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Double-Edged Effects of Socially Responsible Human Resource Management on Employee Task Performance and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Mediating by Role Ambiguity and Moderating by Prosocial Motivation

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Abstract: Previous literature has explored the positive effects of socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) on employees, leaving potential dark sides largely ignored. By integrating situational-strength theory and motivation literature, this study investigates the double-edged effects of SRHRM on employee performance. Based on a sample of 314 employee–supervisor dyads from three companies, we found that SRHRM could increase employees’ organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) while decreasing their task performance through role-ambiguity mediation. Interestingly, prosocial motivation serves as a significant moderator in strengthening the positive relationship between SRHRM and OCB and the negative association between SRHRM and task performance. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of how managers should conduct SRHRM practices among employees.

Keywords: double-edged effects; SRHRM; employ performance; OCB; role ambiguity; prosocial motivation

1. Introduction

As a cross-disciplinary concept, socially responsible human resource management (SRHRM) has long captured widespread attention from both scholars and practitioners [1–5]. Conceptually, SRHRM refers to a set of human resource management practices aimed at implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) values [4,5], typically including recruiting employees who are concerned with social welfare, providing CSR training programs, and associating employee performance in CSR activities with performance appraisal, compensation, and promotion. Such HRM practices help to engage employees in CSR activities and gradually transform employee responsibility awareness into organizational competitiveness and sustainable development. Indeed, evidence has shown that SRHRM has pronounced effects in promoting positive employee outcomes, such as commitment [3], task performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) [4], employee support for external CSR initiatives [5], and competitive performance [6].

Despite its favorable influence on employee performance, some scholars argued that SRHRM may also bring about potential problems [4]. For example, as a kind of practice to convey social concern and aid, SRHRM urges employees to stay true to their values for caring and helping during their daily work, which may lead to the ambiguity and confusion on whether to follow organizational performance or

social welfare [7]. Just as some researchers have noted, SRHRM may expose employees to the risk of distractions from work [4]. Scholars in the HRM domain documented that organizational practices such as high-performance work systems (HPWPs), defined as “system of HR practices designed to enhance employees’ skills, commitment, and productivity in such a way that employees become a source of sustainable competitive advantage” [8], may serve as prominent contextual stressors that result in negative employee outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion [9], decreased engagement [10], and lower subjective well-being [11]. Similarly, extant studies in the altruism domain also highlighted the potential dark side of helping in the workplace. For example, when employees are encouraged to be more helpful and caring, they will feel compelled to do so, which in turn results in overload, role conflict, ambiguity, and reduced performance levels [12]. In other words, SRHRM may bring about risks while motivating positive employee impact. Unfortunately, to date, few efforts were made to empirically examine the double-edged effects of SRHRM.

Role ambiguity is one of the most commonly studied work stressors in the occupational health literature, followed by work conflict and work overload [13]. Role conflict refers to simultaneous contradictory expectations from work colleagues that interfere with one another and make it difficult to complete work tasks [14]. Role overload describes situations in which employees feel that there are too many responsibilities or activities expected from them given time availability, their abilities, and other constraints [15]. We posit that, in the case of SRHRM, role ambiguity would arise as a prominent issue because the goal of SRHRM is to convey wide-reaching benefits to society as a whole, rather than merely pursue business performance. In this respect, ambiguous orientation may bring employees to a dilemma as to what is really expected. Put simply, role ambiguity shaped by SRHRM acts as a threat or stressor that blurs work expectations and distracts employees. As such, we identify role ambiguity as a potential mediating mechanism to explain the double-edged effects of SRHRM.

According to situational-strength theories, ambiguity results in two kinds of situations, the strong and the weak situation [16,17]. The former means high conformity, consensus, and consistency, while the latter implies ambiguity, openness, and diversity. In this case, employees are more likely to be driven by individual differences in an ambiguous situation, which encourages the free expression of trait, disposition, and motivation. Prosocial motivation, defined as the desire to have a positive impact on other people or social collectives [18], is one of the most prevalent factors guiding employees’ behaviors in the workplace [19]. People with high prosocial motivation are assumed to be more sensitive to the welfare of others [12]. Accordingly, SRHRM practices, aimed at making a positive difference to others, may capture the attention of employees with high prosocial motivation, and then shape their subsequent behaviors. Therefore, we identify prosocial motivation as the boundary condition moderating SRHRM effectiveness.

Particularly in the context of SRHRM, role ambiguity arises because of unclear boundaries between social and organizational goals. This may constitute a situation where employees are given more discretion and freedom to make their decisions. In particular, those who are prosocially motivated may be diverted to more helping behaviors, such as OCB, and possibly less so towards task performance, just as a positive response to SRHRM practices. In other words, prosocial motivation may have an enabling effect on the relationship between role ambiguity and employee OCB, and a constraining effect on the relationship between role ambiguity and employee task performance. However, the contingent role of prosocial motivation in the relationship between role ambiguity and performance has not been theoretically developed or empirically examined [19]. Thus, to progress the existing research, an empirical investigation is needed to discover the double-edged effects and the underlying mechanisms of SRHRM.

Drawing on the stressor literature and situational-strength theories, we explore the double-edged effects of SRHRM. In particular, we examine the link between SRHRM and task performance as well as OCBs through the mediation of role ambiguity. Moreover, we investigate the moderating role of prosocial motivation on SRHRM influence, that is, we report the enabling and constraining effects of role ambiguity on employee OCB and task performance, respectively. Most notably, our

focus in this study is on an individual analysis level. Despite previous studies on SRHRM primarily focusing on cross-level analysis, there is also a growing research interest in understanding employee perceptions of and reactions to SRHRM practices. For example, Newman et al. [20] examined the associations of employee perceptions of three-dimensional SRHRM and OCB. Similarly, Kundu and Gahlawat [20] introduced a four-component approach to measure SRHRM, based on Shen and Benson's three-dimensional SRHRM [3]. They then empirically conducted a series of individual-level studies exploring the relationship between employees' perceived SRHRM and intention to quit [20], satisfaction [21], trust, motivation, affective commitment [22], and higher extra-role behavior [23] in an Indian context. Indeed, just as prior researchers claimed, they said that it is employees' perceptions rather than actual HRM practices that affect employees' subsequent attitudes and behaviors [24–26].

Generally, our research makes a number of important contributions. First, we advance the SRHRM literature by extending the scope of SRHRM's influence by investigating its negative consequences. A research model (shown in Figure 1) was developed to explain why SRHRM may divert employees from task performance to OCB. Second, we identified role ambiguity as the underlying mediating mechanism and prosocial motivation as the boundary condition for the double-edged effects of SRHRM. Third, this study contributes to the areas of sustainability psychology and sustainable development by joining the burgeoning movement of recognizing and adopting the value of psychology and the psychological approach in promoting sustainable development. In sum, our research paints a comprehensive view of whether, why, and under which circumstances SRHRM may have double-edged effects on employees, ultimately contributing to bridging theory and practice.

2. Theory and Hypothesis Development

2.1. SRHRM

SRHRM is an academically compound construct connecting the CSR domain and the HRM literature. With the ongoing development of globalization and rising concern for social problems, how to practically implement CSR values into business practices is an urgent issue [27,28]. In response to this challenge, several scholars proposed the idea of implementing CSR with human resource management practices, that is, SRHRM. Orlitzky and Swanson [29] were the first to theorize the use of human resource management functions to conduct CSR activities. For example, recruiting programs consider employee ethics, personality traits, and diversity, relevant training is offered to improve employees' communication and participation skills about CSR activities, compensation indicators cover economic and social aspects, and performance appraisals focus on both financial and social goals. In addition, Strandberg [30] developed ten criteria to conduct CSR with HRM functions—such as building vision, value, and CSR strategy—outlining employee behavior and communication guidelines. Generally, all of those practices are enacted to put CSR into practice and thus sustain competitive development in the long run [31,32].

Three critical components of SRHRM should be noted. First, SRHRM is a type of strategic human resource management like selective hiring, extensive training, performance appraisal, and compensation. At its essence, it is a tool to implement CSR. Second, SRHRM aims at striking a balance between organizational and social performance. Distinct from the high-performance work system (HPWS), which mainly pursues business performance, SRHRM not only cares about organizational outcomes but is also concerned with broader social welfare. Third, SRHRM achieves its goal by engaging employees in the process of CSR implementation. For example, it cultivates employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and fosters employees' motivation to participate in CSR activities by providing training and attractive rewards.

2.2. SRHRM and Ambiguity

As mentioned above, SRHRM is typically a set of human resource management practices aimed at implementing CSR values. This includes recruiting employees who are interested in CSR,

providing training programs to outline details and the importance of CSR employees, and linking appraisal, promotion, and compensation to employees' performance in CSR activities. With various human resource management practices, SRHRM could instill the idea of responsibility and caring into employees, and thus encourage them to make a positive difference from their positions [33]. By doing so, organizations could gain sustainable development in the long run. Indeed, evidence has shown that SRHRM can contribute to two typical organizational outcomes, task performance and OCBs [4,23,34], through organizational identification, suggesting that SRHRM can be a key contributor to organizational success.

However, despite the favorable effects of SRHRM, there is a possibility that SRHRM has certain negative consequences, such as increasing job stress. In fact, previous studies identified HR practices as important stressors in an organizational context. For example, Kroon et al. [35] found that HPWS, as a source of pressure, heightens job demands for employees, which aggravates their emotional exhaustion. Grounded on job-demand-control theory, Jensen, Patel, and Messersmith [36] also noted that the presence of HPWS could lead to employee strain, including anxiety and role overload, which then results into high turnover intentions.

As was noted before, role ambiguity refers to vague and unclear expectations set for employees, such that they are uncertain of what is expected from them [15]. For example, when employees are not clear about what they are expected to do, how to perform their role, or whose expectations should be given priority. Since its inception into the organizational-psychology domain, role ambiguity has emerged as one of the most studied stressors by organizational scholars [37,38]. In the case of SRHRM, we propose that responsible HR practices would blur work expectations and foster role ambiguity. We demonstrate our point of view with the following two arguments.

First, SRHRM may blur work expectations as to what the focus should be. Distinct from previous HRM, such as HPWS, which aimed at improving organizational performance, SRHRM is aimed at striking a balance between organizational performance and social welfare. This means that SRHRM adds to a new work direction, targeted at improving overall social welfare. When facing such organizational practices and policies, it is difficult to choose when the two goals are not fully congruent. For example, some scholars have contended that organizations engaged in CSR initiatives (such as volunteering programs), may be characterized by vague goals and competing interests, which may lead to employee confusion about which goals they should prioritize first [39,40]. Relatedly, based on data from women's clinics, Merrell [41] found that volunteers within formal organizations are likely to experience ambiguity, as roles and expectations may not normally be clearly differentiated.

Second, SRHRM may confuse employees on how to work. SRHRM not only adds to new work content, but also calls for a new way of finishing tasks, such as improving job efficiency and producing environmental products. For example, companies in architecture and product design need to create environmentally friendly solutions to reduce costs and increase profitability [42]. Just as Di Fabio [43] mentioned, creative thinking is essential for creating win-win solutions to ensure sustainable development and global growth. In fact, prior research in the CSR literature found that employees' creative involvement in work tasks is needed when a company tries to apply business logic to solve social problems [44]. In the context of SRHRM, this means that employees are supposed to change their traditional interpretation of work and think of creative new ways to improve work, which may lead to employee ambiguity as to how to work. Therefore, we formally state our hypothesis as below:

Hypothesis 1. *SRHRM is positively related to role ambiguity.*

2.3. Role-Ambiguity Mediation

Role ambiguity generally means vague and unclear expectations set for employees, such that employees are uncertain about what is expected from them. Ample evidence has shown that role ambiguity has a detrimental influence on both individuals and organizations, such as decreasing performance [45], satisfaction [46], and commitment [47].

To understand the consequences of role ambiguity resulting from SRHRM, we introduce the situational-strength framework proposed by Mischel [16]. According to this framework, ambiguity causes two kinds of situations: the strong and the weak situation. In particular, low ambiguity constitutes a strong situation, which gives rise to a common construal, uniform expectations, and adequate incentives. In contrast, high ambiguity causes a weak situation that is open to interpretation. That is, under low ambiguity, employees act based on the availability of clear roles, norms, and rewards, regardless of their own traits and preferences. However, under high ambiguity, without clear expectations, employees are more inclined to turn inward to decide what to do and how to finish their work. Consistent with this logic, we suggest that role ambiguity constitutes a weak situation under which employees have more freedom to interpret their job and decide how to work on their own. In the context of SRHRM, we conjecture that, particularly under role ambiguity, employees are more inclined to engage in OCBs than task performance.

First, role ambiguity may result in vague work goals. Task performance and OCBs are the most valuable and desirable goals of organizations [47]. Task performance is defined as the expected behaviors “that are directly involved in producing goods, services, or activities that provide indirect support for the organization’s core technical processes” [48]. OCB, on the other hand, is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by a formal reward system, and that, in the aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the organization” [49]. The former is closer to being business-oriented, while the latter is society-oriented [50]. When facing ambiguous work demands and job descriptions, employees are more likely to act based on abstract values rather than concrete guidance. Therefore, following the values of caring and helping advocated by SRHRM, employees would shift their focus from a business-oriented performance, reflected by task performance, to society-oriented performance, such as OCBs.

Second, role ambiguity may blur work content. Role ambiguity constructs a weak situation where employees are uncertain about how to conduct a task, and how their performance would be evaluated by their organizations. According to theories of situational strength, individuals are entitled to more freedom to develop their own interpretation about work content under a weak situation [46]. As such, the definition of roles and responsibilities then guides employees to engage in behaviors consistent with organizational orientation in the workplace.

Following this logic, when work content is not clearly specified, and the boundary between in-role and extra-role behavior is not clear, employees may define this kind of behavior, such as helping colleagues, as an in-role duty [51]. Given that SRHRM and OCB share the same core values of responsibilities and social concern, employees easily construe OCB as part of their work duties to respond to SRHRM policies. Indeed, research argued that employees tend to perform OCBs when they view them as a role obligation rather than discretionary. Studies already empirically revealed the mediating mechanism of role ambiguity between leadership style and OCB [52]. Relatedly, other researchers found that, as organizational context, role ambiguity serves as a moderating factor affecting employee OCB [53].

As for task performance, scholars have long recognized its negative association with role ambiguity [52]. A predominant explanation is that exposure to role ambiguity consumes individuals’ cognitive resources. When employees devote more cognitive resources to coping with role ambiguity, they have fewer resources available for effectively and consistently monitoring and enacting necessary behaviors for performing assigned job duties and responsibilities [54]. Furthermore, some scholars have pointed out that exposure to role ambiguity can even hinder employees’ ability to attain personal and professional goals at work [55], and lowers morale, as indicated by lower job satisfaction [56]. In line with these findings, some research reported a negative correlation between role ambiguity and task performance through satisfaction mediation [52]. Taken together, we can expect that employees would, at the same time, be distracted to engage more with OCBs than task performance. Therefore, we put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. *Role ambiguity is positively related to OCB.*

Hypothesis 2b. *Role ambiguity is negatively related to task performance.*

Hypothesis 3a. *Role ambiguity mediates the relationship between SRHRM and OCB.*

Hypothesis 3b. *Role ambiguity mediates the relationship between SRHRM and task performance.*

2.4. Moderation of Prosocial Motivation

As noted above, under low ambiguity, employees largely act based on the availability of clear roles, norms, and rewards, while under high ambiguity, employees are more inclined to act based on personal differences. Particularly, under highly ambiguous situations, one may turn to their own judgement standards, such as personality, values, and motivation. Previous research shows that prosocial motivation, defined as the desire to expend efforts to benefit other people, is an important factor shaping employee attitudes and behaviors [57]. Similar to SRHRM, prosocial motivation highlights the social aspect of work and reflects employees' genuine concerns about how their actions can affect others' well-being. In this study, we conceptualized that prosocial motivation could serve as an important individual difference to influence how employees respond to task performance and OCBs when facing role ambiguity caused by SRHRM. Prosocial motivation, in particular, could strengthen the positive association between role ambiguity and OCBs, and the negative relationship between role ambiguity and task performance.

First, prosocial motivation encourages people to adopt others' perspectives. Studies in the motivated information-processing domain revealed that prosocial motivation shapes cues that individuals selectively notice, encode, and retain [58]. In particular, when employees are prosocially motivated, their desire to benefit others leads them to pay much more attention to other perspectives in order to identify ways to effectively help people. Just as Grant and Berg [59] explained, prosocial motivation encourages individuals to collect information from multiple perspectives, which, in turn, contributes to processing social information. Following this view, a person driven by high prosocial motivation is more likely to put themselves in another person's shoes, consider others' needs, and interpret the environment in a caring way, thus engaging in subsequent helping behaviors. Conversely, those who are less prosocially motivated may focus on their own goals and not care about what others think or need, thus missing opportunities to have a positive impact on others.

Second, as an other-focused psychological process, prosocial motivation directs employees' attention toward others' needs. It has been assumed that individuals with high prosocial motivation tend to have a positive impact on others' lives rather than focusing on mere self-advancement [60]. In fact, research has shown that prosocial motivation is associated with higher personal initiatives, such as OCB, by enabling dedication to a cause [61], a commitment to people who benefit from one's efforts [62], and a willingness to accept and utilize negative feedback [63]. In this case, when guided by prosocial motivation to benefit others, employees are more likely to channel their attention toward such opportunities in order to meet others' demands and display behaviors construed as OCBs. However, on the other hand, those who have low prosocial motivation may be more focused on their own personal returns and benefits. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4a. *Prosocial motivation positively moderates the relationship between role ambiguity and OCB, such that the positive relationship between role ambiguity and OCB is stronger for employees with high prosocial motivation.*

In addition to the focus on others' needs, scholars have assumed that those guided by prosocial motivation are described as givers, who are less concerned about personal risks and threats [64], and "accept social information without carefully weighing its personal consequences" [65]. This means that those who are fueled by high prosocial motivation pay much more attention to helping others rather

than to their own interests. In this view, people are likely to be attracted to such activities as helping others without consideration of their own interests, such as ignoring their own task performance. Indeed, several scholars in the organizational-behavior domain revealed that the experience of helping other may promote other types of focused attention, leave insufficient time to successfully complete one's tasks, and make one find themselves distracted from concentrating on core work activities [66]. In contrast, employees who are less prosocially motivated can devote more resources and time to their work, thus achieving better task performance. For these reasons, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4b. *Prosocial motivation positively moderates the relationship between role ambiguity and task performance, such that the negative relationship between role ambiguity and task performance is stronger for an employee with high prosocial motivation.*

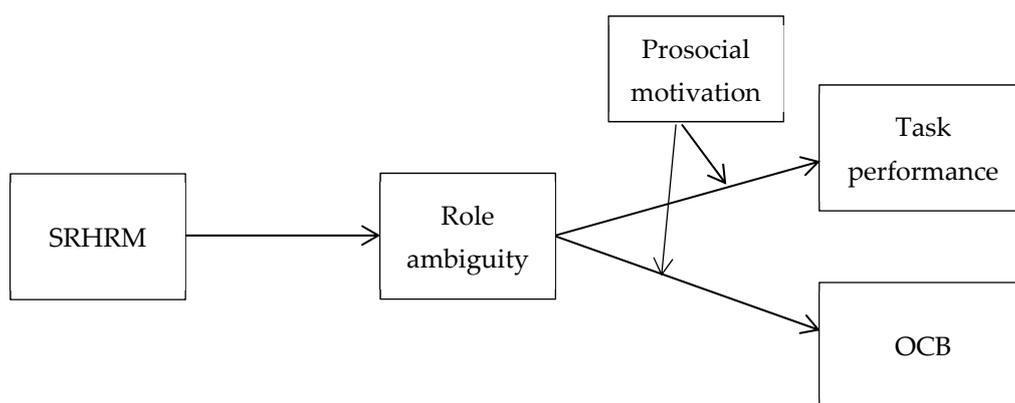


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model of the relationship between Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (SRHRM) and employee organizational and social performance.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Sample and Procedure

We tested our hypothesis based on a sample of 314 employee–supervisor dyads from three enterprises in the manufacturing, service, and banking industries of Southeast China. To guarantee the validity of samples, we considered the following factors when selecting the companies. First, we checked the company websites and communicated with executives to make sure the company established HRM practices concerning CSR. Second, any company whose primary business was not closely related to CSR was not considered. Third, companies with fewer than 500 employees were not considered, as they may not have sufficient resources to build up an SRHRM system.

Our data-collection procedures were as below. We communicated with human resource managers to introduce this study, including the research purpose, guidelines of the operation process, and what we need from them, such as identifying line managers for participation. Second, human resource managers connected with line managers and asked them, with a list of names, to randomly select one–four subordinates who could participate. Line managers were also asked to evaluate the selected employees' performance in the supervisor questionnaire. After that, we obtained a list of all employees who could participate in the survey. Third, with the help of human resource managers, all participants convened in a conference room. They were informed of the purpose of the survey and assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Employees provided data for their demographic variables, SRHRM, role ambiguity, and prosocial motivation, while their supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates' task performance and OCBs. We assigned an identification number to each questionnaire in order to match subordinates with their supervisors' evaluations. We also provided each participant with an envelope in which to seal the finished questionnaire for the purpose of response confidentiality and reliability. We controlled the

process in order to ensure that all participants completed the survey voluntarily and anonymously. We conducted all of these procedures according to the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki. Furthermore, our research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Hua Zhong University of Science and Technology.

In sum, we sent 400 questionnaires to 112 line managers and obtained 314 valid questionnaires from 105 line managers and their 314 subordinate employees, with a response rate of 78.5% from employees and 93.8% from line managers. In the 314 employees, 51.6% were men, while 48.4% were women. In terms of age, 74.7% were aged 30 or below, 24% between 30 and 40, and 1.3% were aged 40 or above. Regarding education, 10.5% had only finished high school, 61.5% had a college degree, and 28.1% held a bachelor or above degree.

3.2. Measures

We created Chinese versions for all measures following the commonly used translation-back-translation procedure [67] to ensure that all English-based measures were accurately translated. A group of researchers translated the scale from English to Chinese, and the other from Chinese to English. Then, we compared both versions and resolved the differences in the dual translation so as to ensure questionnaire accuracy. All measures used the same response scale, a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

SRHRM was measured by a six-item scale originally developed by Orlitzky and Swanson [29], later adopted by Shen and Benson [4] in their empirical study. A sample item was “my company provides adequate CSR training to promote CSR as a core organizational value”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.90.

Role ambiguity was measured using a six-item scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman [15]. A sample item was “I know exactly what is expected of me”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.83.

Prosocial motivation was measured by a four-item scale developed by Grant [68]. An introductory question asked, “why are you motivated to do your work?” A sample item was “because I care about benefiting others through my work”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.83.

Task performance was measured by the five-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson [69], and later adapted by Hui, Law, and Chen [70] in the Chinese context. A sample item was “adequately complete assigned duties”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.86.

OCB was measured by the nine-item scale developed by Farh, Hackett, and Liang [71], which was developed and validated in China. A sample item was “initial assistance to coworkers who have a heavy workload”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.84.

The variables of employee age and gender were controlled, as they could have influenced employees’ interpretation of and responses to organizational policies, task performance, and OCBs [72].

3.3. Estimation Method

We first conducted the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a method used in data analysis to examine the expected causal connections between variables [73], to evaluate the discriminant validity of the key variables. Then, we tested our hypotheses by structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis with the Mplus 7 software package, with all latent variables indicated by their observed items. SEM analysis allowed us to simultaneously test the effects of the independent variables, mediator, and moderator in the context of comprehensive models, as suggested by Edwards and Lambert [74]. In particular, the direct effects of SRHRM on the two performance outcomes and the mediator were tested by structural equation analysis. For testing the indirect effects, a Monte Carlo method simulation computed with 95% confidence intervals was applied. To model interactions with latent variables, we implemented the latent moderated structural equation approach [75]. This approach provided unbiased estimates of interaction effects between latent variables that are corrected for measurement errors.

4. Results

We show our descriptive statistics in Table 1, including means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	28.71	3.87						
Gender	1.42	0.49	−0.03					
SRHRM	5.24	0.99	0.04	0.23 **				
Ambiguity	5.50	0.97	0.00	0.21 **	0.21 **			
Task performance	4.93	1.17	0.01	−0.04	−0.15 *	−0.14 *		
OCB	5.54	0.82	0.00	−0.09	0.08	0.15 **	0.05	
Prosocial motivation	5.44	1.01	0.14 *	−0.07	0.14	0.40 *	−0.07	0.15 **

Notes. N = 314. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; and *** $p < 0.001$. Consistent with our expectations, SRHRM was positively correlated with role ambiguity ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). Role ambiguity was positively correlated with OCBs ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$), and negatively correlated with task performance ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2 shows that the hypothesized five-factor model fit the data well: $\chi^2/df = 2.44$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.89, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.88, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07, and all factor loadings were significant. Comparisons of the five-factor model with several alternative models revealed that the seven-factor model fit the data considerably better than any alternative models, as shown in Table 2. The findings supported the discriminant validity of these measures.

Table 2. Confirmatory-factor analysis of primary study’s variables.

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TFI	RMSEA
Five factors	962.73	395	2.44	0.89	0.88	0.07
Four factors	1813.87	399	4.59	0.73	0.70	0.11
Three factors	2745.82	402	6.83	0.55	0.51	0.14
Two factors	3592.12	404	8.89	0.39	0.34	0.16
One factor	4330.64	415	10.44	0.25	0.21	0.17

Notes. Five factors: SRHRM; role ambiguity; task performance; OCB; prosocial motivation. Four factors: combined SRHRM and role ambiguity; task performance; OCB; prosocial motivation. Three factors: combined SRHRM and role ambiguity; combined task performance and OCB; prosocial motivation. Two factors: combined SRHRM and role ambiguity; combined task performance, OCB, and prosocial motivation. One factor: all variables combined.

In testing Hypothesis 1, as shown in Table 3, after controlling employee gender and age, SRHRM was positively related to role ambiguity ($b = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Our results show that hypothesis 1 is not rejected.

Table 3. Mplus analysis results (coefficients and standard error).

Variable	Role Ambiguity	Task Performance	OCB
Gender	0.35 ** (0.10)	0.08 (0.14)	−0.22 * (0.09)
Age	0.00 (−0.01)	0.12 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)
SRHRM	0.18 * (0.08)	−0.18 (0.11)	0.04 (0.07)
Role ambiguity		−0.20 * (0.08)	0.17 ** (0.06)
Role ambiguity × prosocial motivation		−0.17 * (0.08)	0.16 * (0.07)

Hypothesis 3 predicted that role ambiguity mediates the positive relationship between SRHRM and OCBs (3a) and task performance (3b). As shown in Table 3, role ambiguity was positively associated with OCB ($b = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively related to task performance ($b = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are not rejected. We further tested the mediation effects using bootstrapped path analysis, with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Cis [74]). The indirect effects of SRHRM on OCBs (indirect effect = 0.03, 95% CI (0.00, 0.09)) via role ambiguity were positive and significant,

whereas the indirect effects of SRHRM on task performance (indirect effect = -0.03 , 95% CI (-0.10 , -0.01)) via role ambiguity were negative and significant, showing that Hypotheses 3a and 3b are not rejected. Hypothesis 4a proposes that prosocial motivation moderates the relationship between role ambiguity, and OCBs and task performance. As shown in Table 3, role ambiguity and prosocial motivation interacted to predict OCBs ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < 0.05$). To interpret the interaction, we plotted the simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean, following the procedure suggested by Aiken and West (see Figure 2) [76]. The slope shows that role ambiguity had a stronger positive relationship with the OCB when prosocial motivation was high. The simple slope test is 0.21 , $t = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$ for higher prosocial motivation, and 0.02 , $t = 0.28$, $p > 0.05$ for lower prosocial motivation. This means Hypothesis 4a is not rejected.

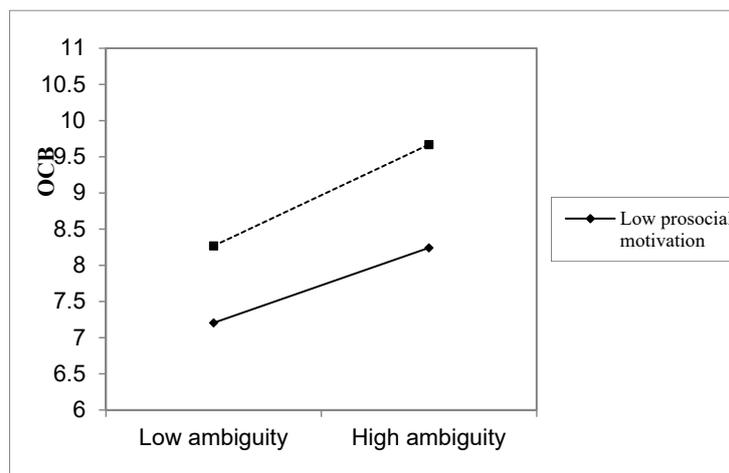


Figure 2. Effect of role ambiguity on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) at low and high levels of prosocial motivation.

Similarly, we tested Hypothesis 4b with the same steps used in Hypothesis 4a. As shown in Table 3, role ambiguity and prosocial motivation interacted to predict task performance ($b = -0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, we interpreted the form of the interaction by plotting the simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the means (see Figure 3). The slope suggests that role ambiguity had a stronger negative relationship with task performance when prosocial motivation was high. The simple slope test was -0.31 , $t = -3.00$, $p < 0.01$ for higher prosocial motivation, and -0.06 , $t = -0.73$, $p > 0.05$ for lower prosocial motivation. Thus, Hypothesis 4b is supported.

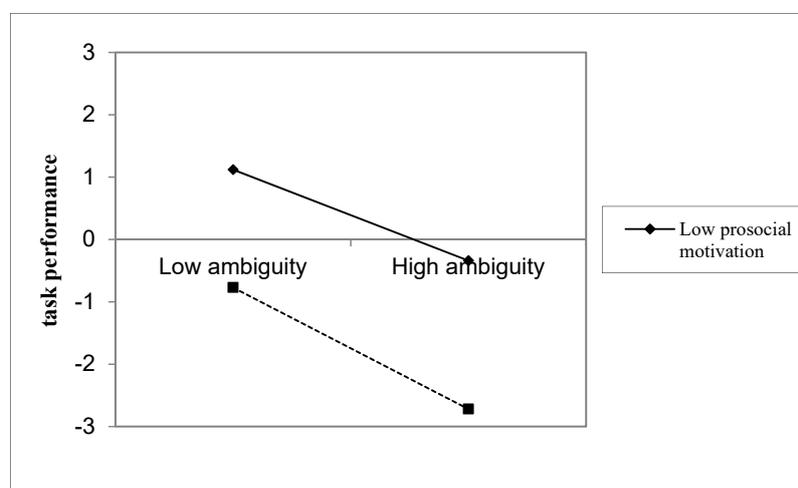


Figure 3. Effect of role ambiguity on task performance at low and high levels of prosocial motivation.

5. Discussion

Despite the potential benefits of SRHRM in promoting social warfare and sustainable development, few studies have paid attention to its possible negative consequences. To address this research gap, our study examined whether, why, and under which circumstances SRHRM may have double-edged effects on organization. Our findings indicated that SRHRM can enhance employee OCBs but decrease their task performance through the mediating effects of role ambiguity. Additionally, we found that the association between role ambiguity, and task performance and OCBs is strengthened by prosocial motivation. As we describe below, these findings offer several implications for future research and practice.

5.1. Theoretical Implication

This study broadly contributes to the SRHRM literature in the following aspects. First, this study advances the SRHRM literature by exploring its double-edged impact on employee performance. Although prior research primarily highlighted how SRHRM could stimulate positive employee consequences, sparse research has considered the possibility that SRHRM may have a dark side, such as causing unclear work goals and content. Given that, the current research fills this critical gap by proposing and examining SRHRM's double-edged effects. In particular, our study contends that SRHRM may distract employees from business-oriented task performance to society-oriented OCBs through blurring the boundaries and scopes of work expectations. By doing so, this study draws a more comprehensive picture of both the positive and negative side of SRHRM in the workplace. In addition, this finding confirms the argument [12] that, although organizational practices are generally designed to have a positive impact, they may also have negative consequences. Relatedly, this finding is also consistent with the view that, in certain circumstances, employees must harm one party in order to benefit another [77].

Second, this study introduced a situational-strength framework as the theoretical basis to explain how SRHRM may have a double-edged impact on employee performance. Previous studies noted the possible double-edged influence of SRHRM, while few went deeper to discuss its mechanisms. To address this gap, our study developed and tested a novel theoretical model with empirical evidence on the enabling and constraining effects of role ambiguity on employee performance. Particularly, role ambiguity caused by SRHRM may divert employees from business-oriented performance, such as task performance, to more society-oriented work, such as OCBs, resulting in an enabling effect on OCBs and a constraining effect on task performance. By assessing the differentiated mediation of role ambiguity between SRHRM and task performance as well as OCBs, our findings complement the existing focus on the positive mechanism of SRHRM impact. By doing so, this study also provides a broader application of situational-strength theory in an organizational context.

Third, our study identified prosocial motivation as a critical contingency for how role ambiguity affects employee outcomes. Our research shows that individuals with high prosocial motivation are more likely to engage in OCB under role ambiguity. Consistent with our expectations, our research reveals the surprising finding that prosocial motivation might distract employees from their task performance under role ambiguity. One possible explanation may be that people fueled by high prosocial motivation appear to pay more attention to others' needs rather than to their own interests. Our findings provide novel insights into the different roles of prosocial motivation in guiding individuals' behaviors under role ambiguity. We also responded to calls for greater attention to individual characteristics as moderators of SRHRM effects [4].

In addition to the SRHRM literature, our research also contributed to the areas of sustainability psychology and sustainable development. As the prior literature has shown, SRHRM serves as a set of organizational practices aimed at promoting individual welfare, as well as sustainable development in the long run. By exploring the psychological process of SRHRM practices in an organizational context, this research provides fresh insight and empirical support to the role of individual psychological factors in promoting sustainability. Therefore, our research responds to Di Fabio [78] to recognize and

adopt the value of psychology and the psychological approach in promoting sustainable development. Together, our research results take an important step toward understanding the complex factors that contribute to human well-being, and healthy organization and sustainability with a transdisciplinary framework [43,79].

5.2. Practical Implications

This study has important practical implications for companies in today's business world. It has long been recognized that taking part in CSR would lead to positive outcomes for both society and organizations. Nevertheless, our research finds that engaging employees in CSR initiatives with human resource management practices could lead to role ambiguity, which in turn promotes employee OCBs and decreases their task performance. More interestingly, the opposite effects between task performance and OCBs are more remarkable among those who have high prosocial motivations. How, then, does one handle the double-edged effects of SRHRM in practice?

First, managers should be much clearer about their SRHRM. Although there are benefits to engaging in SRHRM, managers need to be aware that encouraging employees to engage in organizational CSR initiatives may inadvertently give rise to work-expectation ambiguity. To eliminate potential confusion from employees, caring and responsible values should be promoted, rather than specific forms of CSR activities. Therefore, managers should encourage employees to translate this idea of responsibility into their attitudes and, more importantly, to the creative actions in their position, such as developing environmentally friendly products, and researching energy-saving and emission-reduction technologies.

Second, it would be wiser for an organization to carry out CSR activities related to their main business. Our findings showed that focusing on the prosocial impact of their work may divert the focus of employees from their task performance to OCBs. To reconcile this contradiction between business-oriented and society-oriented performance, organizations should connect CSR activities with the main business to develop a competitive advantage. For example, organizations in energy-domain projects, such as poverty alleviation, may develop through modern energy and the renovation of clean stoves. In this way, an organization can align social welfare with business development.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

Like other studies, our work has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, we asked employees to evaluate the extent to which SRHRM is conducted in their organizations. It is important to note that this approach assesses perceptions regarding SRHRM policies rather than actual practices. As such, the rating of SRHRM perceptions may be biased by various unobserved factors.

Second, to explore the double-edged effects of SRHRM, we only examined two kinds of employee outcomes: business-oriented performance, operationalized as task performance, and society-oriented performance, operationalized as OCBs. However, this does not address the full potential range of the potential negative outcomes of SRHRM. For example, some researchers contended that employees could engage in subsequent deviant behaviors when required to perform good deeds, as they may feel a moral-license effect.

Third, we proposed and tested the mediating mechanisms of role ambiguity on the relationship between SRHRM and employee outcomes. However, other processes that we did not disentangle may also exist. For example, too many CSR policies may lead to an emotional response, such as anxiety or even emotional exhaustion.

Fourth, although prosocial motivation was theoretically identified as the boundary condition between role ambiguity and employee performance, there are other relevant individual characteristics that may also need to be considered. For example, it would be interesting to explore whether individual employees with specific types of traits (e.g., time-management skills and other personal characteristics) would more positively respond to SRHRM.

In addition, our study offers several possible avenues for future research, in particular for those focusing on further understanding the effect and underlying mechanisms of SRHRM. First, despite our individual-level research providing insights for the current SRHRM literature, we encourage future scholars to adopt cross-level analysis to deeply unpack the influence and underlying mechanism of SRHRM with both macro-situational and micro-individual factors. Second, as a kind of organizational practice combining social and business performance, SRHRM may have diverse effects on employee outcomes, both inside and outside organizations. Thus, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the relationship between SRHRM and employee outcomes, such as volunteering out of organizations and deviant behaviors at home. Third, given that our research explored the cognitive mechanism of SRHRM, future work can extend our study by testing whether emotional factors may be the mediating mechanisms in explaining the negative side of SRHRM. Overall, the current work is expected to contribute to uncovering the positive and negative consequences of engaging employees in CSR with human resource management practices.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to examine the double-edged effects of SRHRM. We found that SRHRM could increase employee OCBs while decreasing their task performance through the mediating influence of role ambiguity. Moreover, the relationship between role ambiguity and task performance, as well as OCBs, was strengthened by prosocial motivation. Therefore, it is of great importance for managers to find a balance between business and social performance when guiding employees to engage in SRHRM practices. This is particularly the case for those with certain predispositions (e.g., prosocial motivation). Overall, our research serves as a first step toward a more complete understanding of the effects of SRHRM in both theory and practice.

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