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## PRACTICE OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HA GIANG

Do Thi Van Huong and Dao Thi Hong Thuy

Faculty of tourism, Thai Nguyen University of Sciences

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism has been identified as a key objective in the master plan for tourism development in Ha Giang. Achieving this goal requires focusing on the human factor, which is essential for fostering sustainable development. This study aims to assess the extent to which Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices have been implemented in Ha Giang, particularly in the hotel sector and within public administration agencies. Based on this assessment, the paper proposes recommendations for enhancing GHRM practices in the region. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed, including observations, in-depth interviews, document reviews, and focus group discussions, alongside surveys targeting provincial Department of Culture agencies, district and commune cultural offices, and managers of homestays in the Dong Van Karst Plateau Global Geopark. The results from interviews and focus groups suggest that GHRM practices are being applied, though there are opportunities for further improvement.

**KEYWORDS:** Green, Green human, green tourism, Ha Giang, sustainable

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As sustainable development becomes an increasingly central objective for industries worldwide, organizations across various sectors are aligning their operations with environmentally responsible practices. In this context, Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a critical role in facilitating this transition by creating work environments that are conducive to sustainability trends. Among the emerging trends within HRM, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has gained considerable attention, with research demonstrating its potential in both theoretical and practical terms. GHRM strategies have been shown to drive sustainability by fostering a workforce that is both environmentally aware and responsible.

The concept of GHRM emerged in the early 1990s as a way to integrate environmental management practices into traditional HRM functions. Over time, the focus has expanded, placing increased emphasis on the "greening" of HRM practices such as recruitment, training, and performance appraisals. While initially discussed in broad terms, recent studies have increasingly refined our understanding of how GHRM contributes to environmental sustainability through the development of a workforce that is not only environmentally conscious but also actively engaged in sustainability

initiatives. This is particularly relevant in sectors such as tourism, where the environmental impact is significant and the need for sustainable practices is critical.

Despite the growing body of research on GHRM, its practical application within the tourism industry, particularly in specific regions such as Ha Giang, remains underexplored. This study aims to examine the implementation of GHRM practices within Ha Giang's tourism sector, focusing specifically on the hospitality sector and public administration bodies involved in tourism management. The research will evaluate the extent to which these practices contribute to sustainable tourism development, addressing both the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the region.

The primary objectives of this study are: (i) to assess the current state of GHRM implementation in Ha Giang's tourism industry, (ii) to analyze the factors influencing the adoption of GHRM practices, and (iii) to propose recommendations for enhancing GHRM implementation, thereby fostering sustainable tourism development in the region.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has emerged as a pivotal approach in organizational studies, especially as companies worldwide increasingly focus on environmental sustainability. This concept involves the integration of environmental management principles into traditional Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. By promoting green practices in key HRM functions such as recruitment, training, performance management, and rewards, GHRM helps organizations align their human capital with their environmental sustainability goals. Consequently, GHRM contributes to reducing an organization's ecological footprint and fostering a more sustainable organizational culture (C. J. C. Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016; D. D. Renwick et al., 2008).

The origins of GHRM can be traced back to the early 1990s, when scholars first proposed the idea of integrating environmental management into HRM processes (D. D. Renwick et al., 2008). Since then, the concept has evolved, with increasing emphasis on the "greening" of HRM practices. Initially, HRM was seen as a passive supporter of environmental goals, but recent studies have revealed its active role in driving sustainability within organizations (J. C. Jabbour, 2011). The integration of environmental considerations into recruitment, employee training, and performance appraisal has become central to aligning employee behavior with sustainability goals. GHRM practices not only promote eco-friendly behavior but also enhance organizational performance by fostering a workforce that is both environmentally conscious and productive (Muster & Schrader, 2011a).

### *The Role of GHRM in Organizational Sustainability*

GHRM has been widely recognized for its potential to contribute to organizational sustainability. By embedding green principles into core HR functions, organizations can achieve a more sustainable competitive advantage (C. J. C. Jabbour et al., 2008). Through practices such as green recruitment, organizations are able to attract environmentally responsible employees who are committed to

sustainable practices (Brammer et al., 2007). Furthermore, green training programs equip employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement sustainability initiatives, while performance management systems that incorporate environmental criteria encourage employees to engage in behaviors that support the organization's environmental objectives. This alignment between organizational goals and employee behavior is essential for achieving long-term sustainability (J. C. Jabbour, 2011).

The benefits of GHRM extend beyond environmental performance. Research indicates that GHRM practices can lead to enhanced employee satisfaction and engagement, which in turn improves overall organizational performance. Companies that integrate GHRM into their operations are more likely to attract and retain talent that is aligned with the company's environmental values, thereby improving employee retention and organizational reputation (D. W. S. Renwick, 2018).

### ***GHRM in the Tourism Industry***

The tourism industry is particularly relevant for the application of GHRM, as it is one of the sectors most affected by environmental concerns. Tourism activities, while economically significant, often result in substantial environmental impacts, including resource depletion, waste generation, and habitat destruction (Chan, 2013). In this context, GHRM practices can help mitigate these negative impacts by promoting sustainable practices among employees.

Tourism organizations that adopt GHRM practices are better equipped to reduce their ecological footprint and contribute to sustainable tourism development. Green recruitment strategies, for example, ensure that employees who are passionate about sustainability are brought into the workforce, while training programs teach employees how to reduce waste and energy consumption (J. C. Jabbour, 2011). Furthermore, incorporating sustainability metrics into performance evaluations helps reinforce the importance of environmental responsibility, ensuring that employees remain committed to the organization's sustainability goals (Muster & Schrader, 2011b).

In Ha Giang, the adoption of GHRM practices in tourism management faces both significant challenges and promising opportunities. Ha Giang, home to the Dong Van Karst Plateau Global Geopark—a UNESCO World Heritage site—has witnessed a surge in tourism, which poses both opportunities and risks for environmental preservation (Sở Văn hóa Thể thao và Du lịch, 2023). While there is growing recognition of the importance of sustainability, the implementation of GHRM remains at an early stage in Ha Giang. Key challenges include a lack of awareness about GHRM practices, insufficient training among employees, and resistance to change from both public administration bodies and private sector stakeholders (Brammer et al., 2007).

However, Ha Giang also presents a unique opportunity to implement GHRM in the tourism sector. As a region known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the adoption of GHRM practices could help balance tourism development with environmental conservation. By leveraging GHRM practices, Ha

Giang can promote sustainable tourism while preserving the ecological integrity of its World Heritage site. Implementing GHRM would also provide competitive advantages for local businesses by enhancing their reputation as environmentally responsible entities, improving employee satisfaction, and attracting green talent (C. J. C. Jabbour & de Sousa Jabbour, 2016).

### ***Conclusion and the Need for Further Efforts***

While GHRM has been shown to improve both environmental performance and organizational competitiveness, the uptake of these practices in Ha Giang has been relatively slow. Despite the clear benefits of GHRM, a focused effort is required to raise awareness, provide training, and foster a culture of sustainability within the tourism and hospitality sectors in Ha Giang. The potential for GHRM to support sustainable tourism development in this region is significant, but it will require concerted efforts from both public and private sectors to realize this potential fully (C. J. C. Jabbour et al., 2008).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that encompasses the operation of green human resource management (GHRM) within the context of sustainable tourism. This framework will define the key research variables—specifically GHRM practices and sustainable tourism development—and outline their importance and dimensions at the community level, building upon previous research as a foundation for this study.
2. To assess the current state of GHRM practices in Ha Giang and evaluate the degree of sustainable tourism development in the region's tourism organizations, including both public and private sectors.
3. To construct a model linking GHRM practices with sustainable tourism development, and to test the reliability of the study's underlying assumptions through statistical analysis.
4. To explore the relationship and influence between GHRM and sustainable tourism development at the community level in Ha Giang, identifying key factors that contribute to the success or failure of GHRM implementation in this sector.

### ***Research Approach***

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research phases. A mixed-method approach allows for the collection of rich, contextual data and helps overcome the limitations inherent in any single research method (Byrd, 2007). Specifically, qualitative data was used to gain insights into HR managers' perspectives on GHRM practices, while quantitative data was used to validate the relationships between these practices and sustainable tourism development (Creswell, 2016).

The mixed-method approach helps capture a nuanced understanding of how GHRM is applied in the tourism industry and its impact on sustainability, combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

### ***Literature Review Methodology***

To establish the theoretical foundation for this study, a methodological repository approach was employed to conduct a comprehensive literature review on GHRM (Tranfield et al., 2003). This approach systematically reviews existing studies and categorizes GHRM practices based on HRM processes—ranging from green recruitment to green complaint handling and resolution—adapting frameworks proposed (Mandip, 2012; D. D. Renwick et al., 2008). The practices were evaluated using Richards et al.'s (1999) three criteria: appropriateness, feasibility, and relevance, to ensure that only the most relevant GHRM practices are incorporated into the study framework (Richards, 1999).

### ***Research Hypotheses***

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Main Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant impact of green human resource management on sustainable tourism development in Ha Giang.

H1: GHRM practices are not widely adopted within official tourism and hotel bodies in Ha Giang.

H2: GHRM practices have a positive impact on the effectiveness of official tourism and hotel bodies in Ha Giang.

### ***Survey Instrument***

The survey instrument was developed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), commonly used in social science research to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions (Cohen et al., 2002). The final survey consisted of ten items specifically designed to measure the adoption of GHRM practices in tourism and hospitality organizations in Ha Giang. These items were derived from a thorough review of the literature to ensure their relevance to the study's objectives.

### ***Population and Sampling Techniques***

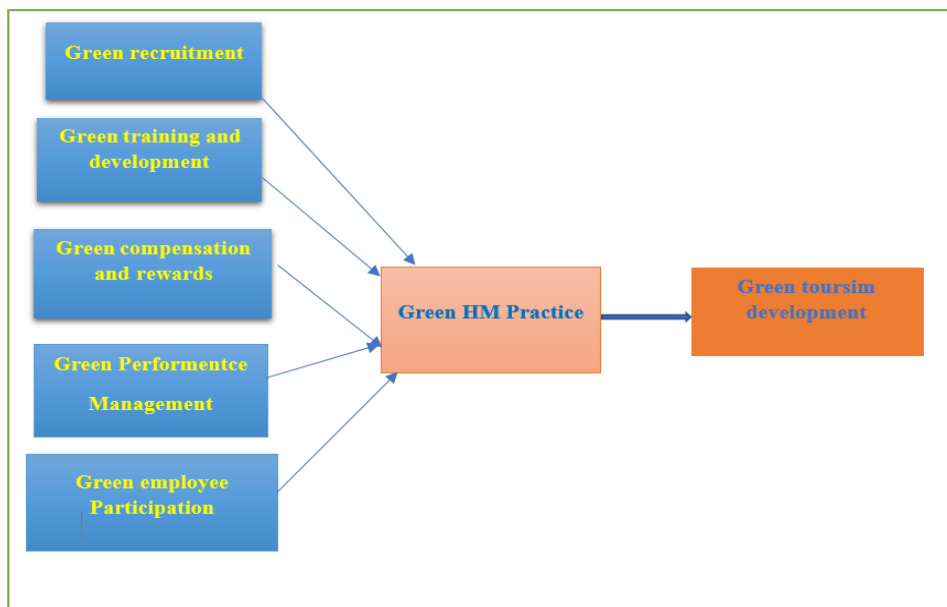
The research was conducted in the Dong Van Karst Plateau Global Geopark area in Ha Giang, which includes the districts of Dong Van, Meo Vac, Quan Ba, and Yen Minh. This area was selected due to its significance in the tourism sector and the increasing need for sustainable tourism practices. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 participants from state management agencies (Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2023) and local accommodation providers (including homestays and hotels). A total of 92 completed surveys were returned, yielding a 92% response rate.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 25) for descriptive analysis, while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using AMOS (version 25) to examine the relationships between GHRM practices and sustainable tourism development. SEM is particularly effective in testing complex models and reducing measurement errors, making it a superior method for evaluating the mediating effects of GHRM on sustainability outcomes (Tarka, 2018).

### ***Research Model***

Below is the proposed research model, aimed at clarifying the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices and sustainable tourism development:



**Figure 1. The relationship between green human resource management and sustainable tourism development**

*Source: Prepared by the researcher*

This research model shows that factors such as green recruitment, green training and development, green compensation and rewards, green performance management, and green employee participation all have a direct impact on GHRM practices, which in turn affect sustainable tourism development. This model assumes that the implementation of GHRM practices will help form an environmentally conscious workforce, thereby promoting sustainable tourism development in Ha Giang. Based on the research hypotheses that the group had previously proposed along with the studies of other authors, the group proposed a research model consisting of 7 variables, including 5 independent variables, 1 intermediate variable and 1 dependent variable (Figure 1).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Survey Descriptive Analysis

The survey aimed to assess the state management agencies in Ha Giang province and their green human resource practices related to tourism management (Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2023). A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, with 92 valid responses received, yielding a 92% response rate. The analysis focused on various green human resource management (GHRM) practices, and the results are summarized in Table 1.



**Descriptive Statistics:** The descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. Among the ten items measured, seven (70%) had mean scores above 3.00. Notably, three items received particularly high mean scores:

"Do you have someone who advocates environmental protection?" (M = 4.91)

"Do you think incorporating green HR practices in human resource management will help in solving environmental problems?" (M = 4.57)

"Lack of support from higher management for green HR practices is considered an obstacle to implementing green HR practices" (M = 4.35)

Conversely, three items had mean scores below 3.00:

"Are green HR practices implemented in your organization?" (M = 1.88)

"Does your organization adopt any green HR management methods?" (M = 1.76)

"Do you know the difference between traditional HR management and green HR management practices?" (M = 1.27)

The standard deviation analysis revealed the highest variation was associated with the item on "green personnel in management practices," indicating inconsistent implementation of these practices (SD = 1.560). The lowest standard deviation was observed in "Are you a supporter of environmental protection?" (SD = 0.283), reflecting strong consensus among respondents.

**Table 1. A Descriptive Analysis**

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Are you an advocate of environmental protection?	4.91	0.283
2	Did you hear about the "Green Human Resources" concept before?	3.77	0.786
3	Does the Human Resources department in your organization work on continuous development?	3.48	0.883
4	Does the Human Resources department in your organization incorporate environmentally friendly practices regularly?	3.21	0.932
5	Lack of support from senior management for green HR practices is an obstacle to implementing green HR practices.	4.35	0.479
6	Do you think incorporating green HR practices in managing human resources will help in addressing environment-related issues.	4.57	0.498
7	Are you aware of the differences between traditional HR management and green HR management practices?	1.27	0.447
8	Does your organization adopt any of the green HR management practices?	1.76	0.429

9	If the answer is yes, which of the following green HR management practices is being incorporated regularly inside your organization?	3.37	1.560
10	Are green HR practices inside your organization helping you?	1.88	0.796

#### 4.1.2. Structural Equation Modelling

##### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: To assess the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. All items were found to load positively onto their respective factors, indicating good construct validity. The composite reliability (CR) for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was above 0.5, confirming convergent validity. Additionally, the factor loadings ranged from 0.5 to 0.820, all significant at the 0.001 level.

**Table 2. Factor loadings, validity analysis, and reliability tests of the measurement model**

Constructs	F. Loadings	CR	£	AVE
EP1	0.523	0.84	0.720	0.64
GC2	0.502			
CD3	0.603			
ER4	0.720			
SO5	0.529			
AI6	0.693			
TG7	0.820			
AP8	0.601			
IO9	0.537			
PH10	0.601			

**Note:** C.R = Composite reliability; A.V.E = average variance extracted; £ = Alpha reliability F.L = All factor loadings were significant at  $\leq .001$

Reliability: The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model (George & Mallery, 2003).

#### 4.1.3. Construct Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

To establish reliability, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct must meet a minimum value of 0.5 (John et al., 1984). The results from Table 2 indicate that all AVE values are above 0.50, confirming the reliability of the model (Hair et al., 2019).



#### 4.1.4. Discriminant Validity (DV)

Discriminant validity was tested by calculating the square root of the AVE for each construct and comparing it with the correlations between constructs. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation between that construct and the others, confirming discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 3. Model of Discriminant Validity for the Measurement**

Constructs	Variance for human resource management practices scale									
	EP1	GC2	CD3	ER4	SO5	AI6	TG7	AP8	IO9	PH10
EP1	<b>0.56</b>									
GC2	0.434	<b>0.56</b>								
CD3	0.286	0.508	<b>0.64</b>							
ER4	0.012	0.305	0.545	<b>0.61</b>						
SO5	0.072	0.328	0.570	0.654	<b>0.73</b>					
AI6	-0.135	0.168	0.367	0.548	0.407	<b>0.74</b>				
TG7	0.501	0.374	0.230	0.058	0.145	-0.187	<b>0.76</b>			
AP8	0.470	0.256	0.174	0.066	0.011	0.031	0.361	<b>0.82</b>		
IO9	0.292	0.411	0.369	0.440	0.562	0.284	0.212	0.266	<b>0.70</b>	
PH10	0.256	0.066	0.168	0.548	0.031	0.361	0.292	0.011	0.548	<b>0.80</b>

**Note:** The squared correlations of each pair of constructs are different values and the values of AVE for the constructs are the values in bold along the diagonal.

#### 4.1.5. Hypotheses Testing and Structural Models

Hypothesis testing was conducted using standardized path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), as shown in Table 4. The results indicated that both hypotheses were supported:

H1: GHRM practices are not widely adopted in Ha Giang's official tourism and hotel bodies ( $\beta = 0.144$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

H2: GHRM practices positively impact the effectiveness of these bodies ( $\beta = -0.183$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 4. Analysis of research hypotheses on direct relationships**

H.	Path.	( $\beta$ )	F. loadings	t-values	p	Results
H1	1	0.144	0.112	3.310	***	Supported
H2	2	-0.183	-0.094	3.566	***	Supported

(H) = Hypothesis; \*Outright t-value  $> 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*Outright t-value  $> 2.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*Outright t-value  $> 3.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

## 4.2. Discussion and Implications

### *Discussion*

The findings of this study indicate a general decline in the adoption of green tourism management practices within the region. Specifically, there has been a significant reduction in the implementation of green practices in areas such as job descriptions, recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and rewards. Furthermore, the number of agencies formally adopting green measures and integrating Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) strategies has noticeably decreased.

However, the study also reveals that the successful application of GHRM practices offers several notable benefits for both the agencies and their employees. These benefits include increased environmental awareness, improved sustainability practices, preservation of intellectual capital, cost reduction, enhanced operational efficiency, and better employee engagement and retention.

Despite these advantages, the study identifies several barriers to the widespread adoption of GHRM. These include the rapid pace of implementing eco-friendly initiatives, a lack of necessary skills to adopt green technologies, low motivation to implement sustainable practices in businesses (although some accommodation providers have shown interest, particularly in attracting international tourists), and cultural resistance, particularly within government-managed tourism agencies. In light of these challenges, the study recommends that official agencies begin incorporating green activities into their operations. Although these activities may involve significant costs in the short term, they are expected to yield long-term benefits, particularly in the realm of human resource management.

### *Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research*

The study has certain limitations. It focuses primarily on green practices within human resource management in official agencies of the tourism and hospitality industry in Ha Giang. Future studies could extend this research to other sectors of the tourism industry, such as private tourism businesses or other regions. The research was limited to managers within state agencies in Ha Giang due to considerations of availability, cost, and time constraints. Thus, future research could broaden its scope by surveying other state management agencies in different provinces. Additionally, the reliance on questionnaires in this study presents a limitation; future research could benefit from integrating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to capture richer data on the experiences of participants.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

**Implement GHRM Practices:** Official tourism management agencies in Ha Giang should adopt GHRM practices due to their positive impact, particularly in light of the province's current tourism development trends. This will help improve the sustainability of tourism practices within the region.

**Promote Ecological Responsibility:** It is essential to introduce ecological responsibilities to employees to foster an environmental mindset. This will encourage the development of a green human resource management culture that aligns with sustainable practices.

**Encourage Green Thinking:** State management agencies and private tourism enterprises should promote "green thinking" among employees, motivating them to contribute to environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources. Organizations should cultivate a green culture in which employees are well-informed about environmental issues and are empowered to address sustainability challenges.

**Training Programs:** Establishing and organizing comprehensive training programs is crucial to raise environmental awareness among employees, particularly in state management agencies and private tourism businesses. This will help build a workforce equipped to implement sustainable practices.

**Cultural Shift in Public Service:** It is important to encourage a cultural shift in public service agencies towards valuing green practices. By fostering such a culture, these agencies can lead by example in adopting sustainable practices.

**Employee Reward Systems:** Developing a reward system for employees who actively engage in GHRM practices will incentivize sustainable behaviors. This reward system should be tailored to the local management structure, ensuring alignment with organizational objectives.

**Recruitment Priorities:** State tourism management agencies should prioritize recruiting employees who are environmentally conscious and have a strong understanding of environmental protection principles. This will help strengthen the green management approach within the sector.

**Use of Technology:** Leveraging modern information and communication technology (ICT) can help minimize the use of machinery and equipment that negatively impacts the environment, particularly within the Geopark area and state management agencies. This will contribute to reducing the environmental footprint of tourism-related operations.

**Link Environmental Criteria to Performance:** It is recommended to develop specific environmental criteria linked to employee performance, particularly in state management agencies. These agencies should take a leadership role in green management and evaluate employees based on their contributions to sustainability initiatives.

**Further Research:** Future research should explore the application of GHRM techniques and their impact on sustainable development in other provinces across the country, extending the understanding of GHRM's role in promoting sustainable tourism development.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has explored and analyzed the role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) in promoting sustainable tourism development in Ha Giang, a province with significant natural and cultural tourism potential. The findings of the study indicate that while GHRM has not been widely implemented in tourism and hotel management agencies in Ha Giang, the adoption of GHRM practices can offer several important benefits, including raising environmental awareness, improving work efficiency,

preserving intellectual capital, reducing costs, and enhancing employee engagement and retention.

Despite these clear benefits, the study also identifies several challenges in adopting GHRM practices. These include a lack of awareness regarding the importance of these practices, insufficient skills to adopt green technologies, low motivation to implement sustainable practices, and cultural resistance, particularly within government-managed tourism agencies. However, the study also highlights that implementing green activities in human resource management, although potentially costly in the short term, can provide long-term benefits, especially in human resource management.

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