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## Towards a Contextual Human Resource Management Model: A Systematic Review of Literature on HRM Practices and Organizational Outcomes

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**Key words:** HRM practices, cross-cultural management, organizational outcomes, employee outcomes, organizational culture

**Abstract:** The complexity of the link between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and organizational outcomes has been considered as a black box where a lot still needs to be explored. Further, the intermediary outcome effects of HRM that bridge the complexity between HRM practices and organizational outcomes is of particular interest among researchers in the field of cross-cultural management. Thus, the present paper aims to systematically review the empirical studies which investigated the nature of the link that exists between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. In doing so, the existence of a mediating mechanism is also examined. Following the PRISMA procedure, a search of five publication databases (i.e., Science Direct, Emerald Insight, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Journals and Wiley online library) was conducted for the period from 2010 and 2020 which yielded 3314 hits and analysis of content for 23 peer-reviewed articles in the English language were conducted. Based on the nature of the link that was noticed in the selected articles, interesting findings were observed regarding the nature of the practices within the HRM system and their outcomes. Given the relevant context, the present paper identified noteworthy evidence in the research linking HRM practices and organizational outcomes and the mediating role of organisational culture. Moreover, the presented evidence is likely to induce variety in the outcome effects of HRM interventions. Contribution to understanding the complexity of the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes in the one hand and the coordinated research efforts to advance this understanding for developing an international HRM Model on the other is called for in this research.

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Page No.: 279-290

Volume: 15, Issue 7, 2021

ISSN: 1993-5250

International Business Management

Copy Right: Medwell Publications

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## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices as a strategic intervention in organizations have been receiving much attention, particularly in the context of management of human resources and effective outcomes<sup>[1]</sup>. The past 20 years have witnessed a remarkable change in exploring fundamental elements of HRM practices like talent acquisition, learning and development, compensation and benefits, rewards and recognition, performance appraisal and separation in HRM system<sup>[2]</sup>. Research related to HRM practices more and more focuses on the outcome effects of a set of combined elements of HRM practices or HRM bundles that encompass the entire stages of an employee life cycle such as on boarding, career development and exit, rather than individual HRM practices one at a time<sup>[3, 4]</sup>. The studies have argued that adequate consideration should be given to a set of the fundamental elements of HRM practices rather than individual ones where the effect of one practice is probably interconnected with other practices within the HRM system<sup>[5]</sup>.

Given the incessant organizational effort for achieving success in a highly competitive market, the link between fundamental elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes has garnered progressive discussion among the researchers<sup>[6-8]</sup> and the idea of reciprocity between a set of HRM practices or HRM bundles is widely conceptualized as the rationality behind the effective organizational outcome of HRM practices<sup>[9-11]</sup>. Moreover, it is argued that the fundamental elements of HRM practices act as a precious resource for companies intending to consider strategic outcomes in terms of innovation for achieving competitive advantage<sup>[6]</sup>. Besides, owing to the increasingly competitive market environment, academicians and practitioners perceived that attaining the desired organizational outcome through effective HRM is important. Further, it is considered that certain HRM outcomes often act as intermediary outcomes that bridge the complexity between HRM practices and organizational outcomes<sup>[12]</sup>. Studies have argued that HRM practices supporting organizational outcomes are influenced by various internal and external factors<sup>[13]</sup>. The influence of employee outcomes and organizational culture on organizational outcomes within the context of the elements of HRM practices have received increasing attention<sup>[14]</sup>. In the light of the argument that employee outcomes and organizational culture have a link with organizational outcomes, these effects as an intermediary outcomes of HRM practices on organizational outcome needs further consideration<sup>[15, 16]</sup>. This is important, since, studying the effectiveness of HRM practices in

achieving organizational outcomes through mediating effects have both applied and theoretical implications.

The progressive research on HRM has highlighted the complexity of the link between fundamental elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes which is often referred to as a “black box”<sup>[17, 18]</sup>. With the growing number of studies, the field of HRM is challenged with assessing how cumulative insights develop<sup>[19, 20]</sup>. Despite the progressive discussion, the extent to which the fundamental supposition in the context of an individual or a comprehensive set of HRM practices within the HRM system holds is unclear<sup>[21]</sup>. Specifically, our understanding of the fundamental elements of HRM practices seems to be at a budding stage, given the vast amount of literature on HRM practices<sup>[20]</sup>. Besides, previous studies have raised concerns regarding the conceptualization of the comprehensive set of practices within HRM systems. For instance, Lepak *et al.*<sup>[5]</sup> reviewed the HRM system and highlighted the existence of an expansive range of HRM systems associated with commitment, performance and engagement at organizational and employee levels but how the HRM system in terms of inclusion or exclusion of elements of practices help achieve the outcomes lacked clarity. Moreover, despite the discussion on the synergistic nature of HRM practices, there is no sufficient clarity regarding the relevant progress in this field in terms of understanding the synergistic aspect of the elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes<sup>[11]</sup>. Further, the number of studies that assessed the link between fundamental elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes through intermediate outcome dimensions of HRM practices like employee outcomes and organizational culture remains scarce and scattered<sup>[13]</sup>. Understanding the significance of the intermediary outcomes in empowering the link between fundamental elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes could influence the established relationships significantly.

To date, a systematic overview linking the elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes in terms of mediating mechanisms, the empirical perspectives that advocate the link and the conceptualizations used to examine these practices seem to lack clarity<sup>[19, 22]</sup>. As such, it is vital to review progress, identify areas for improvement and enrich the theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning the elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes. Thus, the present paper focuses on answering the two main questions:

- How the elements of HRM practices (set or individual or combined) and organizational outcomes are linked?

- How intermediate outcomes of HRM practices (employee outcomes and organizational culture) mediate the relationship between the elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes?

In order to answer the research questions, the present study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the link between elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes. In this context, the study attempts to address whether and if so, the extent of progress in assessing the comprehensive or individual or synergistic aspects of HRM practices. Moreover, the present study tries to explore if there is a need for a mediating mechanism to understand such a relationship. Several ways can be adopted to inspect the linkage between elements of HRM practices and organizational outcomes. However, the present study uses the following approach: a set of HRM practices or individual practice<sup>[23]</sup>. Accordingly, the paper is arranged as follows: first, the methodology of the selection of articles is explained. Second, the papers are summarized according to the way that elements of HRM practices (set or individual or combined) affect organizational outcomes. This is followed by the existence of mediators as an explaining mechanism is examined. Finally, conclusion, practical implications, limitations and future research directives of the study are presented.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study used a two-step systematic approach where the first step included information search (Journal and keyword) regarding the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. The second step included the collection of relevant articles related to the context of the present study.

**Information search strategy:** The systematic information search was done using the PRISMA chart of reporting items<sup>[24-26]</sup>.

**Journal search:** To get a representative picture for the present study, the main focus was laid on high ranking journals in the HRM research with a proven impact. Firstly, for the journals to be included in the study, the Academic Journal Guide (AJG) journal ranking (2018) was examined. Secondly, the main focus was on HRM and employment (EMP) journals. Moreover, the supportive source of journals included General Management, International Business, Psychology and Hospitality journals.

**Keyword search:** A systematic keyword search was conducted in five major search databases such as Science

Table 1: No. of hits in the search databases

Databases	No. of hits
Science Direct	1468
Emerald Insight	137
Taylor and Francis Online	105
Sage Journals	151
Wiley online	1453
Total	3314

Direct, Emerald Insight, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Journals and Wiley online library focusing on articles related to the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. Articles published between 2010-2020 with the following key terms were inspected: 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practice's AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'.

The search strategy resulted in 3314 articles (doubles excluded; Table 1). The details related to search terms are provided in Appendix 1.

**Collection of relevant articles (Inclusion and exclusion criteria):** Articles identified counted 3, 314, however, those that were not listed in AJG ranking (2018) were excluded. Moreover, book chapters, records, reviews, case studies, editorials and proceedings were also dropped; only empirical papers regardless of the research methods were taken into consideration. Also, studies that focused on links between HRM practices (bundles or individual) and organizational outcomes were included. Besides, studies that focused on employee outcomes and organizational culture in empowering the link between HRM practices and organizational outcome were also included.

Moreover, articles that used companies, organizations and firms conversely were included. However, articles without any citations, except those published in 2020 were excluded. Further, some articles may have been overlooked due to their online availability in languages other than English or due to the difficulty in finding them through the above searches, leaving us with a final list of 23 articles (Fig. 1). The 23 studies analyzed were published from 2010-2020 in 12 journals (Table 2)

Thus, the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes in firms is explored in a variety of contexts in the present systematic review paper. The present paper declares that HRM practices and organizational outcomes are being empirically analysed and has an international appeal as different countries are covered.

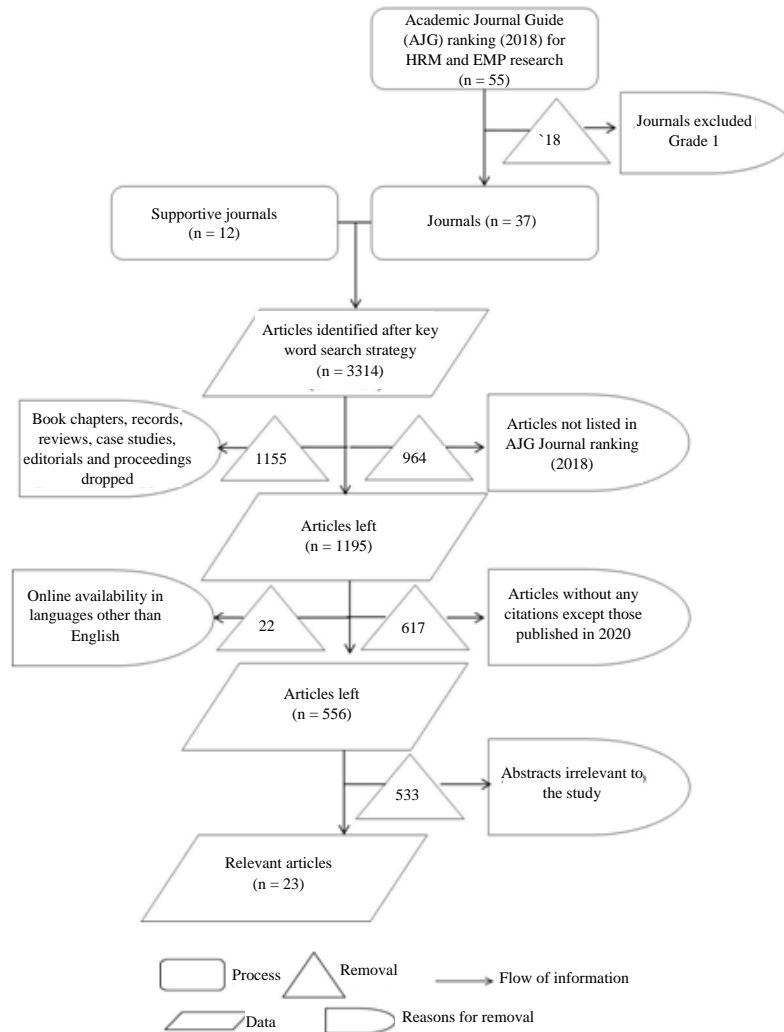


Fig. 1: PRISMA chart of selection method of articles

Table 2: List of journals included for the study based on their ranking

Journal Title	Article (Total)	Journal ranking
<b>Human Resource Management Journals</b>		
Human Resource Management	5	Grade 4
Human Resource Management Journal	2	Grade 4
The International Journal of Human Resource Management	5	Grade 3
Advances in Developing Human Resources	1	Grade 2
Personnel Review	1	Grade 2
International Journal of Manpower	2	Grade 2
<b>General Management/International Business/Psychology/Hospitality Journals</b>		
Journal of Management Studies	1	Grade 4
European Management Review	2	Grade 3
Review of Managerial Science	1	Grade 2
Journal of International Business Studies	1	Grade 4*
Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	1	Grade 4
International Journal of Hospitality Management	1	Grade 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Distribution of studies:** Chand and Katou<sup>[27]</sup> declared that the concept of HRM practices in firms dates back to the early 1980's and that the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcome is guided by two fundamental paths of research (direct and indirect relationship). Their study is considered to be essential in inspecting the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. Thus, the present study took the year 2007 as a starting point to inspect the previously established relationship. The difference of curiosity in such a relationship is rather noted, since, 2010. The period 2010-2020 accounts for the most empirical findings in the field of study in the present context. Moreover, the main journals in the study are the following: Human Resource Management (5 articles), The International Journal of Human Resource Management (5 articles), Human Resource Management Journal (2 articles), International Journal of Manpower (2 articles) and European Management Review (2 articles). More than two-thirds of the papers were available in Human Resource Management journals (n = 16). Moreover, the quality of the journals used included approximately 67% of the studies being published in Grade 4 and 2 journals followed by 25% of the studies published in Grade 3 journals and the remaining 8% were published in Grade 4\* journals. Further, the articles published covered nearly 22 countries, where, Spain (six) and China (four) dominated the articles count, followed by three articles for India, two articles for the UK and the rest of the articles were distributed along Australia, Canada, Egypt, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, Brunei, Vietnam, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Turkey and countries like Netherland, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Finland and Italy located in Europe. This might indicate scope for globalized research if strengthened with more samples of firms from different countries.

**Methodology characteristics of the studies:** The present systematic review paper revealed some empirical aspects about the procedural trends employed in the articles. The chosen articles include a mix of sectors where the manufacturing sector was observed as the main industry covered in most of the studies. Next were the financial services, consultancy and automotive sectors which were covered in some of the studies. This was followed by the software industry, construction and transport and communication sectors. Besides, the healthcare and hotel industries were inspected in two articles. Also, the wholesale trade, retail trade, aviation, glass production and tourism industries were inspected in one article each. Thus, it was noticed that the emphasis is laid on the

manufacturing industry and while some industries like agriculture, marketing and education have not been given due importance and would open up avenues for future research.

In total, 20 studies used survey methods (questionnaire) for data collection, only one of them was longitudinal while the remaining was cross-sectional. Moreover, two studies used an interview (one telephone and the other face-to-face) approach and one study used a mix of the questionnaire and face-to-face interview approaches.

The respondents represent the essential unit of analysis concerning the link between HRM practices and outcomes in firm research. Top executives including the CEOs, HR director (HRD) or HR heads were the unit of analysis in the majority of the studies. The middle-level managers (HR managers and line managers) were the unit of analysis in some studies. Team leaders, administrative personnel, project managers and professionals working as programmers and developers were also the unit of analysis in one study. Also, local stakeholders were the unit of analysis in one study. The owner/entrepreneur was the unit of analysis in one paper. As noticed, a majority of the studies have focused on either top or middle-level management to represent the sampling population. Several studies have also focused on employees, thus, contradicting the claim that employees' perception of HRM practices is usually not considered in HRM-related research<sup>[28]</sup>.

**Analysis of contents:** The analysis of the contents concerning HRM practices and organizational outcomes are focused on the following facets: HRM practices or system (set/bundle and individual and combined), existence of intermediate outcomes of HRM practices and organizational outcomes of HRM practices.

**HRM practices or systems:** HRM practices were defined as comprehensive but interconnected activities and processes that are aimed at drawing attention, developing and sustaining the human resources of an organization<sup>[29]</sup>. This indicates the balancing and interconnected nature of the activities formulating an HRM practice that inflicts a competitive advantage for an organization. Moreover, Pfeffer<sup>[30]</sup> defined HRM practices as High-Performance Work (HPW) systems to enhance employee competence, productivity and commitment in a way that generates sustainable competitive advantage for organizations. Besides, the majority of studies have adopted individual HRM practices to analyse its impact on outcomes<sup>[23]</sup>. However, there is a call for adopting a comprehensive set of defining practices to induce innovation in the process

and product<sup>[9]</sup>. HRM practices, when used as a set of practices are expected to induce effective organizational outcomes as evident in many studies<sup>[27, 31]</sup>. The idea of complementarities is essential for HRM practices to induce organizational outcomes<sup>[32, 33]</sup>. However, it has been documented that individual HRM practices induce organizational outcomes to a certain extent. But, their interactive effect is more noteworthy<sup>[34]</sup>. Further, the effect of individual HRM practices on organizational performance is not beneficial<sup>[35]</sup>. Additionally, Ybema *et al.*<sup>[36]</sup> in their study reported conflicting findings regarding the assertion that individual HRM practices induce effective organizational outcomes. Moreover, the aspect of combined use of HRM practices and fit is underlined as; individual HRM practices might not induce effective organizational outcomes unless accompanied by employee outcomes that support organizational outcomes. Also, HRM practices influenced by organizational culture is essential for organizational outcomes<sup>[37]</sup>. On the other hand, the combined use of a comprehensive set of HRM practices towards the same goal may have selective applicability within specific organizations and sectors<sup>[38]</sup>.

In summary, papers that used HRM practices as a comprehensive set or bundle was (n = 14); individual (n = 5); a mixture of both (n = 4). It is noticed that most researchers agree on the notion of the set of HRM practices or bundles, however, a lack of agreement is noticed relative to the type of practices to integrate into the HRM system<sup>[7]</sup>.

**Role of the mediator:** Almost half the studies (n = 12) have used an intermediate outcome variable of HRM practices to explain the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. The mediators used are as follows: organizational culture and values and employee outcomes like employee creativity, work environment conditions (supervisory and peer support), motivation for knowledge sharing, employee relationship and employee capital and organizational commitment. In the following section, the outcomes of the articles included in the review and the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcomes (direct or mediated) are presented accordingly. Moreover, the direct relationship is analysed within the context of a set of HRM practices or HRM bundles, individual HRM practices and a combination of both.

**Direct or mediated relationship between HRM practices (set or bundle) and organizational outcomes:** First, trying to find the best set of HRM practices for organizational outcomes, Cooke *et al.*<sup>[39]</sup> through a qualitative study of 54 Indian managers employed in

different Indian firms supported the adoption of a set of HRM practices (learning and development, employee engagement, performance management, employee involvement and other HRM initiatives) and innovation-oriented organizational outcomes like product and business processes. Besides, Boxal *et al.*<sup>[18]</sup>, in a sampling of 116 cases in the Australian cinema context, identified a mediating effect of behavioural compliance measure of organizational culture on the relationship between HRM practices (training, performance appraisal and job description) and organizational performance outcomes, indicating the need to recognize internal fit of HRM practices into the HRM system. Also, Jiang *et al.*<sup>[4]</sup> explored the mediating effect of employee outcome in terms of employee creativity on the relationship between a set of HRM practices (talent acquisition, training, reward, performance appraisal, job design and teamwork) and innovation-oriented organizational outcome with a sample of 106 firms in China. The findings revealed that employee creativity positively mediated the four HRM practices except for training and performance appraisal. Besides, Zhou *et al.*<sup>[40]</sup> inspected HRM systems (commitment and collaboration) in the Chinese organizations or industries. The results obtained from a survey of 50 employees and more working in 125 firms indicated a positive effect of commitment and collaboration on organizational outcomes (innovation and employee performance), however, when applied together, a negative effect emerges hindering organizational outcomes, suggestive of requirement of balance between commitment and collaboration. Through internal consistency and innovation, the positive effect of HRM system (commitment) on organizational outcomes is also reflected in the Spanish hotel industry of 109 firms having 50 employees or more<sup>[41]</sup>.

Besides, the mediating role of work environment conditions (management and peer support) between HRM practices and organizational outcome (innovative work behaviour) was inspected in Spain with a sample of 198 firms<sup>[42]</sup>. The findings indicated that direct and the mediated relationship between HRM practices (bundles) that enhance ability, motivation and opportunity and effective innovative work behaviour is significant. As well, Foss *et al.*<sup>[32]</sup> linked HRM practices to employee motivation for knowledge sharing and employee retention through interaction among three HRM practices, namely rewards and recognition, work environment and job design. The researchers argued that combining specific HRM practices would reduce the ambiguity effect when using an individual HRM practice like rewards and recognition. The sample included five knowledge intensive Danish firms with 1.523 employees. Results indicated that the complementarities among the HRM

practices expose the employees with an increased level of autonomous motivation which in turn, enhances their knowledge sharing and increases employee retention. Additionally, the mediating effect of organizational behavior on the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcome was inspected by sampling 251 firms in the Spanish context<sup>[43]</sup>. Results indicated a positive effect of HRM practices on organizational performance when influenced by organizational behavior. Next, employee outcome in terms of employee relationship and employee capital was inspected as a mediator between two HRM systems (high profile performance and collaborative) and innovative organizational outcome with a sample of 72 Spanish technological firms<sup>[44]</sup>. Results indicated that the two HRM systems positively affected innovative organizational outcomes when mediated through employee relationships and employee capital (human and social), respectively. This implied the need for the organizations to focus on employee-related intangible assets to achieve a competitive advantage. In addition, Singh *et al.*<sup>[33]</sup> inspected the effect of a specific set of HRM practices on organizational outcomes by sampling 151 firms across different sectors in Brunei. Results indicated that HRM practices like talent acquisition, training and internal promotion yielded positive organizational outcomes in terms of positive financial performance and contributed to employee retention. However, these practices when integrated did not support better outcomes relative to individual practices. Simultaneously, it was observed that the effectiveness of HRM practices varied among firms such as lower turnover was observed in oil and gas sector as compared to manufacturing sector indicating that the measures for effective organizational outcomes may vary as per the capabilities and characteristics of firms.

Additionally, the existence of an interesting mediation and moderation was observed by Chen *et al.*<sup>[8]</sup> in a sampling of 113 Chinese manufacturing firms where a better work climate facilitated the relationship between a high commitment work system and innovation-oriented organizational outcome. Further, Marescaux *et al.*<sup>[45]</sup> investigated the mediating effects of employee well-being linking HRM practices and organizational outcomes by sampling 403 employees in Belgium. It was noticed that a set of HRM practices like training, career development and feedback practices boost organizational outcomes through affective organizational commitment. On the other hand, work-related exhaustion tends to weaken the outcomes of HRM practices, indicating the need to consider the conditions under which organizations can nurture multiple aspects of employee well-being to generate effective organizational outcomes through HRM,

instead of building a trade-off. This notion was supported by Ogbonnaya<sup>[46]</sup>, when exploring the impact of employee well-being as a mediating link on the relationship between HRM practices like flexible working, job autonomy, etc. and organizational outcome in the British context with a sample of 664 workplaces having 4311 employees. Results indicated that the organizational outcomes of HRM practices may in reality come at the cost of adverse employee well-being like increased work related stress and work demands. However, these adverse outcomes are inclined to weaken at greater levels of affective commitment of employees. Also, Uraon<sup>[47]</sup> explored the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between HRM practices and employee retention as a measure of organizational outcomes by sampling 516 software employees in the Indian context. Results indicated that affective and normative organizational commitment of employees had a positive effect on their retention as a result of HRM practices.

Further, Mohammad *et al.*<sup>[48]</sup> explored the relationship between a specific set of HRM practices (talent acquisition, training and development, internal promotion, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits) and organizational outcomes mediated through organizational values and culture within the healthcare sector in Jordan. Results indicated a positive direct effect of HRM practices like talent acquisition, training and development and internal promotion on organizational outcomes. Besides, the study identified the existence of an indirect positive effect of HRM practices (talent acquisition, training and development and internal promotion) on organizational outcomes through organizational values, indicating the need to establish an association between employees and organizational values and culture to strengthen organizational outcomes. This paper underlined the importance of social exchange as a mediating variable wherein the HRM practices influences employees behaviour and attitude.

In summary, the effect of a set of HRM practices with mediating variables indicated a positive impact on organizational outcomes. Further, different sets of HRM practices within the HRM systems have indicated a positive association with organizational outcomes through employee outcomes, however, little evidence is provided to support the mediation of organizational culture linking HRM practices and organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it was noticed that when applying two different types of HRM systems, the impact of both systems on organizational outcome is weakened. This is based on the ability to use both the systems equally as there should be a balance if more than one system is implemented. Thus, the research is rich with empirical

investigations to explain the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcomes through a process. However, the mediating process is increasingly receiving more attention among researchers, thus, what would be beneficial is the exploration for further mediators to explain the above-mentioned relationship.

**Relationship between HRM practices (individual and combined) and organizational outcomes:**

Chang *et al.*<sup>[49]</sup> inspected the Chinese context through 196 hospitality companies and identified that applying HRM practices like recruitment and selection and training and development individually had a positive effect on organizational outcomes. However, when applied together, these practices had a negative effect on organizational outcomes with a possibility of un-rewardful effect of huge investments in both the practices. The results highlighted the need for proper identification of HRM practices that won't affect each other negatively. Moreover, Ballesteros-Rodriguez *et al.*<sup>[37]</sup> examined the influence of organizational culture on the relationship between the training of employees and successful organizational outcomes by sampling 137 restaurants in the Canary Islands. Results indicated that HRM practices do not influence successful organizational outcomes unless organizational culture that supports the HRM practices are implemented.

Besides Andreeva *et al.*<sup>[50]</sup> explored the notion that HRM practices (performance appraisal and rewards and recognition) that fit well within organizational settings may produce diverse and even negative effects on organizational outcomes when implemented together. The findings obtained through a survey of 100 employees working in 259 companies in Finland indicated a positive individual effect of the HRM practices on incremental outcomes but lacked any interactive impact. While, rewards and recognition had a positive effect on radical organizational outcomes, the interactive impact was negative, supporting the idea of a careful selection of practices when implementing them together. Also, Diaz-Fernandez *et al.*<sup>[51]</sup> executed a longitudinal study to explore the relationship between HRM practices (employment security, training, compensation and benefits) and organizational outcomes related to innovation performance with a sample of 1.363 manufacturing firms in Spain. Results indicated that only employment security and training had a significant effect on organizational outcomes as revealed by increased number of patents, when moderated by high compensation practices. This could indirectly aid in retaining the employee and increase the competitiveness. However, when these HRM practices were applied individually, no effect on organizational outcomes was observed. Further, Ogbonnaya *et al.*<sup>[38]</sup> explored the

isolated and combined effect of High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP) on employee retention by sampling 2.119 workplaces in the British context. Results indicated a positive combined effect of HPWP on employee retention, however, indicated that the combined effects may apply to specific sectors within specific organizational settings. In summary, various HRM practices have been investigated to see if being used individually would improve organizational outcomes and surprisingly it is noticed that single practices would induce organizational outcomes. However, few studies revealed that when implemented together, organizational outcomes will be hindered. This is contradictory compared to the effect of a set of HRM practices on organizational outcomes through a mediating effect. In what follows practical implications for the present study are presented.

## CONCLUSION

The systematic review of 23 empirical studies suggests some advances toward understanding the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes. The context in which the studies have been conducted highlights that the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes is a rich field but a lot needs to be explored. First, training, as a fundamental element of HRM practice, is identified in most of the HRM system to induce innovation-oriented organizational outcomes. Thus, practitioners and managers should focus on the development of human capital and adopt practices that enrich employee skills. Development of human capital includes the process of knowledge sharing and fostering employee-related intangible assets. Knowledge sharing can be motivated through a combined effort rather than an individual one. Moreover, managers can promote an environment for training and development through nurturing multiple aspects of employee well-being. Second, two opposing perspectives have been encountered regarding the implementation of HRM practices. On one hand, a call is noticed for single HRM practice, thus inducing organizational outcomes. While, on the other hand, the inclusion of a comprehensive set of practices inducing organizational outcome is noticed. Third, some HRM practices when combined hinders the outcome effects in the organizations. For instance, the existence of commitment and collaboration as well as the presence of recruitment and selection and training and development for organizational outcomes. Such cases might produce conflicting outcomes which can be resolved by careful selection of HRM practices that fit well in the HRM system. Thus, the HRM practitioners and managers have to be aware of what practices to use together. Fourth, providing a relaxed working environment for employees will lead to effective



organizational outcomes. Fifth, organizational culture supports the HRM practices to generate effective organizational outcomes; therefore, aspects related to organizational culture should be given due consideration. Sixth, the importance of talent acquisition and the proper measures to retain talents are considered important. This can be done through training, career development, internal promotions and feedback practices in a dynamic environment which in turn, can be mediated through motivation, organizational commitment, improving work environment conditions and employee creativity. Lastly, the HR practitioners and managers would apply a set of HRM practices; however, these practices should be applied in synergy.

Thus, important practical suggestions are uncovered for practitioners and managers that need to acquire HRM competencies which would augment competitive advantage for organizations and their sustenance. Furthermore, the present study is consistent as the journals taken into consideration are high ranking, however, only empirical articles were considered while conceptual ones were dropped.

### LIMITATIONS

In the present study, the aspects of the HRM practices-organizational outcome linkage is quite noticed. However, there is still scope to explain this linkage. For

instance, studies that explain the factors at an individual level that might have a positive or negative impact on HRM. Moreover, the size of the sampling population in most of the studies was limited, thus, future studies must expand the sampling of firms to improve the generalization of results. Besides, the implementation of the practices in the context of the outcome effects should have been more closely examined. Also, the present study covered a mix of various sectors; however, it would be interesting to investigate the type of HRM practices that would influence each sector specifically. Additionally, the longitudinal approach for understanding the link between HRM practices and organizational outcomes is scarce as noticed in the present study<sup>[51]</sup>. Thus, further studies could explore the effect of HRM practices on organizational outcomes at different time points. Moreover, studies that inspected the sample of examination before and after implementing the HRM practices are scarce. Also, qualitative studies would yield more detailed information regarding the relevant area of study. Further, replacement or using alternative HRM practices would be an area of interest for investigation. As well, consensus on the type of HRM practices that are well-aligned and fits in the HRM system is missing. Finally, the inclusion of more variables to interpret the linkage between HRM practices and organizational outcomes would be appealing.

Appendix 1: Search databases and no. of hits: Wiley Online Library (2010-2020)

Search databases	Sample search queries	No. of hits
Wiley online	1. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices'	29,640
	2. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle'	1654
	3. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices'	1978
	4. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes'	1663
	5. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance'	1876
	6. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes'	1612
	7. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance'	1850
	8. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'	1453
<b>Sage Journals (2010-2020)</b>		
Sage Journals	1. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices'	110
	2. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle'	422
	3. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices'	212
	4. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes'	183
	5. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance'	195
	6. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes'	171
	7. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance'	191

Appendix 1: Continue

Search databases	Sample search queries	No. of hits
	8. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'	151
<b>Taylor and Francis Online (2010-2020)</b>		
Taylor and Francis	1. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices'	3101
	2. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle'	164
	3. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices'	148
	4. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes'	128
	5. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance'	140
	6. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes'	120
	7. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance'	134
	8. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'	105
<b>Emerald Insight (2010-2020)</b>		
Emerald Insight	1. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices'	3000
	2. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle'	126
	3. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices'	206
	4. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes'	165
	5. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance'	182
	6. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes'	149
	7. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance'	166
	8. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'	137
<b>Science Direct (2010-2020)</b>		
Science Direct	1. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices'	929
	2. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle'	929
	3. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices'	932
	4. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes'	932
	5. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance'	2721
	6. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes'	1375
	7. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance'	1744
	8. 'human resource management practices' OR 'HR/HRM practices' OR 'HRM bundle' OR 'set of HRM practices' AND 'organizational outcomes' OR 'organizational performance' AND 'employee outcomes' OR 'employee performance' AND 'organizational culture'	1468

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