


# The Antecedents of Career Development Competency in SMEs, Cambodia

Uk Chanveasna<sup>1</sup>, Sou Veasna<sup>2\*</sup> , Kang Sovannara<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>International Business Management (IBM), Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh City, Cambodia

<sup>2</sup>Research Office, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh City, Cambodia

<sup>3</sup>Post Graduate School, National University of Management, Phnom Penh City, Cambodia

Email: \*sou.veasna@rupp.edu.kh

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## Abstract

Drawing on the social exchange theory (SET) and the self-determination theory (SDT), the present study aims to examine the impact of green human resource management (GHRM) practices on organizational innovation, employee creativity, and career development competency in the SME context in Cambodia. GHRM is crucial in fostering innovation within Cambodia's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The country's economy continues to develop and diversify, and SMEs are becoming increasingly important drivers of growth and innovation. Integration effectiveness of GHRM practices and strategies in an SME context may increase an employee's capacity for innovation, thereby contributing to Cambodia's overall economic development. Furthermore, aligning GHRM with the overall business strategy is paramount for driving innovation in SMEs. GHRM should be closely integrated with the organization's innovation goals, ensuring that recruitment, performance management, and reward systems are all designed to support and incentivize innovative thinking and behavior. To reach this study's research objectives, 388 SMEs were asked to rate the questionnaire survey. By employing structural equation modeling (SEM), the study finds positive and significant effects of the sub-dimension of GHRM practice—i.e., green job design (GJD), green recruitment & selection (GRS), green labor relation (GLR), green training & development (GTD), and green compensation management (GCM) on organizational innovation, employee creativity, and employee career competencies. Indeed, effective HRM practices are vital for driving innovation within SMEs in Cambodia. SMEs invest in talent management, fostering a positive work environment, and aligning GHRM with innovation goals to increase high business performance in Cambodia's economy.

## Keywords

Green Human Resource Management Practices, Career Development

## 1. Introduction

Environmental concerns and sustainable growth are norms in today's business world, and almost every industry has begun adopting environmental practices (Al-Hawari et al., 2021); countries are gradually becoming more concerned about the upcoming environmental issues (Ahmed et al., 2021). Green human resource management has recently been a function of hiring, selecting, developing, and evaluating employees to enhance an environmentally friendly workplace (Rahman, 2023; Renwick et al., 2013). Organizations worldwide are concerned with environmental performance and sustainability (Gilal et al., 2019; Umrani et al., 2022). Green HRM enhances environmental performance in the hospitality context (Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022) and fosters employee green behavior (Tuan, 2022). An increasing number of hotels have begun to adopt new green HRM practices to foster green performance (El Baroudi et al., 2023). In recent years, as sustainability and environmental protection become important global concerns, companies are increasingly paying attention to their green performance (Wang et al., 2023). GHRM is key to accomplishing sustainable objectives (Bahuguna et al., 2023). GHRM could leverage global environmental concerns to promote green practices to protect the environment, a major concern in modern society (Ly, 2024). Organizations implement GHRM practices to preserve the environment (Khan & Muktar, 2024). However, only some studies have examined how green human resource management (GHRM) is linked with organizations' innovation and employee creativity to promote employee career competency. GHRM refers to strategic organizational tactics that promote green initiatives and encourage sustainability across the firm (Joshi et al., 2023). They provided a process model for GHRM implementation that emphasized the role of HR practices in supporting sustainability-oriented behaviors among employees (Renwick et al., 2008). The function of GHRM is associated with green planning, recruitment, training and development, compensation, and appraisal to support green organizational objectives (Mishra, 2017). GHRM is the blend of managing the environment and practices that come with human resource management (HRM) (Kodua et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2021). GHRM practices mostly investigate hospitality contexts (i.e.), and research scholars have paid cross-sectional studies less attention. Thus, this study uses a cross-sectional survey of the SME context in Cambodia. SMEs in Cambodia play the most important roles in enhancing career competency to improve workplace productivity by meeting the working demand for organizational needs and wants. Also, SMEs play crucial roles in enhancing the Cambodian economy and social development. These important roles are: 1) creating jobs, about 40% - 50% of total employment in SEMs mar-

kets; 2) generating incomes for low-income people and vulnerable populations; and 3) fostering economic growth and social stability, and especially in contributing to the growth of a dynamic private business sector (Siharath, 2012). Cambodian youngsters possess demand-driven skills and competencies, such as soft skills, work-life balance, and green and digital abilities, which may be linked to current and future labor market demands (Silva, 2022). Entrepreneurs' innovation and personality play a significant role in recognizing innovations in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to maintain their company activities (Marcatti et al., 2008). Indeed, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries play a critical social role in speeding business growth and decreasing poverty (Beck et al., 2005). Employee working behaviors in the SME context in Cambodia are investigated through an appropriate GHRM practice of the organization (Rauch & Hatak, 2016). GHRM practices include motivating employees to satisfy their jobs, reducing turnover, and improving working performance (Chaudhary, 2019; Ho & Kuvaas, 2020; Jebna & Baharudin, 2014). The Cambodian government is promoting SMEs to create more jobs for Cambodian youths and reduce migration by improving the quality of education, science and technology, and vocational training (Kwon et al., 2015). Implementing GHRM practices significantly increases high-level performance and gains sustainable business competitive advantage (Habibi et al., 2018; Kokko & Sjöholm, 2005; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Zaid et al., 2018). The study asserts that increasing high levels of employee job satisfaction, work engagement, job creativity, and working competency development can be achieved by applying green HRM practices in the SME contexts in Cambodia.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1. Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory is among the most influential conceptual frameworks for understanding organizational behaviors. Social exchange theory is a central premise that exchanging social and material resources is a fundamental human interaction in the workplace (Blau, 2017). Several studies have demonstrated that social exchange relationships can predict job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and employee intentions to leave (Matthijs Bal et al., 2010). Social exchange theory (SET) is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior (Memmon et al., 2017), which is determined by the rewards of interaction between people or activities minus the penalty/cost of that interaction may have (Griffith et al., 2006). Similar to this theoretical perspective, when employers' and employees' efforts are recognized and fairly rewarded, they reciprocate by going above and beyond their roles (Agut et al., 2009; Lichtenstein, 2011). The social exchange theory is thus crucial for our model regarding the interaction between organization and employee to achieve something that both parties feel is fair or

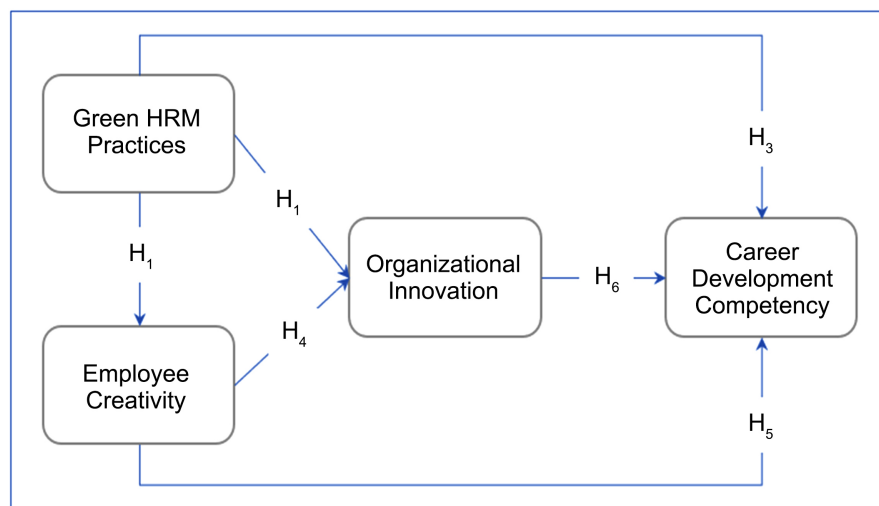
transparent in return for their effort and commitment (Coates, 2010). Thus, this study aims to explain the relationship between research variables using social exchange theory (Alias et al., 2018), as proposed in **Figure 1**.

## 2.2. Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory is a vital way of thinking about how individuals choose and implement their work effectively. The two variables that interact to produce careers are self-concept and society's expectations (Savickas, 2002). The application of career construction theory explains individual employees' working attitudes and behavior to effectively complete tasks (Rudolph et al., 2019; Shabeer et al., 2019; Xu & Yu, 2021; Zacher et al., 2019). Previous research scholars have applied the career construction theory to explain differential, developmental, dynamic, and learning-based perspectives of individual employees and how they can perform their work effectively (Guan et al., 2017; Walker-Donnelly et al., 2019), as shown in **Figure 1**. The critical perspectives of constructive career theory are enhancing employee satisfaction and reducing turnover intention (Zhu et al., 2021).

## 2.3. Green HRM Practices and Employee Creativity

Green HRM is defined by Kramar (2014) as "HRM activities which enhance positive environmental outcomes" (p. 1075). GHRM practices are implemented by organizations to improve employee perception of green behavior in the workplace (Renwick et al., 2008; Siyambalapitiya et al., 2018). GHRM refers to the human resource management aspects of environmental management (Carballo-Penela et al., 2023). A recent study examines the association of green human resource management (GHRM) with employee green creativity (Farooq et al., 2022). Green HRM practices on employees' green creativity have been explored by Al-Ghazali and Afsar (2021). GHRM practices play a critical role in



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of career development competency.

enhancing organizational innovation and employee creativity in the hospitality context (Al Kerdawy, 2019; Wong & Denizci Guillet, 2018). GHRM practices influence employees' green creativity in hotel service industries (Muisyo et al., 2022). Indeed, the literature on GHRM extends to predicting employees' green outcomes and individual creativity at workplaces (Ahmad et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2019). GHRM practices influence employee creativity in tour operators operating in Vietnam (Luu, 2021). Drawing on cognitive-affective system theory, this study assumes that employees' high perceived GHRM influences their work creativity in a green behavioral context (Chen et al., 2021). Assuming that GHRM practices are powerful tools to promote employees' positive behaviors, several scholars have adopted the behavioral perspective of HRM (Carballo-Penela et al., 2023). Thus, individual employees can pursue green innovations out of their love, values, and passion for the environment. In doing so, they are more likely to engage in employee creativity and organizational innovation (Al-Hawari et al., 2021). Also, GHRM practices predict employee creativity in the healthcare service sector (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016; Mensah et al., 2023). Based on the prior reasoning, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Green HRM practices have a positive influence on employee creativity.*

## 2.4. GHRM Practices and Organizational Innovation

In GHRM practices, employee green behavior reflects an individual-friendly behavior toward the environment (Norton et al., 2014), which can positively contribute to organizational innovation behavior for the following concerns. First, employees with higher knowledge and awareness of environmental concepts will contribute to the organization's green innovation (Renwick et al., 2013). Second, green training and development allow employees to acquire the skills and expertise to strengthen their innovative organization (Chang & Chen, 2012). Third, green performance appraisal and incentive strategies will enhance the behaviors of employees in line with the organization's environmental objectives (Guerci & Carollo, 2016), which would positively encourage organizational green innovation behaviors at work. Fourth, previous researchers suggested that employees usually repay the organization with innovative work behaviors in exchange for the organization's commitment toward it. Overall, these sub-dimension of GHRM practices positively influenced organizational innovation in green contexts (Kim, 2016). Finally, GHRM practices positively influenced organizational innovation (Song et al., 2021). The critical aspect of the resource-based view (RBV) and the ability-motivation-opportunity theory, this current study implies how GHRM practices interplay with the linkages among green leadership styles, green innovation, and environmental performance (Singh et al., 2020). The relationship between GHRM practices positively influences organizational innovation in owner-managers of small lodging enterprises in Greater Cairo, Egypt (Sobaih et al., 2020). GHRM practices play a significant role in positively enhancing the

organizational green innovation ability (Song et al., 2021). There are several theoretical and practical implications for top management levels and policy-makers to ensure their employee commitment to adopt GHRM practices and green organizational innovation implementation to achieve high environmental performance (Malik et al., 2021a). Thus, this study argues that the employees' perceptions of GHRM practices toward the environment will profoundly affect their organizational green innovation behavior (Aboramadan, 2022). GHRM practices significantly contribute to the depth of empirical evidence about SMEs in Saudi Arabia related to enhancing organizational innovation in green business environments (Al Doghan et al., 2022). Also, GHRM practices initiative as an improved organizational innovation of education service sectors (Bahmani et al., 2023). Another study inspects the influence of GHRM practices and organizational innovation in green contexts (Niazi et al., 2023). Thus, the following research hypothesis proposes that:

*Hypothesis 2: GHRM practices have a positive influence on organizational innovation.*

## **2.5. GHRM and Career Development Competency**

GHRM practices increase employee motivation to work and provide them with career development (Ye et al., 2022). A basic practice of green HRM is related to individual green task behavior (Shah, 2019), which is a critical factor in the career development plans of individual employees (Mahmood et al., 2023). The key concept of Green HRM practices is associated with green career development (Yan & Hu, 2022). Specific dimensions of GHRM practices, such as green training and development, are processes that help individual employees realize the environmental effect of their organizational practices and build employee knowledge, skills, and capacity related to environmental protection and management (Gull & Idrees, 2022). Based on cognitive consistency theory, this study proposes that GHRM can influence employees' motivation to engage in career development (Cheng et al., 2022). The key concepts of HRM practices (i.e., recruitment & selection, training & development, compensation, and appraisal performance) enhance employee job performance and career development (Otoo, 2020). HRM practices are key antecedents of employee competencies in empirical evidence from the banking service industries (Salman et al., 2023). GHRM practices include green recruitment and selection, green training and development, green performance appraisal, and green reward and compensation that have significantly correlated with career development for green managers and employees (Cahyadi et al., 2022; Kanan et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2021b). Thus, this study assumes that GHRM practices play critical roles in developing employee career competencies (Salman et al., 2023). According to social exchange theory, GHRM is crucial in motivating employees and enhancing their career development competencies. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: GHRM practices have a positive influence on career develop-*

*ment competency.*

## 2.6. Employee Creativity and Organizational Innovation

With this regard, many authors have similarly proposed and studied that creativity is the predecessor of innovation (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Recently, the Cambodian government has focused on a key major challenge involving building human capacity to meet the expectations of the evolution of Industry 4.0. Industry 4.0 is one of the most key challenging themes for engineering design through educational improvement and human capacity building, which is a significant critical challenge for developing Industrial 4.0 (Chu, 2017). This way, the focus of Industry 4.0 is to create intelligent products, procedures, and processes (Motyl et al., 2017). The relationships between employee creativity and organizational innovation have become increasingly important determinants of corporate success and longer-term survival (De Casanova, 2016). Employee creativity is key to improving organizational innovation for developing new, improved products and services (Utbjoa & Jaroenlap, 2023). According to social exchange theory, this study examines how individual employee creativity contributes to their novel ideas to enhance workplace organizational innovation behavior (Uzo & Ogbechie, 2017). The work studied creativity and motivation as internal aspects of frontline hospitality employees for making innovative organizational suggestions (González-González et al., 2021). Although the importance of fostering organizational creativity and open innovation is becoming more widely acknowledged, there still needs to be more empirical evidence on the impact of employee creativity and organizational innovation on enhancing SMEs' performance (Rumanti et al., 2023). Creativity is an important resource for companies, and environmental sustainability in organizational development related to employees' ideas (Kottwitz et al., 2024). Employee creativity is critical to increasing organizational effectiveness and survival, especially in today's highly turbulent and competitive business environment (Zhou et al., 2022). Employee creativity refers to the ability to generate new ideas that lead to creativity and sustainability of the best innovation performance in the organization (Jaboob, 2023). From this perspective, it could promote employee creativity and the generation of novel and useful ideas (Zhou et al., 2024). Thus, this study assumes that when employees have a high level of creativity, they will have more knowledge, skills, and competency related to useful ideas to innovate their organization to develop new products and services. This study expects that the following hypothesis will exist from this point of view.

*Hypothesis 4: Employee creativity has a positive influence on organizational innovation.*

## 2.7. Employee Creativity and Career Development Competency

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by (Blau, 2017) explains social changes

in societies and human behaviors. Employee creativity enhances individual career development and more developed skills for organizations (Cumming et al., 2017). In the competitive business environment, organizations view employee creativity as a source of competitive advantage because it enables employees to increase organizational performance through their career development competency (Akgunduz et al., 2023). The perceptions of employee creativity are considered a top priority for career development competencies (Ismail & Rishani, 2018). SET describes employees' contributions to their organizations and their expectations due to their interactions (Simmel et al., 2019). This study highlights the importance of employee creativity and encourages employees to foster their career development competency (Gao et al., 2021). Employee creativity significantly correlates with enhancing employee career competency (Huu, 2023). According to the social exchange theory, when employees are perceived positively by their management, they will provide positive thinking and bring new ideas for better creative performance and solutions to their workplace, resulting in their career competency. This study assumes that employees are more satisfied with their jobs and working environment, happier, and more creative in bringing new valuable ideas and solutions to the organization, and increase productivity in career development. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*Hypothesis 5: Employee creativity has a positive influence on career development competency.*

## **2.8. Organizational Innovation and Career Development Competency**

When considering all economic actors, organizational innovation is primarily associated with four activities: new product creation, new manufacturing methods, creative strategy, and financial structure (Baregheh et al., 2009). Organizational innovation is regarded as a multi-tasking process that includes newly evolved digital technology, advanced procedures, practical implementations, more complicated structures, sophisticated technical strategies, and creative product development (Donate & de Pablo, 2015). This study investigates organizational innovation factors that influence the relationship between career development competencies (Lee et al., 2018). Organizational innovation influenced employees' job satisfaction which, in turn, improved career development competencies (Wipulanusat et al., 2018). Organizational innovation defines as a new concept implemented for product enhancement and a new organizational process or procedure that applies in organizations, groups, workplaces, and operations (Waheed et al., 2019). The present study examines the employee's working behavior who achieves better career development in innovative organizations in the SME contexts in Cambodia. Drawing on trait activation theory, employees will learn more about improving their working activities related to their career development (Jiang et al., 2021). Organizational innovation plays an important role in

improving career development (Kettunen, 2023). Employee creativity is a core competency of employees and is considered a key resource to sustain business competitiveness (Peng et al., 2023). Specifically, employees engaged in innovation were significantly more optimistic under high involvement with their career development. The following research hypothesis is proposed.

*Hypothesis 6: Organizational innovation has a positive influence on career development competency.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Measures

All research variables of this study were adopted from previous existing literature, for research variables of career development competency variable adopted from (Akkermans et al., 2013), consisting of 6 sub-dimensions with 21 items (i.e., reflection on motivation has three items, three self-profiling has three items, work exploration has three items, reflection on quality has four items, networking has four items, and career control has four items). Organizational innovation has seven items adopted by Zhen et al. (2021). Employee creativity has 13 items adopted (Zhou & George, 2001), consisting of 13 items. Green HRM consists of 7 sub-dimensions with 25 research items adopted from Shah (2019). Organizational innovation has seven adopted items (Zhen et al., 2021). All questionnaire items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Most importantly, this study uses a double-back translation technique (i.e., English-Khmer-English) to validate the meaning of questionnaire translation (Brislin, 1980).

#### 3.2. Sampling Design

A purposive sampling technique and snowball sampling are used to collect data from SMEs in Cambodia (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The sample sizes for this study, an unknown population was recommended by Bowerman et al. (2019) to collect data from SMEs, as shown  $n = p(1-p)\left(\frac{Z_{\alpha/2}}{B}\right)^2$ , Where:  $n$  = sample sizes;  $p$  = Probability is 0.5 (50%);  $z_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}$  = Significant level at 1.96 with confident interval of 0.05;  $B$  = Tolerance Error is 0.07 (7%).

$$n = 0.5(1-0.5)\left(\frac{1.96}{0.07}\right)^2 = 196$$

This study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the proposed research hypotheses. Thus, the formal sample size should be at least 196 respondents. Four hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed to 236 SMEs, which are available and allow us to ask their employees to join our survey. A total of 416 participants with 203 SMEs were returned. However, 28 questionnaires were withdrawn because they contained serious missing data, and 9 SMEs were not

included in the final samples. Therefore, the valid samples for this study were 388 participants (with  $388/450 = 86.22\%$ ) from 194 SMEs (with  $194/236 = 82.20\%$ ); each SME selected two employees who worked closely with the product and service development to participate in the survey for this study. As suggested by Saunders et al. (2019), given that the likely response rate for mail survey questionnaires has been found to range between 30 and 50 percent, self-administered surely should be more than 50 percent. Thus, this response rate of 86.22 percent was viewed as good for the study.

## 4. Results

Data analysis of this study consists of three stages: 1) factor analysis and reliability, 2) Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and 3) Structural equation modeling (SEM), as stated below:

### 4.1. Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

The purpose of conducting factor analysis and reliability tests is to reduce unnecessary items before proceeding to the hypothesis testing stage (i.e., Chet et al., 2022; Tabachnick et al., 2018). The threshold values of factor analysis and reliability test include the factor loading scores should be greater than 0.70, KMO and Bartlett's test should be greater than or equal to 0.50, the cumulative percentage should be higher than 60%, and the Eigenvalues should be greater than 1. Indeed, the reliability test is to validate the reliability of questionnaire items related to Item-total Correlation should be greater than 0.50, and Coefficient Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) should be higher or equal to 0.60 or 0.70, respectively (Hair Jr. et al., 2019). The factor analysis results have been performed, and this study just reported Cronbach's alpha, as shown in Table 1. During factor analysis and reliability tests, some items were removed due to the threshold value requirement, as Hair et al. (2019) suggested. Indeed, one sub-dimension of GHRM practice and career development competency was removed due to Cronbach's alpha being lower than 0.60 or 60%. Then, the rest of the formal items and sub-dimensions of these 4 research variables were used to conduct CFA and SEM, as shown in Table 1.

### 4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The factor analysis and reliability results in Table 1 indicated that the findings had met the threshold values suggested by (Hair Jr. et al., 2019). Thus, all research items from the reliability test are adopted to double confirm with CFA before doing the SEM stages. The threshold values of CFA and SEM, such as  $GFI > 0.90$ ,  $AGFI > 0.90$ ,  $NFI > 0.90$ ,  $CFI > 0.90$ , and  $RMSEA < 0.05$  (i.e., Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair Jr. et al., 2021; Jöreskog et al., 2016; Kline, 2023). Related to the reliability test and validity test, Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Peterson and Kim (2013), AVE (Average Variance Extracted) must exceed 0.50,

**Table 1.** The overall model of CFA.

Indicators		Research Constructs	$\lambda$	t-value	p-value	AVE	CR	$\alpha$
MoP	←	Career development competency	0.84	A	***	<b>0.743</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.886</b>
SP	←		0.85	26.614	***			<b>0.906</b>
WE	←		0.88	22.061	***			<b>0.783</b>
RoQ	←		0.92	22.089	***			<b>0.884</b>
NET	←		0.82	20.021	***			<b>0.890</b>
EMCR1		Employee creativity	0.79	A	***	<b>0.548</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.933</b>
EMCR3			0.79	21.46	***			
EMCR4			0.86	19.185	***			
EMCR5			0.79	17.221	***			
EMCR6			0.68	14.363	***			
EMCR7			0.78	16.63	***			
EMCR8			0.81	17.696	***			
EMCR9			0.78	16.737	***			
GLR		Green HRM practices	0.66	A	***	<b>0.688</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.808</b>
GCM			0.73	15.54	***			
GPM			0.87	16.534	***			
GTD			0.91	15.611	***			
GRS			0.88	14.589	***			
GJD			0.89	15.339	***			
ORINO6		Organizational Innovation	0.97	A	***	<b>0.906</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.870</b>
ORINO5			0.95	23.792	***			
ORINO3			0.94	23.652	***			

Note: A is regression weight fixed at 1. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.01$  and significant level of confident interval at 95% (i.e., t-value  $> 1.96$ ).  $\lambda$ : Standardized regression weights. **Green HRM Practice:** GJD = Green Job Design; GRS = Green Recruitment and Selection; GTD = Green Training and Development; GCM = Green Compensation Management; GLR = Green Labor Relations. **Career Competency:** MoP = Reflect on Motivation; SP = Self-Profiling; WE = Work Exploration; RoQ = Reflection on Quality; NET = Networking; CON = Career Control.

and C.R (Composite Reliability) must exceed 0.6 or 0.70, respectively. Indeed, the t-value should be greater than 1.96, and the p-value should be <0.05 (Hair Jr. et al., 2019). This study applied a first-order and second-order factors model, and overall, CFA is also adapted to process the CFA stage **Table 1**. The formula of AVE and C.R. is as stated below. Then, the results of CFA will be adopted to proceed to the SEM stage.

$$AVE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i^2}{n} \quad (1)$$

$$CR = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i\right)^2 + \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \delta_i\right)} \quad (2)$$

where:  $\lambda$  (Lamda) represents the standardized factor loading and  $i$  is the number of items 1) and  $\delta$  (Delta) represents error variance terms 2) while  $\delta = 1 - \lambda_i^2$ . All results of CFA and C.R met the threshold, which indicated that these research variables have high reliability and validity. Thus, this study contributes to exploring the significant coefficient among hypothesis relationships. SEM was also applied to test a research hypothesis formulated in relation conceptual model as proposed by this study. Then, a detail of the SEM process and analysis is proceeded and shown in the results of **Table 2** and **Figure 3**.

Where  $\lambda$  (Lamda) represents the standardized factor loading,  $i$  is the number of questionnaire items 1), and  $\delta$  (Delta) defines error variance terms 2) while  $\delta = 1 - \lambda_i^2$ . **Table 1** and **Figure 2** also need to evaluate the results of CFA and SEM. All results of CFA and C.R met the threshold, which indicated that these research variables have high reliability and validity. Thus, this study contributes to exploring the significant coefficient among hypothesis relationships. Then, a detailed description of the SEM process and analysis is presented and shown in **Table 2** and **Figure 3** results.

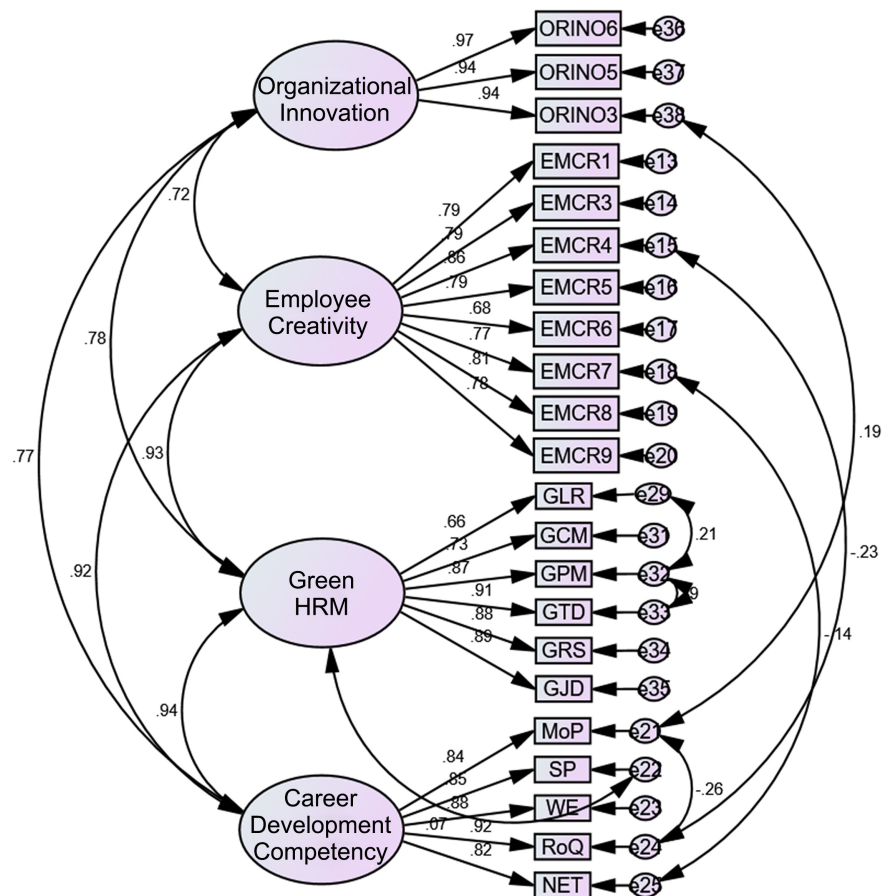
### 4.3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a collection of statistical approaches for estimating the magnitudes and directions of hypothesized causal effects in quantitative investigations using cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, or other study designs (Kline, 2023). Its uses extend from exploratory and data-driven research, in which early causal models are developed, to more confirmatory research, in which one or more existing models based on a priori assumptions are verified or contrasted. While the data in SEM are derived from measurable variables, they might be used in the analysis to approximate hypothetical constructions. As a result, by studying manifest variables as markers for target constructs, causal relationships may be estimated between them (Pearl, 2023). After confirming the measurement model (CFA), the structural equation model modeling (SEM) was performed. SEM is used to analyze the goodness of fit index and hypotheses testing (i.e., path coefficients). The results of **Table 2** showed that

**Table 2.** The results of SEM.

Indicators			Research Constructs	$\lambda$	t-value	p-value
MoP	←	Career Development Competency		0.829	A	***
SP	←			0.866	26.368	***
WE	←			0.846	21.467	***
RoQ	←			0.905	21.831	***
NET	←			0.827	20.127	***
GLR	←	Green HRM Practices		0.639	A	***
GCM	←			0.708	15.129	***
GPM	←			0.833	15.794	***
GTD	←			0.904	14.737	***
GRS	←			0.915	14.345	***
GJD	←			0.916	14.878	***
ORINO6	←	Organizational Innovation		0.961	A	***
ORINO5	←			0.941	23.254	***
ORINO3	←			0.946	23.476	***
EMCR1	←	Employee Creativity		0.795	A	***
EMCR3	←			0.801	21.775	***
EMCR4	←			0.853	19.246	***
EMCR5	←			0.785	17.36	***
EMCR7	←			0.777	16.817	***
EMCR8	←			0.813	18.05	***
EMCR9	←			0.786	17.144	***
Path Relationships						
Green HRM → Employee Creativity [H1]				0.93***	12.86	0.000
Green HRM → Organizational Innovation [H2]				0.55***	4.83	0.000
Green HRM → Career Development Competency [H3]				0.55***	5.85	0.000
Employee Creativity → Organizational Innovation [H4]				0.23**	2.06	0.040
Employee Creativity → Career Development Competency [H5]				0.32***	3.81	0.000
Organizational Innovation → Career Development Competency [H6]				0.13**	2.94	0.003

Note: A is regression weight fixed at 1. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.01$  and significant level of confident interval at 95% (i.e., t-value >1.96).  $\lambda$ : Standardized regression weights.



Model=Standardized estimates  
 Group=Group number 1  
 Ch-square=298.719,  
 df=168, Chi-square/df=1.778,  
 GFI=.932, AGFI=.898,  
 NFI=.968, CFI=.986,  
 RMSEA=.045, P=.000

**Figure 2.** Overall CFA.

$\chi^2/D.F = 1.307$ ,  $GFI = 0.959$ ,  $AGFI = 0.930$ ,  $CFI = 0.981$ ,  $NFI = 0.995$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.028$ , which indicated that the goodness of fit of this model is a *good fit* for this study. **Table 2** and **Figure 3** also showed that GHRM practices have a positive significant impact on employee creativity with  $\beta = 0.93^{***}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 12.86$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $<0.001$ ), which Hypothesis 1 is accepted. GHRM practices have a positive significant impact on organizational innovation with  $\beta = 0.55^{***}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 4.83$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $<0.001$ ), which Hypothesis 2 is accepted. GHRM practices have a positive significant impact on career development competency with  $\beta = 0.55^{***}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 5.85$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $<0.001$ ), which Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Employee creativity has a positive and significant impact on organizational innovation with  $\beta = 0.23^{**}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.06$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.040$  ( $<0.05$ ), which Hypothesis 4 is accepted. Employee creativity has a positive and significant impact on career development

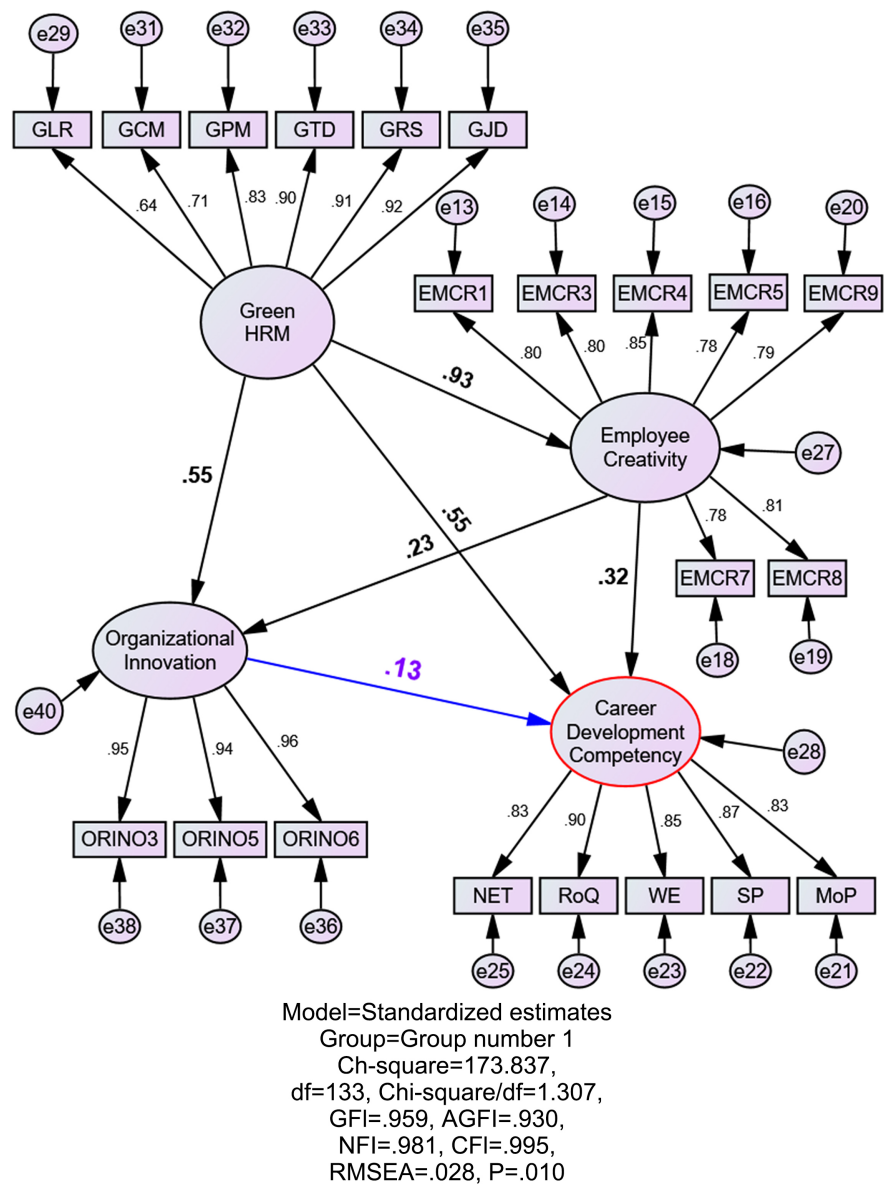


Figure 3. SEM.

competency with  $\beta = 0.32^{***}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 3.81$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $<0.001$ ), which Hypothesis 5 is accepted. Organizational innovation has a positive and significant impact on career development competency with  $\beta = 0.13^{**}$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 2.94$  ( $>1.96$ ), and  $p\text{-value} = 0.003$  ( $<0.05$ ), which Hypothesis 6 is accepted. Overall, among the six proposed research hypotheses, all are significantly supported and confirmed by this study.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### 5.1. The Effects of Green HRM Practices

GHRM practices have been proven to enhance employee creativity—H1, which was confirmed by Hameed et al. (2022). GHRM practices positively impact em-

employee creativity (Ahmad et al., 2022). GHRM practices can foster the creativity of 712 employees working in Vietnam tour operators (Luu, 2023). GHRM practices are key predictors of fostering employees' green creativity in hotel service industries (Alyahya et al., 2023). Therefore, this empirical study contributes to the growing literature on Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and its impacts on employee creativity. Additionally, GHRM practices have a direct impact on employee creativity. Employees who know their organization values sustainability are more likely to feel inspired and engaged.

GHRM practices have been proven to enhance organizational innovation—H2, confirmed by Alipour et al. (2022). Also, GHRM practices strongly influence organizational innovation and performance (Chaudhary, 2019). In the ability-motivation-opportunity theory, this study argued that GHRM practices interplay the linkages with organizational innovation (Singh et al., 2020). Indeed, the researcher employed green HRM, which is important in facilitating corporate innovation in green concepts from Saudi Arabian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) (Al Doghan et al., 2022). Green human resources management is highly correlated with innovative organizational behavior in Turkey's tourism sectors (Kara et al., 2023). GHRM practices were positively associated with corporate innovation in Pakistan (Ullah et al., 2023). According to the research findings of the current study, the key concept of GHRM practices plays a pivotal role in enhancing and improving organizational innovation within SMEs (Zhang et al., 2019). By encouraging employees to think creatively and develop innovative solutions to environmental challenges, GHRM practices foster a culture of innovation. This mindset shift is crucial for SMEs to remain competitive in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. Employees empowered to contribute ideas and suggestions for sustainable practices bring fresh perspectives, leading to the development of new products, services, and processes that align with environmental goals. This enhances the organization's reputation as a socially responsible entity and creates a competitive advantage in the market.

GHRM practices have been proven to enhance career development competency—H3, consistent with Ye et al. (2022), indicated that GHRM practices are key motivation factors in developing employee careers. Also, GHRM practices are associated with green career development (Yan & Hu, 2022). Thus, this study assumes that one of the key benefits of GHRM practices is their positive impact on career development competency. By adopting green practices, SMEs provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge related to sustainability. This enhances their professional growth and enables them to contribute to the organization's sustainability goals. Employees develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues through training programs on sustainable practices and gain expertise in implementing environmentally friendly processes, thus enriching their career development. GHRM practices in SMEs offer several advantages, such as improving career development competency by providing employees with opportunities to generate critical knowledge, skills, and compe-

tendencies related to achieving business sustainability.

## 5.2. The Effects of Employee Creativity

Employee creativity plays an important role in increasing organizational innovation—H4, which is consistent with previous scholars' research findings (i.e., [Du & Chang, 2023](#); [Kurniawan & Nugroho, 2021](#)). This study assumes that the importance of fostering employee creativity and organizational innovation is becoming more widely acknowledged. However, there is still little empirical evidence on the impact of creativity and innovation on enhancing SME performance ([Rumanti et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, employee creativity is critical for an organization's innovativeness and survival in today's competitive business environment. Organizational innovation is closely linked to employee creativity. As organizations encourage employees to explore new ideas and approaches, they are more likely to generate innovative solutions to existing challenges. This can lead to the organization's development of new products, services, or processes that give the organization a competitive edge in the market. Thus, SMEs can motivate employees to be creative by solving problems effectively, leading to increased organizational innovation and growth ([Ghosh, 2015](#)).

Indeed, employee creativity is a critical factor positively influencing career development competency—H5, which aligns with previous research findings (i.e., [Lua et al., 2024](#)). Employee creativity has a positive significant impact on career development competencies. This relation's research finding exists because most previous studies have not been explored yet. However, a few researchers have mentioned that the perceptions of employee creativity are considered a top priority for career development competencies ([Ismail & Rishani, 2018](#)). Indeed, when an employee has a high level of creativity, it enhances individual career development and more developed skills for organizations ([Cumming et al., 2017](#)). Also, another study highlights the importance of employee creativity and encourages employees to foster their career development competency ([Gao et al., 2021](#)). Furthermore, employee creativity also contributes to career development competencies within SMEs. When employees are allowed to exercise their creative thinking skills, they develop a range of competencies essential for their professional growth. By doing so, they can unlock a wealth of innovative ideas and solutions that can propel the organization forward. To harness the power of employee creativity, SMEs can implement various strategies. Employee creativity in SMEs can unlock their full potential and drive organizational innovation while empowering their employees' career development. Therefore, employees are perceived as positively thinking and bringing new ideas for better creative performance and solutions to their workplace, resulting in their career competency ([Bachmann et al., 2019](#)).

## 5.3. The Effects of Organizational Innovation

Organizational innovation positively impacts career development competency—

H6, which is confirmed by this study. Organizational innovation is involved in employee career planning and development to reduce workers' insecurity (Potnuru et al., 2021). Employee career competencies needed in their organizations, as well as the levels of innovation, are also required (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021). From this assumption, this study concludes that when an organization has a high capacity for organizational innovation, they tend to build their employee with high career development to achieve business goals or sustainability.

#### 5.4. Conclusions

In the SME context, the analysis of this study was a cross-sectional study, which cannot be generalized across a broad range of all business sectors in Cambodia. The research findings of this study contribute to policymakers, stakeholders, and management of SMEs adopting proper and well-articulated Green HRM practices to build human capital and stimulate the necessary behaviors that create an advantage for the organization. Research has concluded that implementing Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) can greatly enhance career development competencies, organizational innovation, and employee creativity. GHRM refers to integrating environmentally friendly practices within the human resource management framework. One of the key benefits of GHRM practices is the improvement in career development competencies. By incorporating sustainable practices into the organization's HR policies, employees are encouraged to develop skills and knowledge related to environmental management. This enhances their career prospects and aligns their personal goals with the organization's sustainability objectives. Employees become more aware of the importance of sustainable practices and are equipped with the necessary competencies to contribute effectively to the organization's environmental goals.

Furthermore, GHRM practices have a positive impact on organizational innovation. Employees are empowered to develop innovative ideas and solutions that align with the organization's environmental objectives. This benefits the organization by reducing its environmental footprint and enhancing its competitive advantage in the market. Employee creativity is also enhanced through GHRM practices. Organizations can stimulate creativity and out-of-the-box thinking by emphasizing the importance of sustainability and providing employees with the necessary resources and support. Employees feel motivated to find sustainable alternatives and contribute to the organization's environmental goals. This creativity can lead to the development of new products, services, or environmentally friendly processes that meet customer demands. In conclusion, research has shown that implementing Green Human Resource Management practices in SMEs can have significant positive impacts. These practices enhance career development competencies, organizational innovation, and employee creativity. By integrating sustainability into GHRM policies, SMEs can create a work environment that benefits the environment and promotes the organization's and its employees'

growth and success. Overall, the research findings of this study indicated that green HRM practices play a crucial indicator in enhancing employee career competencies, fostering employee creativity, and driving organizational innovation in the SME context in Cambodia. Green HRM practices' key effectiveness is attracting and retaining talented employees and cultivating and developing their skills, enabling them to perform at their best. Green HRM practices ensure that individual employees have the necessary knowledge, skills, and capacity to sustain organizational success. In conclusion, green human resource management practices are instrumental in improving employee job competencies, stimulating creativity, and fostering organizational innovation.

### 5.5. Recommendations

GHRM practices are recommended for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as they have been found to enhance career development competencies, which increases organizational innovation and fosters employee creativity. GHRM practices in SMEs create a work environment that supports their employees' growth and promotes sustainable and eco-friendly business practices. One of the key benefits of GHRM practices is the improvement in career development competencies. These benefits individual employees in terms of career progression and contributes to the organization's overall success. Employees who feel valued and supported in their career development are more likely to be motivated and committed to their work. Furthermore, GHRM practices also play a crucial role in driving organizational innovation. In addition to career development and innovation, GHRM practices have been found to enhance employee creativity. Employees with a work environment that values sustainability and encourages green thinking are more likely to generate creative ideas and solutions. This can lead to improved products or services that align with the values of eco-conscious consumers. Moreover, fostering a culture of creativity and sustainability can attract top talent passionate about positively impacting the business environment. In short, SMEs adopting GHRM practices can benefit more from enhancing employee career development competencies, organizational innovation, and creativity to achieve business sustainability and success. By prioritizing their employees' growth and well-being while embracing eco-friendly practices, SMEs can position themselves as industry leaders and attract like-minded customers and partners.

### 5.6. Research Limitations and Implications

While the concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices improving career development competencies, organizational innovation, and employee creativity in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) holds great promise, certain limitations and implications need to be considered. One limitation of this research is the potential for selection bias. The study may have focused on specific SMEs already inclined towards implementing GHRM practic-

es, which could have skewed the results. This research study may be limited by the need for a comprehensive framework for measuring the key impacts of Green HRM practices on career development competencies, organizational innovation, and employee creativity in the SME context in Cambodia. The lack of standardized measurements makes it difficult to compare findings across studies and limits the generalizability of the results. However, future researchers should consider extending this conceptual framework by integrating some critical key independent variables to predict employee outcomes (i.e., employee creativity, job satisfaction, and employee retention), such as identity and intrinsic motivation, management support and employee attitude (Al-Hawari et al., 2021). According to knowledge on the theory of human capital, the environmental knowledge of employees could be emphasized and extended to GHRM strategies that might produce human capital rather than behavior reinforcement (Munawar et al., 2022). In summary, while the study highlights the potential benefits of GHRM practices in SMEs, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and implications. By addressing these limitations and further exploring the implications, researchers can provide valuable insights for academia and human resource management practitioners.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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