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The Recent Trend in a Human Resource Management Journal: A Keyword Analysis

Muhammed Kürşad Özlen

Ishik University, Iraq
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
E-mail: kursad.ozlen@ishik.edu.iq

Abstract

Continuous changes in technology, economic, social and psychological understandings and structures have influence on both Human Resources and their management. Organizations approach their human capital in a more sensitive way in order to win the loyalty and commitment of them, while increasing profit and maximizing the efficiency/effectiveness of its work power. Human Resources Management helps achieving these goals by recruiting, training, developing, motivating and rewarding employees. Therefore, the identification of current research interests is essential to lead them in defining organizational human resources strategies.

The main purpose of this research is to identify top rated factors related to Human Resource Management by analyzing all the abstracts of the published papers in a Human Resource Management journal from the beginning of 2005 till the end of 2012. As a result of analyzing the keywords of all abstracts, the frequencies of the keyword categories are identified. Except the keywords related to Human Resources (17.6%), it is observed that the studies for the period consider the following: Employee rights and their career (18.3%), management (14.6%), contextual issues (10%), organizational strategies (9.5%), performance measurement and training (9.5%), behavioral issues and employee motivation (5.7), organizational culture (5.4%), technical issues (4.1%), etc. It should be noted that the researchers (a) mainly stress on practice more than theory and (b) consider the organization less than the individual. Interestingly, employee motivation is found to be less considered by the researchers. This study is believed to be useful for future studies and the industry by identifying the hot and top rated factors related to Human Resource Management.

Keywords: Human Resource Management; Abstracts; Keywords analysis.

Introduction

Human resource management has been extensively considered as the key element by all top management because of its significance on overall operations and organizational effectiveness/efficiency. It is extremely essential to identify, understand, and assess the key factors and the relationships among them in order to increase the overall performance of the organizations. Moreover, since the understandings and behaviors are changing based on the economic and technological changes, it may be important to discover the latest interests and approaches on human resources. Therefore, this research aims to identify the key points for the researchers and company managers by evaluating the recently published papers in a scientific

journal specific to human resource management through a keyword analysis. Therefore, especially researchers in this field and the organizational decision makers can get benefit by considering the human resource management research trends and the important points in HRM.

The paper starts with this introduction section and continues with the information about the development of Human resource idea. The next section includes the methodology and the results. According to the identified keywords, some works from the literature under the proper headings are reported and discussed. Finally, the paper is summarized in the conclusion section.

Historical Evolution of HRM

Human resources and their management have been important since the beginning of human life. However, the HRM idea, as a discipline, evolves after 20th century. According to Thite and Kavanagh (2009), HRM can be considered as a (1) professional and scientific discipline, (2) aid to management, (3) political and economic conflict between management and employees, and (4) increasing employee involvement as a result of changes in industrial/organizational and social psychology. In their study, they aimed to identify the importance of employees as a key source of sustainable competitive advantage in the 21st-century knowledge economy. They consider the HRM history under five broad phases:

Pre–World War II

According to scientific management philosophy which considers the maximization of employee productivity, the basic function of human resources department is keeping the records of employee information (Thite and Kavanagh, 2009). They report that the average time and motion and accordingly piece-rate pay systems are calculated as the most efficient way to motivate employees, since scientific management considers the most efficient use of human capabilities in the production process. It is also reported that since the influence of government in employment relations was quite weak in that period, firm owners followed employment terms, practices, and conditions.

Post–World War II (1945–1960)

According to Thite and Kavanagh (2009), the mobilization and utilization of labor during the War extremely enhanced the personnel function as a result of realizing the strong tie between the employee productivity and motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) by social and psychological factors, such as recognition of work achievements and work norms and the profitability of the firm. They state that workers were classified by considering the occupational categories in order to improve recruitment and selection procedures including job description, duties, and responsibilities of employees in order to design appropriate compensation programs, evaluate individual employee performance, and provide a basis for termination. They also report that employees started forming trade unions for bargaining better employment terms and conditions because of the abusive worker practices before the War.

Social Issues Era (1963–1980)

Thite and Kavanagh (2009) state that labor legislation about the management of various employment relationships extremely increased in this period with the additional responsibility of collecting, analyzing, and reporting employee related data to legal authorities. Therefore, Human Resources Departments and the field of human resource management were appeared in the history.

Cost-Effectiveness Era (1980 to the Early 1990s)

According to Thite and Kavanagh (2009), as a result of increasing global competition and the change in the understanding of human resources (from employee administration to employee development and involvement), firms have focused more on cost reduction by automating and improving productivity measures which increases administrative duties and therefore requires fulfilling a growing number of legislative requirements. Hence, HR departments use technology which has become cheaper and more powerful in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery, through cost reduction and value-added services (Thite and Kavanagh, 2009).

Technological Advancement Era and Emergence of Strategic HRM (1990 to Present)

Economic changes in 1990s caused increased globalization, technological breakthroughs (particularly Internet-enabled Web services), and hyper competition and accordingly Business process reengineering applications have been increased with some initiatives, such as right employee numbers, reduction in management layers and the bureaucracy of organizational structures, autonomous work teams, and outsourcing (Thite and Kavanagh, 2009). Thite and Kavanagh (2009) suggest innovative and creative employees as the key holder of organizational knowledge in order to reach a sustainable competitive advantage because compared to other resources, competitors cannot imitate intellectual capital. Accordingly, it has become strategically more important to manage human capital and the current understanding of HRM has appeared (Thite and Kavanagh, 2009).

According to the above discussion, it can be understood that HRM has evolved parallel to the changes in global considerations and economy. Since there is a fast changing environment outside, organizations need to adopt new strategies and manage their most valuable capital (human resources) in a most efficient/effective way. Therefore, the identification of most current trends in HRM related issues is necessary. The following section reports the analysis of keywords which are achieved from the last eight years of a HRM journal.

Methodology and Results

This study aims to identify the latest research trend for the last period of a scientific journal specific to Human Resource “Journal of Human Resource” by employing a keyword analysis. While choosing the journal, the scientific indexes are considered and one of the most effective journals is selected for the analysis. The journal had published four issues per year till 2008 and after 2009 it has been publishing six issues per year. The journal’s abstracts from the beginning of 2005 to the end of 2012 (including last eight years) are collected. The keywords of the articles are entered to an excel spreadsheet, ordered and grouped under the categories by considering their similarities. The categories are then named according to human resource terminology. Finally, the frequency distribution of the categories is calculated. The frequencies of the categories can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Keyword Categories

Keyword Categories	Frequency	Percent
Employee Rights and Career	235	18.3
Human Resources	226	17.6
Management	187	14.6
Context (Specific Industries, Organizations, etc.)	128	10.0
Organizational Strategies	122	9.5
Performance Measurement and Training	121	9.5
Behavioral Issues and Motivation	73	5.7
Organizational Culture	69	5.4
Technical Issues (Technology, Information Systems, tools, etc.)	53	4.1
Theories	41	3.2
Organizational Performance	28	2.2
Total	1283	100

According to the results, except the keywords related to Human Resources (17.6%), it is observed that the papers for the evaluated period consider the following: Employee rights and their career (18.3%), management (14.6%), contextual issues (10%), organizational strategies (9.5%), performance measurement and training (9.5%), behavioral issues and employee motivation (5.7), organizational culture (5.4%), technical issues (4.1%), etc. It can be also stated that the researchers

(a) mainly stress on practice (96.8%) more than theory (3.2%) and (b) consider the organization (31.7%) less than the individual (33.5%).

Employee Rights and Their Careers

One of the most important duties of HRM is protecting the rights of employees. The analysis identifies that after general human resources (management) considerations, it is observed that the articles in the subject journal for the analyzed period mostly consider employees' rights and their careers. Some human resource studies consider the issue from religions' perspectives by stressing on (1) how religions approach employees and (2) how employees should approach to their organizations. Hashim (2010) evaluates human resources from Islamic perspective and, by considering the principles of Islam, suggests Muslims perform their best within work environment which requires their full commitment. He examines the management of human resources from the Islamic perspective and its effects on organizational commitment among 121 employees with different positions in eight Islamic organizations in Malaysia. He identifies that (1) the selected organizations consider the Islamic principles well in all its human resource management (HRM) functions, (2) the Islamic considerations in HRM is highly and significantly correlated to organizational commitment, and (3) the organizational commitment variance is highly (45%) explained by the Islamic approach in HRM. He suggests the Islamic approach in HRM practices as an initial attempt for managers to enhance the effectiveness of their management and understanding the people they work with.

While improving the careers of human capital, it is necessary to approach human resources in a holistic manner. Khan and Sheikh (2012) emphasize holistic education and human development by suggesting an enhanced role for joint objectives and value in organizational motivation. They suggest that organizations should be more careful on the value of ethical and normative objectives that may involve delayed or reduced fulfillment and by giving more emphasis to ethics and moral goals; organizations and human resources can be more responsible to social responsibilities. Furthermore, Vancouver (2008) aims to develop a dynamic process theory for the underlying cognitive subsystems to explain relationships among long used constructs like goals, expectancies, and valence.

Another study by Cheruiyot and Maru (2014) identifies the role and influence of corporate human rights social responsibility (CHRSR) on employee job outcomes by employing an exploratory and explanatory survey on 450 employees of three leading horticultural exporters in Naivasha, Kenya. They analyzed the data by using descriptive statistics, principal component analysis (PCA) and multiple regression analyses and identified that the selected firms have largely satisfied both HR and moral expectations, CHRSR has significant impact on employee job outcomes such as employee retention, satisfaction, commitment and pride. They suggest that adoption of HR-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) enhances employee job outcomes and overall organization performance if complied with the law.

As a summary, it can be suggested that organizations should consider employees' rights and their career while running their human resources management.

Management and HRM

As a result of fast changes in organizational concepts, organizations are adopting new understandings in their management considerations which in turn influences everything related to the organization as well as HRM. Pollitt (2005) suggests the importance of leadership skills and managing diversity to meet the company mission of delivering accurate and timely services. Therefore, the relationship between HRM and characteristics of new management considerations is also important. In her study, Geren (2010) aims to study Motivation from Chinese theoretical perspectives and identifies that the Chinese organizations are adopting Western management styles because of the growth in their economy and open door policy. She also explores various motivation theories in the historical context of Chinese workforce and observes that motivational models rely on both individual needs (micro level) and the organizational context and culture (macro level).

Organizational Strategies and HRM

Understanding organizational structure, work environment, human resource shortages and the links among them is necessary for the organizations in order to improve strategies and solutions to maintain the quality in their operations and services. Brunoro-Kadash and Kadash (2013) describe the processes and results of implementing and evaluating the Releasing Time to Caree (RTCe) model in a tertiary care hospital in Canada. They identify that improved patient safety, staff engagement, leadership opportunities and an affirmative shift in organizational culture and a reduction in falls and decreased medication errors enhance patient safety. They suggest including the clinical nurse in organizational and system change in order to improve patient-centered quality care.

HRM is expected to be in line with organizational strategies. Androniceanu (2011) aims to study new possibilities for increasing the degree of motivation of the Human Resources for a Sustainable Organizational Development. According to Androniceanu (2011), it is necessary that the new system should include bonuses and incentives to motivate the human resources to get their significant contribution for a sustainable organizational development.

Performance Measurement, Training and HRM

Organizations need to continuously check the performance of their work power and employ necessary training for them by the help of HRM. In his study, Beal (2004) examines Hilton hotels' performance measurement. Hilton hotels wants to streamline their fast-track "Elevator" program designed to recruit high-potential graduates as their hotel general managers and they want to check that all applicants could meet the basic requirements of attitude and ability according to Hilton's standards and values. Therefore, Beal (2004) searches psychological aspects of the managers in Hilton hotels by employing face-to-face meetings and scoring a series of psychometric assessments. He concludes that managers can concentrate on more value-adding work by getting rid of manual processes.

Motivation and HRM

Motivational aspects of human resources have considerably taken the attention of researchers and have been studied a lot. From the analyses, it can be concluded that it has lost the popularity. The reason for that may be the issues related to motivation have become clearer and therefore, there may not be need for extra effort. Some of the works related to motivation are reported under this heading. Deci and Ryan (2008) aims to explore Self-Determination Theory as a Macro theory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health. They focus on the types of motivation particularly autonomous motivation, controlled motivation and the motivation as predictors of performance. They consider Self-determination theory (SDT) as an empirical theory of human motivation, development, and wellness. Deci and Ryan (2008) also address the social conditions that have positive and negative impacts on these types of motivation.

Duke (2010) searches practical challenges of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation in understanding and managing workers' behavior in organizational settings. He recommends building long-term/strategic incentive plans, the right work atmosphere that recognizes and rewards high performance, analyzing the situation for congruity of expectancies, and ensuring a clear, visible and unambiguous link between performance and outcomes.

Organizations need to transfer talent, satisfy their needs and employ them effectively by the help of HRM. Pollitt (2005) suggests that companies need many talent sources to ensure their future success. He also reports that when companies transfer talent, an inclusive environment needs to be developed to achieve better business results by getting people do their best.

Organizational Culture and HRM

There are also some studies considering different aspects of HRM such as employee motivation, career development and their relations with organizational culture. Pollitt (2005) identifies that cultural factors can explain 26 percent of the differences in effectiveness between offices.

Vancouver (2008) reports that formal elements of computational models of human actors, thinkers, and learners have been presented in organizational contexts. He reports that Dynamic process models both provide deeper understanding and also potentially leads to applications to motivational problems by explaining dynamic interactions between persons and environments.

Khan and Sheikh (2012) report the need for a broader philosophical framework for human resource development (HRD) within management practice and the popularity of workplace spirituality in this context. Therefore, they discuss the role of Islam in filling this need for a spiritual philosophical framework, focus on the lessons derived from Islamic principles and suggest revisiting some major motivation theories (such as expectancy theory of motivation) of HRD after discussing relevant philosophical, spiritual and HRD literature. They emphasize holistic education and human development in HRD by suggesting an enhanced role for joint objectives and value in organizational motivation. They also suggest that organizations should be more careful on ethical and normative objectives and organizations and human resources can be more responsible to social responsibilities by giving more emphasis to ethics and moral goals.

Moreover, Harvey and James (2005) aim to develop a model of utility for overall satisfaction by employing cognitive evaluation theory to explain motivation. He observes that greater satisfaction is not achieved by intrinsic motivation. They suggest that rewards are controlled by two conditions: (1) intrinsic motivation is also the source of extrinsic compensation and (2) offered large incentives. Harvey and James (2005) found that two factors (the object on which intrinsic motivation is tied and the size of the incentive and fixed compensation) are influential on motivation.

Jabbour (2011) analyzes the level of greening HRM practices, organizational culture, learning, and teamwork in 94 Brazilian companies which are certified by ISO 14001. He suggests two important conclusions: (1) human resource practices should be systematically aligned in order to environmentally manage workers and (2) environmental issues are little formalized in traditional human resource practices. He furthermore suggests greening HRM, organizational culture, learning and teamwork as an emerging topic for scholars and consultants.

Patil and Kant (2012) explore certain aspects of organizational culture as an influencing factor on knowledge management (KM) and organizational performance by employing a case study to illustrate HR strategies related with organizational culture that influence the KM process and organizational performance. They collect data mainly by observations and face-to-face interviews with top-level management, team leaders and general employees and archival data in the form of annual reports. Their case study results suggest that various aspects of organizational culture (organization structure, education and training, reward and incentives, open communication, worker involvement and workforce flexibility) increase the ability to defeat KM barriers and achieve competitive advantage.

HRM and (Organizational and Employee) Performance

It is identified that the evaluated studies fairly consider both employee and organizational performance. Prowse and Prowse (2010) critically review the literature and explore the possible impact of human resource management (HRM) on organizational and individual performance. They examine the historical development of HRM and conclude that HRM appeared as the product of some different traditions including employee welfare to the development of workplace relationships. They define human performance and its influence on organizational effectiveness. They suggest more contemporary criteria to evaluate the contribution of people on organizational performance in private, public and the emerging non-profit organizations.

Estes and Polnick (2012) study Motivation Theory in Higher Education in terms of Tenured Faculty research Productivity by considering Expectancy Theory Analysis. They analyzed the applicability of Vroom's Expectancy Theory as a predictor of post-tenure faculty productivity by evaluating research productivity for three years "pre-tenure" and three years "post-tenure" for each eligible faculty member. They found that the results support expectancy theory that productivity of tenured faculty significantly decreases compared to scholarship performance of subjects in the pre-

tenure years. They recommend conducting analysis with both pre- and post-tenure faculty productivity and reviewing their existing policies and practices regarding performance assessments of faculty for effectiveness in providing sustained professional growth, recruiting and retaining quality faculty.

According to Adhikari (2010), company competitiveness is related to its ability to manage performance and enhance the skills and competencies of employees by developing a learning environment. Therefore, they aim to analyze the influence of failure to address human resource development (HRD) and poor performance management (PM) practices on company competitive advantage for the Nepalese economy which has embraced an open market policy and attempts to join the global market. By reviewing Anglo-Saxon and Nepalese literature, they analyzed (1) the concept of PM and its relationship with HRD, (2) the PM and HRD context and the associated issues in Nepalese organizations and (3) the effect of new structure and roles on HRD for PM. They suggest establishing a clear link between organizational objectives and outcomes by developing a human capital base in organizations in order to manage PM in organizations and improving HRD professionals support to integrate HRD functions and organizational objectives by developing a learning environment.

Ferguson and Reio (2010) test a model where human resource inputs (e.g. motivation, employee skill) and human resource processes/practices (e.g. training and development; profit sharing) have influence on organizational outputs, i.e. job performance and firm performance by employing a cross-sectional study on 350 business professionals (91% managers; 9% consultants) from a Midwestern US professional organization. According to their results, both the human resource inputs and process/practice variables are found to have significant impact on the performance. They suggest involvement of human resource managers to increase employee motivation by implementing and supporting organizational policies and procedures (e.g. incentives and rewards, caring employee problems, and performance management), and learning and development activities to enhance optimal task and contextual job performance.

Amin, Ismail, Rasid, and Selemani (2014) examine the impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on organizational performance by surveying 300 employees from a public university including both academicians and support staff. They identify that human resource practices: recruitment, training, performance appraisal, career planning, employee participation, job definition and compensation significantly affect university performance. They suggest emphasizing on job definition, training and employee participation to increase university performance. They also suggest improving other HRM practices-recruitment, performance appraisal, career planning and compensation in order to increase their effectiveness on the university performance.

Pollitt (2005) studies and finds a link between employee satisfaction and organizational performance in the US National Weather Service (NWS). Since talent does not come in uniform packages, Pollitt (2005) concludes that companies need many talent sources to ensure their future success. He also reports that when companies transfer talent, an inclusive environment needs to be developed to achieve better business results by getting people do their best.

Conclusion

As a result of constant and rapid increase in technology and education, the development of multinational corporations and frequent changes in economic status and structures, the competition is getting tougher and harder. Therefore, Human Resources have become the most efficient and the most reliable management department within the organizations. This change in practice leads to the change in HRM research. Detecting the current research considerations becomes important for both practice and research. Hence, this study has been motivated to identify the most current trends in HRM research by focusing on one of the leading journals "Journal of Human Resource" in the field of human resources management by employing a keyword analysis.

According to the results, except the keywords related to Human Resources (17.6%), it is observed that the studies for the period consider the following: Employee rights and their career (18.3%), management (14.6%), contextual issues (10%), organizational strategies (9.5%), performance measurement and training (9.5%), behavioral issues and employee motivation (5.7), organizational culture (5.4%), technical issues (4.1%), etc. It should be noted that the researchers (a) mainly stress on practice more than theory and (b) consider the organization less than the individual. By doing so, organizational success may be guaranteed. Interestingly, employee motivation is found to be less considered by the researchers. Since human resources management research has studied motivational aspects well, the current demand focuses on other aspects.

This study is useful for future studies and the industry by identifying the hot and top rated factors related to Human Resource Management. According to the results, in the analyzed period, the focus points of the articles are identified and reviewed in the related literature. Therefore, the research provides beneficial information for every manager to enhance HR efficiency, realization of the importance of Employee rights and Training/education and HR strategies, including information technologies in their human resource management, etc.

This study has limitations in that it only considers a specific time interval and one specific journal. Future studies may involve longer time intervals in order to see the evolution of human resource idea through the timeline. Additionally, including more journals into analyses may be much representative. However, this research is useful in that future research may employ the appeared factors in their studies and empirically test them. The industry can also consider the results of this study and adopt new competitive strategies in their human resource management. We finally suggest that the organizations should consider the benefits of both organizations and individuals before and after hiring their employees.

We finally assume that the selected keywords for published articles fairly represent the studies and most of them are too generic. Researchers should consider more while determining the keywords for their papers.

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