize employee well-being and professional development beyond financial compensation. Providing opportunities for training, recognizing achievements, and granting autonomy nurture intrinsic motivation, which is essential for sustaining creative behaviors.

In contexts where financial rewards are limited, non-monetary incentives such as flexible working arrangements, personalized feedback, and career advancement pathways become especially valuable. Utilizing these strategies thoughtfully can maintain enthusiasm and inspire ongoing innovation.

Promoting a learning culture where risk-taking is safe and failures are seen as growth opportunities further supports creative thinking. When leaders model openness and resilience, employees feel empowered to explore new ideas without fear of negative consequences.

Understanding the cultural context, especially collectivistic values that emphasize group harmony, is crucial for tailoring HR and managerial practices. Aligning strategies with local cultural norms strengthens teamwork and collective creativity, making initiatives more effective. Finally, managers should continuously seek feedback and evaluate how their practices impact employee creativity. Being responsive to changing employee needs helps sustain a dynamic and supportive environment where innovation can thrive over time.

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