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Alex Anlesinya & Pattanee Susomrith

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Sustainable human resource management and social harm of deviant tourism employees

Alex Anlesinya ^a and Pattanee Susomrith^b

^aDepartment of Organisation & Human Resource Management, University of Ghana Business School, Legon, Ghana;

^bSchool of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia

ABSTRACT

Research on how sustainable human resource management (HRM) can alleviate the social harms of tourism employees is limited. Therefore, this study conceptually examines the influence of sustainable HRM on the social harms of deviant tourism employees by drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives. The findings suggest that social harms of tourism employees are the result of social learning. Additionally, they imitate deviant tourists' behaviours, and generate social harms for the stakeholders both in and outside the tourism work environment. However, this can be counterbalanced by sustainable HRM practices that shape social learning forces, and directly reduce social harms. Accordingly, our study contributes by developing a multidisciplinary theoretical framework to guide practices and research on critical social issues within the tourism workplace.

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Introduction

Social issues in the tourism industry are becoming a major concern for stakeholders (Bhati & Pearce, 2016; Wen et al., 2018), particularly, the potential social harms as a result of tourism employees' emulation of socially deviant behaviours. Deviant behaviours violate laws, social norms, and organizational policies (Lugosi, 2019). While some deviant behaviours may lead to innovations and prevent organizational malpractices through resistance (Lugosi, 2019; Pascale et al., 2010), deviant behaviours are generally considered as any behaviours that cause harm or intend to cause harm to the organization or any of its internal and external stakeholders (De Clercq et al., 2020; Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997). The latter is the focus of this study on tourism employees.

In South Florida, tourism employees are 2.21 times more likely to abuse alcohol and engage in harmful alcohol drinking behaviour compared to employees in other industries (Cain et al., 2020). Similarly, in Britain and Ireland, most restaurant managers sampled consider the use of alcohol and drugs as an inherent tourism work culture (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Likewise, alcohol abuse linked with casual sex is prevalent among tourism employees in Canada (Milhausen et al., 2020). Other deviant behaviours among tourism employees include vandalism and violence (Bhati & Pearce, 2016), sexual harassment, and other emerging social issues in the industry (Baum et al., 2016; Wen et al., 2018). This raises concerns that deviant tourism employees' behaviours may be contributing to social harms towards stakeholders, such as employees, their families and the general society. An area of research that may offer some hope is sustainable human resource management (HRM).

Sustainable HRM is concerned with recognizing the complexities of workplace dynamics and the need to limit the negative externalities of work for employees, their family and the wider society (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014). Sustainable HRM practices are aimed at promoting the sustainable management of human resources in ways that positively impact on employees' lives and broader social domains while advancing the cause of the organization (Mariappanadar, 2016).

However, limited literature is available on how sustainable HRM practices can alleviate the social harms of tourism employees. An analysis of a recent thematic review by Baum et al. (2016) on sustainable tourism employment practices and other tourism HRM studies (e.g. Baum, 2018; Melubo & Buzinde, 2016) found that tourism HRM research is mainly economic-centric, as it ignores societal debates and issues associated with tourism works, such as social harms that may be associated with tourism employees' work. This is because available studies on the topic tend to examine the economics of tourism work, such as the influence of HRM practices on the economic performance of tourism firms (see Madera et al., 2017); tourism employee turnover and extra-role behaviours (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020); the role of sustainable HRM practices on customer satisfaction; and the innovativeness of hotels (Wikhamn, 2019) and employee performance (Manzoor et al., 2019). Indeed, the current literature on outcomes of sustainable HRM practices, as evidenced in recent systematic reviews (see Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020; Macke & Genari, 2019), has focused on its role in eliciting organizational benefits and positive behaviours of employees like employee sustainability behaviours, performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour (see Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020; Macke & Genari, 2019). However, research on the link between sustainable HRM and employee deviant behaviours and their associated social harms are rare to find.

In addition, although the literature on deviant behaviours in tourism have examined research themes like forms of deviant behaviours (Lugosi, 2019), consequences (Lugosi, 2019; Plé & Demangeot, 2020), and antecedents of deviant behaviours among tourists and tourism employees (Goh & Kong, 2018; Nisar et al., 2021), the social harms of tourism employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours for multiple stakeholders of tourism is yet to receive major attention.

This is consistent with the emerging views that troubling social issues of tourism employees, such as sexual and physical abuse, which constitutes modern slavery (Mooney & Baum, 2019), and other social harms among tourism employees and societal members are largely neglected (Baum, 2018; Mooney & Baum, 2019). The marginal interest shown in social issues in sustainable tourism research (Baum, 2018; Baum et al., 2016) for economic issues suggests that past researchers have avoided unpalatable issues in the industry (Mooney et al., 2017). Accordingly, Baum et al. (2016) argue that the limited focus on sustainable employee outcomes in the tourism industry is a significant void in the literature. Therefore, it is time that tourism work and employment is analysed not just from a profit maximization perspective, but also from the social perspective, since the sustainable employment outcome is a central component of the sustainable tourism narratives (Baum, 2018; Mooney & Baum, 2019).

Furthermore, it has been found that influential social groups, such as tourists, can encourage deviant acts among tourism employees, and vice versa (Goh, 2020; Goh & Kong, 2018), with several studies suggesting that the social learning theory explains the deviant behaviour of tourists (e.g. Kabiri et al., 2021; Stodolska et al., 2019). However, there is less emphasis on understanding how social learning factors can motivate tourism employees to imitate deviant tourist behaviours and perpetuate the same against their colleagues in the work environment and other stakeholders outside the work context. Given that the tourism work environment is characterized by social harms, it is essential to shed more light on how social learning motivation can affect the social harms of tourism employees to effectively design policies and practical measures to mitigate socially deviant tourist behaviours among tourism employees.

Consequently, using a conceptual analysis, this study critically examines the influence of sustainable HRM practices on the social harms of tourism work from the perspective of the

employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours. To achieve this, the study draws on several theories, including the social harms of work, social learning, stakeholder and sustainable HRM theories. Similarly, in line with previous studies (e.g. Goh & Okumus, 2020), the articles considered relevant for this analysis were selected via an exploratory literature review rather than a systematic review. We searched for "sustainable human resource management, or sustainable HRM", "social harms of work", "social learning theory and deviant behaviours or deviant tourism behaviours" and "social issues in tourism" in key sections of articles. The search was conducted in multiple databases (Emerald, Taylor and Francis, Sage, Wiley and Sons, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar). The search was not limited to any time period. Subsequently, we generated insights from the analyses of the selected articles to develop the research framework and theoretical propositions.

Our study makes an original contribution by bringing together the following two separate fields: sustainable tourism and sustainable HRM. Although they are both in separate disciplines, they are concerned with promoting sustainability in all forms, both in and outside the work environment. This study demonstrates that implementing sustainable HRM practices can serve as a useful buffer for employees who experience the social harms of tourism work, thereby improving their social wellbeing. Moreover, our study has significant value for tourism practitioners and stakeholders, as it highlights a novel way of reducing the social harms of tourism employees through sustainable HRM practices. We further develop a multidisciplinary theoretical framework to guide practices and future research on an important emerging social issue in the tourism workplace.

Sustainable HRM and the social harms of tourism employees' deviant behaviour model

This section discusses a proposed model for sustainable HRM and the social harms of tourism employees. Its main components include concepts of social harms, the social process of the social harms of tourism employees, sustainable HRM, and sustainable HRM buffers for the social harms of tourism employees.

Concept of social harms

The concept of social harms is defined as harms that individuals, firms and countries cause that affect various aspects of social life (Tombs, 2016). It is a situation that significantly compromises the ability of people to flourish. It may include harm to one's autonomy, relations, mental health and other physical circumstances (Pemberton, 2015). The social harms of work theory describes work harm as an impairment of wellbeing for different stakeholders, such as the employees, their family members, and the broader societal members (Mariappanadar, 2016). Therefore, social harm of tourism employees is defined as the intended and unintended deleterious effects of tourism employees' actions on internal (e.g. co-workers) and external stakeholders (e.g. spouses and children of employees, and the general public).

Reasons behind social harms of tourism employees

The motivations that underline the tourism employees' deviant actions with the potential to cause social harms range widely from rationalization of deviant acts (Bowes et al., 2017), disregarding regulations (Goh, 2020), and roles of influential social groups (Goh, 2020; Kabiri et al., 2021). Further reasons include the opportunities within the workplace that enable deviant acts to thrive (Bhati & Pearce, 2016); criminal history (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2002); dissatisfaction and perceived distributive injustice (Hystad et al., 2014); sub-cultures; and aggressive norms (Yu et al., 2020). This suggests that there are various antecedents of social harms of tourism employees.

The social process of the social harms of tourism employees

The social learning theory (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Akers et al., 1995), which has roots in criminology, posits that individuals learn criminal values from their social environment through interactions with other people (Akers & Sellers, 2013). The theory maintains that deviant behaviour consists of inputs (from the environment, i.e. exposure through observation), which leads to a mediation process (mental event), which in turn leads to an output (i.e. behaviour). According to the theory, the learning of deviant behaviours is influenced by the following four social learning factors: *differential association*, *imitation*, *differential reinforcement*, and *definitions* (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Akers et al., 1995; Lilly et al., 2011).

Differential association means that individuals are exposed to criminal actions or deviant behaviours in their social environment. A high rate of differential association motivates individuals to engage in the criminal actions to which they are constantly exposed (Akers & Sellers, 2013). *Imitation* describes the situations whereby individuals exhibit the deviant behaviours to which they were previously exposed by seeing it as worthy of emulating (i.e. modelling behaviours of their role models) (Lilly et al., 2011). *Differential reinforcement* describes the extent to which an individuals' sensitivity to punishments or rewards influences their propensity to engage in or abstain from a deviant behaviour. It involves an individual's comparison of the actual and expected benefits and the costs of engaging in a particular deviant behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Shadmanfaat et al., 2020). Baldwin and Baldwin (1981) assert that "observers tend to imitate modelled behaviour if they like or respect the model, see the model receive reinforcement, see the model give off signs of pleasure, or are in an environment where imitating the model's performance is reinforced" (p. 187). Finally, *definitions* describe people's own attitudes and meanings towards engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Akers et al., 1995). Therefore, individuals' deviant behaviours are based on their perception of the "characteristics of the models, the behaviour observed, and the observed consequences of the behaviour" (Akers & Sellers, 2013, p. 85). Employees are more likely to engage in behaviours for which they have positive or neutral *definitions* (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Shadmanfaat et al., 2020).

Tourism work is frequently considered an area that is characterized by deviant behaviours that can cause social harms to stakeholders, such as transgressions at work (Chapman & Light, 2017), illicit drug abuse (Wen et al., 2018), vandalism, violent behaviours (Bhati & Pearce, 2016), and suicides (Yu et al., 2019). From the perspective of the social learning theory, it is possible for *differential association* to motivate tourism employees to imitate the socially deviant behaviours of tourists. Bhati and Pearce's (2016) integrative review found that vandalism in tourism environments increases when people in such environments witness other tourists engage in acts of vandalism and violence. Similarly, in terms of *imitation*, tourism employees' exposure to socially deviant behaviours of their role models can motivate their acts of deviance. This is similar to Kabiri et al. (2021) findings in Iran, which found that sport fans who observe the aggressive behaviours of their favourite sport personalities are more likely to engage in verbal or physical aggression towards others. This suggests that by witnessing unacceptable behaviours, over time, they become unwritten rules that lead employees to believe that the deviant behaviours are acceptable (Zhu et al., 2011). Therefore, tourism employees' engagement in deviant behaviours can be facilitated by *differential association* and *imitation* within the tourism work environment.

Moreover, *differential reinforcement* can motivate tourism employees' engagement in deviant tourist acts. A study by Goh and Kong (2018) showed that hotel employees in Australia engage in theft behaviours simply because they are excited by the act of committing theft. Recently, Goh (2020) revealed that the need to have more freedom has caused tourists to stray from trails at national parks. Additionally, opportunism, expectations and satisfaction encourages or reinforces vandalism intentions in tourism (Bhati & Pearce, 2016). This implies that *differential reinforcement*, such as excitement about committing a particular deviant behaviour, the need for freedom, and

opportunism may increase tourism employees' rewards against the costs of imitating deviant tourist behaviours.

With respect to *definitions* (i.e. deviant norms, values and attitudes), relaxed attitudes towards risks (Saunders et al., 2019) and pleasure-seeking (Bhati & Pearce, 2016) can increase the frequency of deviant behaviour in tourism environments. Mustaine and Tewksbury (2002) found that people with a criminal history have a higher propensity to steal at work. Similarly, the need to preserve one's identity discourages deviant behaviour in tourism (Ying et al., 2019). This suggests that tourism employees who have positive or neutral definitions towards deviant tourists' behaviours are more likely to imitate them.

While the above information provides useful insights, there is a dearth of research on applying the social learning theory to understand the social harms of tourism employees. Therefore, we argue the following:

Proposition 1: *Social learning factors (greater imitation, differential association, differential reinforcement, and positive/neutral definitions) will increase the propensity of tourism employees to engage in socially deviant behaviour of tourists.*

Furthermore, deviant behaviours in the tourism industry can negatively affect both the perpetrators and other stakeholders (Lugosi, 2019; Plé & Demangeot, 2020) because such behaviours present different significant social harms of tourism employees. In the social context of work, it has been shown that 58% of hotel employees and 77% of casino employees were sexually harassed by tourists or guests in Chicago (Unite Here Local, 2016). Earlier, Moore et al. (2009) found that 80% of men and 64% of women had engaged in hazardous alcohol consumption patterns in the industry. Tourism employees' engagement in these deviant behaviours may lead to various social harms. For example, victims of bullying, harassment and workplace violence often experience trauma and psychological distress, which leads to low job satisfaction and eventual exit from the organization (Bond et al., 2010; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). A recent longitudinal study by Sprigg et al. (2019) found that witnessing bullying significantly impairs the health and wellbeing of employees, as it causes depression and anxiety. The mental health problems caused by employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours, can negatively affect the self-esteem and self-confidence of the victims (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003). Additionally, aggressive behaviours and discriminative practices can lead to social exclusion and destruction of organizational property and other people's belongings (vandalism) (Björkqvist et al., 1994).

Outside the work environment, the employee's engagement in deviant tourist behaviour can harm their family in the form of increased violence or constant assaults against spouses and children, which can lead to family breakdowns, divorce and child neglect (Gmel & Rehm, 2003; Meque et al., 2021); and as a result, social problems among children may increase and persist into adulthood. In addition, it can increase community violence and crimes against others (Gmel & Rehm, 2003). Therefore, we argue the following:

Proposition 2: *Tourism employees' engagement in socially deviant behaviours will result in greater social harms of tourism employees in both work and non-work domains.*

Sustainable human resource management (HRM)

Sustainable HRM is concerned with the use of HRM practices and strategies in ways that promote the economic success of firms while simultaneously promoting the social and ecological wellbeing of the organization's stakeholders (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020; Ehnert, 2009). It is a way of bringing back the "human" element to the practice of HRM in organizations (De Prins et al., 2014). Sustainable HRM acknowledges the unsustainable nature of strategic HRM practices and seeks to

address them. This is because strategic HRM uses efficiency-oriented approaches that are targeted at increasing organizational performance, which, subsequently, cause social harms for employees in the form of work stress and burnouts (Kramar, 2014; Mariappanadar, 2016). Therefore, sustainable HRM is more holistic and proactive in recognizing the ways that organizations can use their HRM systems, processes and activities to create a win-win value for the firm and its internal (e.g. employees), and external stakeholders (e.g. families and societal members).

The sustainable HRM theory has three main perspectives: green HRM, socially responsible HRM, and the triple-bottom line HRM (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020). This research relies on the socially responsible HRM perspective; it aims to address social or societal problems of the social harms of tourism employees. The following section explores key sustainable HRM buffers for the social harms of tourism employees.

Sustainable HRM buffers for the social harms of tourism employees

Sustainable employee training and development

Sustainable employee training and development, which has roots in learning, is concerned with equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and attitudes to benefit themselves and the organization, as well as humanity in general (Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Pinzone et al., 2019). From the perspective of the triple-bottom line HRM, it is seen as the process of equipping employees with the necessary attitudes, abilities, skills and behaviours to achieve green, economic and social sustainability outcomes in an organization. The social sustainability aspect of training and development, which is the focus of this study, is concerned with promoting ethical and socially responsible actions through training initiatives. This is significant because ethical decisions and actions are the key ingredients for the development of sustainable societies (Talan et al., 2020). Ethical considerations in employee training and development can address stakeholder's problems, including eliminating the social harms of work that can potentially threaten the health and well-being of people. Therefore, from the sustainable HRM perspective, the ethical training and moral development of employees are seen as key elements of an organization's sustainable training and development program.

The provision of ethical training as a form of sustainable training and development can help to reduce employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours through the following channels: first, by creating an ethical culture that focuses on positive values and promotes ethical actions and beliefs in employees (see Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Kancharla & Dadhich, 2021); and second, it can assist in increasing ethical awareness among employees to facilitate the desired behavioural and emotional changes. This has the potential to empower the employees who are exposed to deviant tourists' actions to avoid indulging in unethical and socially irresponsible behaviours that can affect their healthy relationship with stakeholders, as they will be well-positioned to assess the moral legitimacy of their decisions and actions (see Institute of Ethics, 2020; Kancharla & Dadhich, 2021) and the associated negative consequences for both others and themselves. This is similar to (Malik & Lenka, 2019) qualitative analysis of the Indian public sector, which suggested that employee ethical training and development programs can minimize employees' deviant behaviours.

In addition to training in ethical values and actions, sustainable training and development can reduce employees' engagement in deviant tourist behaviours by providing them with critical social skills, such as interpersonal, emotional intelligence and communication skills (Chappell & Di Martino, 2006). This can equip them with strategies to cope with stressful ethical and socially deviant situations, which can reduce their imitation of tourists' deviant behaviour.

Based on the preceding, we argue that employee sustainable training and development programs can provide psychological support to tourism employees who are constantly exposed to deviant tourist behaviours, attitudes and values. It helps them to become more aware of the ethical values, culture and social norms that are expected of them, and encourages socially and ethically accepted behaviours. Likewise, training and educating employees on the consequences of engaging in deviant

tourist behaviours can reduce their imitation of the socially deviant behaviour of tourists to which they are exposed in their work environments.

Legal compliance HRM practices

Shen and Zhu (2011) identified legal compliance HRM as a key socially sustainable HRM practice. This sustainable HRM practice imposes a responsibility on the organization to comply with the relevant laws and regulations including the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards for health and safety (Shen & Zhu, 2011). Therefore, compliance with HRM practices and policies will reduce engagement in deviant tourist behaviours by making the tourism organizations comply with the relevant local and international laws on socially responsible labour practices. Additionally, it can be utilized to control and regulate employees' behaviour by internalizing the social responsibility and ethical values among organizational members (Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Shen & Zhu, 2011) by negatively shaping employees' definitions of deviant tourist behaviours. Therefore, instituting human resource (HR) control and ethical codes for employees and other stakeholders in the tourism industry on ethical behavioural requirements can discourage employees from imitating the criminal or deviant acts of tourists.

Moreover, people are innately utility maximizers and tend to act opportunistically (in this case, engage in deviant behaviours). When there is a positive differential reinforcement in the tourism work environment, employees will imitate the criminal behaviours of tourists to which they are exposed. However, the existence of negative differential reinforcement will make the employees who are exposed to tourists' deviant behaviours act in a manner that is consistent with social norms and relevant laws and policies.

Organizations can bring opportunistic behaviours in line with the expected social norms (Malik & Lenka, 2019), organizational policies and regulations. A key method of creating a negative differential reinforcement is by forming and implementing HR disciplinary management to monitor and control the employees' engagement in deviant tourist behaviours. Generally, the key functional mechanisms of employee discipline management are rewarding acceptable behaviours and punishing deviant behaviours. Award schemes for best-behaved employees can encourage them to desist from engaging in deviant tourist behaviours. Similarly, stringent punishment in organizations' HR disciplinary and control policies for the perpetrators of criminal and deviant acts will increase negative differential reinforcement for engaging in the deviant behaviours learnt from deviant tourists. This is consistent with prior empirical evidence (Li & Chen, 2019), which states that establishing behavioural controls and regulatory measures, such as punishments and rewards, can contribute significantly towards suppressing potential deviant tourist behaviours.

From the above, we argue that sustainable HRM practices can reduce employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours through the following two main channels or mechanisms: by shaping *differential association*, *differential reinforcement*, *imitation* (i.e. modelling negative behaviours), and employees' *definitions* of socially deviant tourist behaviours (i.e. attitudes and values towards particular deviant behaviours) and through legal compliance HRM practices by producing a code of conduct and communicating this to employees. Therefore, we argue the following:

Proposition 3: *Sustainable HRM practices (sustainable training and skill development, and legal compliance HRM practices and policies) will do the following: (a) directly reduce tourism employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours; and (b) indirectly negatively shape social learning factors.*

Employee health and safety practices

The socially responsible HRM perspective of the sustainable HRM theory suggests that tourism organizations can reduce the social harms of tourism employees through effective employee health and safety programs, including employee assistance programs. It is essential to recognize that human beings are at the heart of sustainable development. From the perspectives of the work

harms and stakeholder theories, the employees, families and members of society may suffer from the harmful aspects of work (e.g. psychological, social and health harms) (Mariappanadar, 2016).

Therefore, the care of stakeholders is a key sustainable concern in sustainable HRM. It aims at ensuring that work practices cause less harm to the organizations' internal and external stakeholders, including employees' families, so as to promote the occupational health of employees and a healthy and sustainable society (De Prins et al., 2014; Mariappanadar, 2016).

Health and safety practices are concerned with improving the social, physical and mental health of stakeholders, including employees, their families and other external stakeholders (Guest, 2017). These are a critical source of social support that can help stakeholders to overcome social problems (Omari & Paull, 2016), such as the adverse psychological impacts of stressful social experiences (e.g. workplace bullying (Sprigg et al., 2019)) and drinking and drug abuse, which improve self-confidence and self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Similarly, social counselling is an integral component of occupational health management, which can be deployed to support employees involved in conflicts at work and in their private lives to enhance their wellbeing (Hoeppel, 2014).

This means that providing health and safety services and employee assistance programs, such as counselling and stress management, can help victims of harassment, violence and bullying, and employees with alcohol and drug addictions to overcome psychological challenges, thereby reducing the social harms of tourism work. Therefore, we argue the following:

Proposition 4: *Sustainable HRM practices (employee health and safety practices) will directly reduce the social harms of tourism employees in both work and non-work domains.*

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model of sustainable HRM practices and the social harms of tourism work based on the above propositions. It shows that social learning factors are critical antecedents of tourism employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours, which in turn creates social harms for the stakeholders both within and outside the social context of tourism work. This is followed by the mechanisms through which sustainable HRM practices play buffering roles

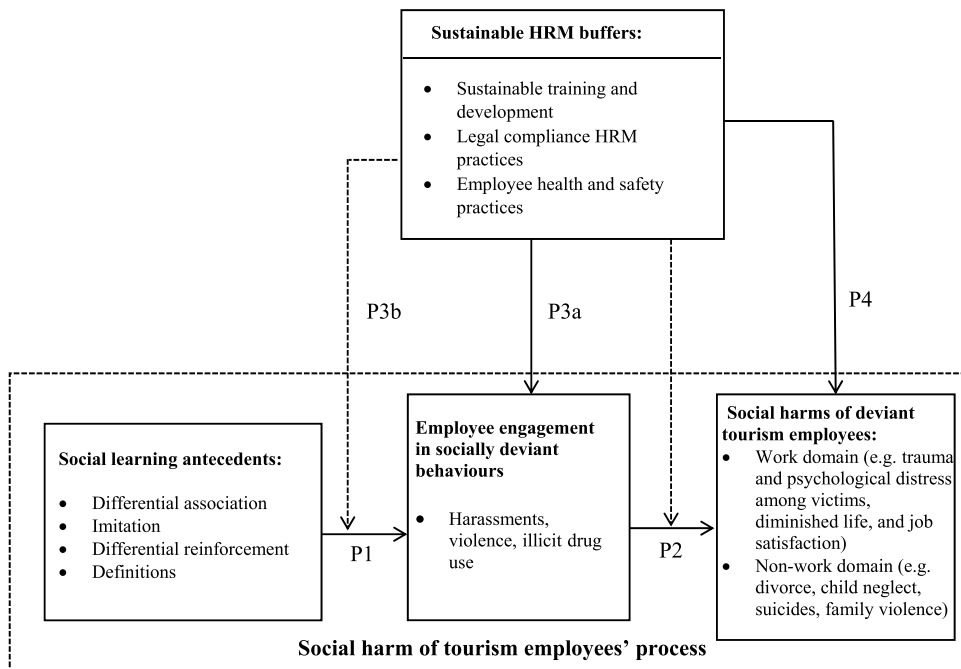


Figure 1. A model of sustainable HRM and the social harms of tourism employees.

against the social harms associated with employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours.

Conclusion and implications

While tourism work is blamed for its various social harms for stakeholders, limited literature is available on how sustainable HRM practices can counteract the social harms of tourism employees. Consequently, this study advances the theory of sustainable HRM in tourism settings by leveraging multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives to raise awareness of a key emerging social issue in the workplace within the tourism industry and suggests how to deal with the social harms of tourism employees. It has contributed towards extending the application of the social learning theory from the field of criminology to highlight the process of the social harms of tourism work. It shows that social harms of tourism work resulting from employees' engagement in socially deviant tourists' behaviours may be facilitated by conducive social learning conditions. Specifically, tourism employees engage in socially deviant tourist behaviours because of social learning forces of *differential associations*, *differential reinforcements*, *imitations*, and *definitions* that support deviant behaviours. Unfortunately, several stakeholders may face social harm issues due to employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours in the form of the negative social effects of tourism work expanding to family domains (e.g. divorce, increased community violence and crimes), and social work contexts (e.g. increased incidents of discrimination/stigmatization, mental health problems, interpersonal conflicts, accidents and injuries, and diminished life and job satisfaction). Therefore, we expand the scope of the social learning theory beyond its dominant application of explaining the deviant behaviour of tourists to understand the spill-over effect of tourism employees' imitation of deviant tourist behaviours on tourism stakeholders, both within and outside the work context.

Furthermore, it extends the sustainable HRM theory by demonstrating how sustainable HRM practices can act as a buffer for the social harms of tourism employees that threaten the wellbeing of tourism work and non-work stakeholders. This is significant because, although social tourism problems are increasingly prevalent, there is limited knowledge on sustainable HRM mechanisms for alleviating social harm of tourism employees and stakeholders. This paper addresses this void by showing that sustainable HRM practices can reduce employees' engagement in socially deviant tourist behaviours through the following two main mechanisms: first, by shaping employees' *definitions*, *differential association*, and *imitation* of socially deviant tourist behaviours through sustainable training and development; and, second, by *differential reinforcement* via legal compliance HRM practices that increase employees' awareness of the actual and expected punishments for engaging in such behaviours.

Moreover, this study extends the social harms of work theory and stakeholder theory to the tourism settings by drawing attention to the key preventive mechanisms for countering the negative aspects of tourism work on stakeholders by proposing potential sustainable HRM buffers.

In addition, this study has contributed to tourism HRM research by developing a multidisciplinary theoretical framework and proposes a future research agenda on an important emerging social issue in the workplace, focusing on employees in the tourism industry. It has highlighted the differential roles of various sustainable HRM practices by addressing the social process of the social harms of tourism work whereby sustainable training and development and legal compliance HRM reduce socially deviant tourist behaviours of tourism employees, and health and safety practices constitute direct prevention and coping resources for victims of social harms of tourism work. In doing this, we seek to create a novel research agenda at the intersection of sustainable tourism and sustainable HRM. It provides a useful future opportunity for empirical contributions to the sustainable HRM theory in tourism by testing the proposed multidisciplinary model on sustainable HRM and social harms of tourism work in different tourism work contexts. Similarly, comparative empirical examinations of the model in different geographical settings can be useful contributions to tourism HRM research and knowledge.

Future studies may test the proposed model among different demographic groups of tourism employees. This is because research suggests that deviant behaviours among young, male, less-educated tourism employees tend to be greater compared to older, highly-educated, female tourism employees (Belhassen & Shani, 2012; Goh & Kong, 2018). Likewise, the social harms of alcohol use are more prevalent among young people (Meque et al., 2021). Future studies could be conducted on hotel employees in different job roles (front-line vs back-room staff), as research (e.g. Belhassen & Shani, 2012) has shown that deviant behaviour is more prevalent among front-line tourism employees.

Future research on the topic may be investigated using quantitative and/or qualitative methods. Qualitative techniques, like in-depth interviews and focus groups, can provide further insights and knowledge on how the social harms of tourism employees' deviant tourist behaviours develop, which stakeholders are mostly targeted, and the common social harms (e.g. mental health harms, relational, physical) that are frequently inflicted on their targets. It would be useful in providing in-depth empirical knowledge on the buffering roles of sustainable HRM practices. Additionally, quantitative methods may be applied to generalize the proposed model to specific groups of tourism employees. It is highly recommended that such studies utilize rigorous analytical techniques and data to ensure the quality of their conclusions. The mixed method will be particularly useful for examining the proposed model because research on sustainable HRM (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020) and socially deviant behaviours in tourism (Wen & Meng, 2021) mostly use quantitative and qualitative methods, respectively.

In conclusion, this study highlights a critical emerging social issue by positing that the social harms of tourism employees for stakeholders, both in and outside the tourism work environments, are a result of the process of social learning, which in turn, generates social harms. However, sustainable HRM practices can interact with social learning factors by affecting employees' social learning motivations of deviant tourist behaviours to reduce the social harms of tourism employees' behaviours. Finally, it is essential to recognize that the conceptual analysis method may limit the study's conclusions. Since this study did not use the systematic review method, it is possible for seminal articles to be ignored in our analysis on the topic. Hence, future research may conduct a full comprehensive and well-structured systematic review of the topic.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Alex Anlesinya (PhD) is a multiple award-winning Researcher and Management Trainer. He is Associate Editor of *Review of Business Management (RBGN)*, and Training Facilitator/Adjunct Lecturer at GIMPA Academy of Leadership and Executive Training. He has consulted for several institutions in Ghana. Alex is a recipient of seven (7) best research paper Awards including the prestigious Emerald Literati Award and overall best student awards and valedictorian. He has authored several peer-reviewed articles in ranked journals and presented his research in top international conferences. Alex researches at the intersection of organization, human resources and sustainability, specifically, talent management, sustainable HRM, decent work, sustainability/CSR strategy, and organization development.

Pattanee Susomrith (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. Pattanee is an associate editor of *Journal of Management Development* and a member of several editorial boards of reputable journals. She has published in leading journals, authored book chapters and conference proceedings. She is also a Western Australian State Councilor of Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI). Her research interests are in human resource management (particularly sustainable HRM, workplace training, learning, development, talent recruitment, HRM in SMEs, and organisational behaviour (innovative work behaviour).

ORCID

Alex Anlesinya  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5439-4672>

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