



Strategic Human Resource Management: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a significant expansion in the field of strategic HRM. This article synthesizes the literature in this field by doing a meta-review, which is a study of reviews that have addressed different facets of strategic HRM. The authors also discuss conceptual frameworks and empirical findings from studies carried out in the field over the preceding three decades, pointing out methodological issues and challenges in the earlier research. They also analyze contemporary developments in the study of strategic HRM. The author concludes with a meta-review of some interesting literature and important lines of inquiry. PRISMA was used for the preferred review of systematic and Meta-analysis of available review items.

Keywords: literature, meta-review, synthesis, strategic HRM

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Introduction

In light of the continued importance of SHRs in contemporary companies, strategic HRM has evolved over the past 30 years into a distinct field of study. According to Almashyakhi (2022), strategic HRM scholarship is the "study of HRM systems (and/or subsystems) and their interrelationships with other elements constituting an organizational system, including the organization's external and internal environments, the multiple players who enact HRM systems, and the multiple stakeholders who evaluate the effectiveness of the organization and determine its long-term survival" (p. 4). According to Jackson et al., the definition of strategic HRM places an emphasis on HRM systems and their connections to other organizational elements including

organizational performance and effectiveness. This agrees with definitions provided by other academics (Verma et al., 2022).

Strategic HRM has gotten more and more attention from management experts and practitioners over the last few decades. Figure 1 shows the expansion of the strategic HRM literature since its inception in the 1990s. The Scopus database contains a list of about 8126 publications from 1990 to 2023 that include the phrase "strategic human resource management." Over 150 publications published these papers, which included scholars from over 120 different countries. Google Scholar now has about 32,000 publications on the topic of strategic HRM, and this figure is rapidly increasing. Understanding what has been done in the past and what can be done in the future is crucial for the advancement of the strategic HRM profession.

A number of significant conceptual and meta-analytic reviews of strategic HRM have been published, including those by Kim et. al., (2022); Verma et al., (2022); Almashyakhi (2022). However, as demonstrated in Figure 1, the area of strategic HRM has rapidly expanded during the past ten years, with 5896 out of 8216 total publications in the topic being published between 2007 and 2016. There is a need for an updated evaluation to address the major conclusions from earlier reviews as well as new trends and areas of recent empirical study. The current paper takes focus on this purpose. Considering this goal in mind, the current research employs a "meta-review" methodology to compile the conclusions of earlier conceptual and empirical strategic HRM review studies. Given the vast body of work in this field, the meta-review approach is a useful tool to comprehend the state of the strategic HRM paradigm. This method also goes beyond a conventional review by exposing the theoretical and methodological problems that permeate this discipline, providing a fundamental and thorough grasp of the current situation and the key difficulties it faces.

To identify the main theoretical frameworks used in strategic HRM research, summarize the main findings of empirical work, and discuss the key methodological issues (such as measurement issues and research design), we reviewed 68 reviews that have covered various theories and topics of strategic HRM. Additionally, when addressing specific points, we connect readers to examples of reviews. Furthermore, we examine 183 empirical studies on strategic HRM to supplement the meta-review. When analyzing the empirical studies, we pay close attention to how the research questions have evolved over time, highlighting, in particular, the recent decade's new trends. Finally, we talk about some fascinating and crucial issues for future research on strategic HRM.

Reviews on Strategic HRM

Search for prior reviews of strategic HRM

The terms "strategic human resource management" and "review" were searched for in academic articles and book chapters in the EBSCO Business Source Premier, Web of Science, and Scopus databases. The conceptual and meta-analytic reviews were included in this meta-review based on two criteria. First, we included papers whose main goal was to summarize and synthesize earlier research. We didn't include theoretical articles (such Adula et. al., (2023); Kim et. al., (2022), Verma et al., (2022); Almashyakhi (2022) that were primarily concerned with formulating theoretical models and assertions. Second, we excluded articles about specific HRM practices (such as Yu, Yuan, Han, Li & Li (2022) and international HRM (such as Adula, Kant & Birbirs (2023); instead, we included review articles about HRM systems and their relationships with other variables. 68 review articles about strategic HRM, including 64 conceptual reviews and 4 meta-analyses, were produced using these two criteria. Based on the theoretical framework/perspectives, methodological issues, and review articles' coverage of those topics, we classified conceptual reviews. The meta-analytic reviews were not coded, and the main conclusions from them are just briefly covered in the part that follows.

PRISMA primarily focuses on the reporting of reviews evaluating the effects of interventions, but can also be used as a basis for reporting systematic reviews.

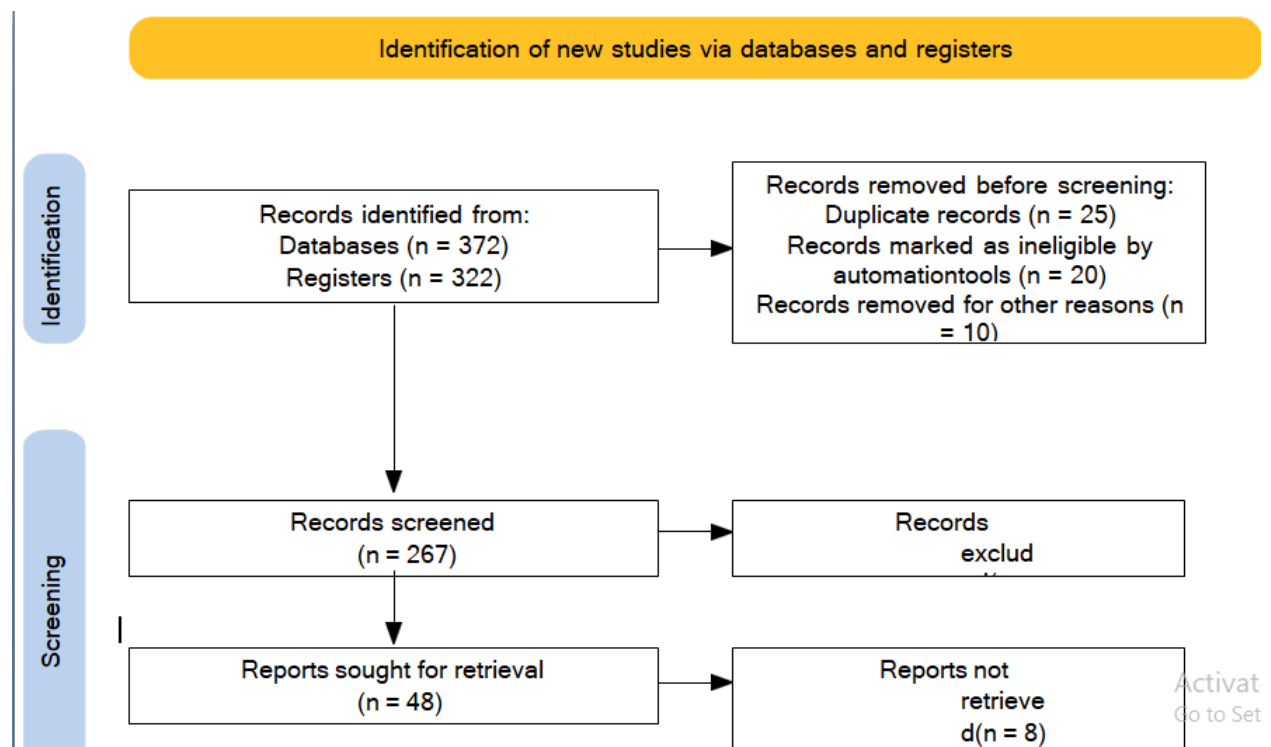


Figure 1. PRISMA Statement
Source: PRISMA output, 2023

Theoretical foundations of strategic HRM

The central and defining research question in strategic HRM, according to Tufa & Kant (2023) is the connection between strategic HRM and organizational effectiveness. To explain why, how, and when HRM systems are connected to organizational outcomes, academics have used a variety of theories. More than 20 theories or theoretical perspectives were found after we coded the theories presented in earlier conceptual assessments (see Table 1). The resource-based view, human capital theory, the behavioral viewpoint, the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework, and social exchange theory are among the theories that have been often discussed in earlier reviews (at least in 10 articles).

Table 1. Summary of strategic HRM theories in prior reviews.

Resource-based view	37
Behavioral perspective	22
Human capital theory	20
AMO framework	14
Social exchange theory	10
Institutional theory	9
Agency/Transaction costs	8
Organizational climate	8
Resource dependence	7
Attribution theory	5
Social capital theory	3

General system theory	3
Cybernetic	2
Employee-organization relationship	2
Organizational learning theory	2
Psychological contract theory	2
Equity theory	2
Self-determination theory	1
Population ecology	1
Symbolic theory	1
Strategic reference points theory	1
Strategic agreement theory	1

Source: Researcher own Meta analysis, 2023

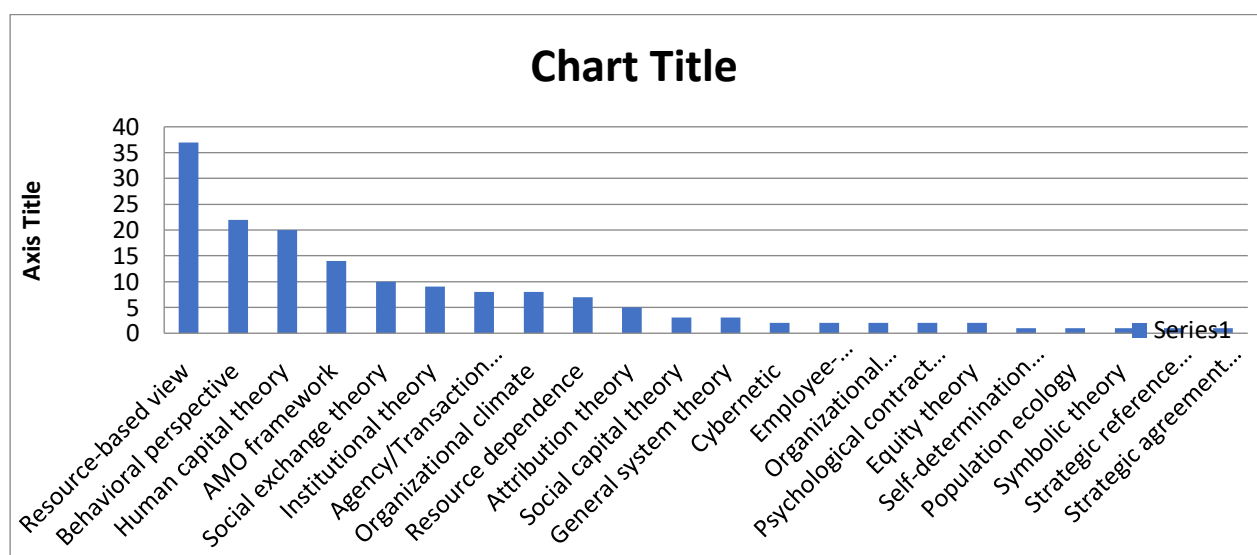


Figure2. SHRM Theories Numbers of times identified in prior reviews
(Source: Researcher own Meta-analysis, 2023)

Human capital theory, which is similar to the resource-based view, views human capital as a firm-level resource that can improve business performance and produce economic value (Barney & Wright, 1998; Wright & McMahan, 2011). Human capital, in contrast to other resources, is held by employees and transferable to other businesses in the event that people depart. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to use HRM systems to both improve their current levels of human capital (for example, by recruiting and training staff) and prevent losing their human capital investments to rival businesses (for example, by motivating and retaining employees). Strategic HRM topics including the HR architecture (Negeri et al., 2023) and the connection between HRM systems and organizational performance have all been addressed using human capital theory.

According to the resource-based view, enterprises might potentially derive sustainable competitive advantage from valuable, uncommon, unique, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Based on this viewpoint, a number of academics have proposed theories explaining how HRs or HRM systems might satisfy the four requirements and, as a result, potentially serve as a source of long-term competitive advantage (Gobena & Kant (2022)). Many empirical studies use this theory to explain the beneficial association between HRM systems and organizational performance. These theoretical works have established the foundation for applying the resource-based view to strategic HRM research. Despite becoming a paradigm for strategic

HRM research, the resource-based concept has recently come under fire. Negeri et al., (2023) pointed out that the four requirements for sustained competitive advantages have not been adequately investigated in terms of how HRM systems may produce employees who match these requirements.

The behavioral viewpoint emphasizes how HRM systems may help organizations accomplish their strategic goals, whereas the resource-based view and the human capital theory highlight the importance of HRs and HRM systems. The behavioral perspective, which has its roots in role theory, contends that in order to successfully navigate both internal and external environments, organizations must have the desired role behaviors of their workforce. By managing and reinforcing these desired behaviors, HRM systems can improve organizational effectiveness. Theoretically, the relationship between HRM systems and organizational outcomes can be examined by using the behavioral viewpoint to look at the mediating mechanisms. The behavioral approach is frequently used by researchers to pinpoint specific mediators and investigate how HRM systems impact employee behaviors, which in turn affect organizational effectiveness.

According to Yadete et al. (2014), the behavioral perspective is regarded to be a version of the AMO framework. According to this paradigm, an employee's ability, motivation, and opportunity to achieve are all related to their level of performance (Gerhart, 2007). By improving the three facets of employee performance, HRM systems can help a company perform better (Jiang et al., 2012a). The AMO framework has been extensively employed in strategic HRM research to describe the mediating processes through which HRM systems are related to organizational performance, similar to how the behavioral perspective has been used (e.g., Garuma, 2023). According to research, HRM systems can be separated into sub-dimensions based on the AMO model, such as skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing HRM practices. Additionally, different HRM system components have an impact on firm performance. Social exchange theory has been used more and more in strategic HRM research since there is growing interest in how HRM systems impact organizational performance by influencing employee attitudes and behaviors. Gouldner's (1960) reciprocity norm and Blau's (1964) study of social exchange connections serve as the foundation for social exchange theory. According to this hypothesis, those who gain advantages from one party often reciprocate. The organization may view HRM systems designed to benefit employees as an investment in those individuals; in return, those individuals may show favorable attitudes and behaviors towards the organization in order to preserve the exchange relationship. Theoretically, HRM systems can boost organizational performance by improving employees' social exchange relationships with organizations, according to research (Gile et al., 2022).

Prior review studies have also noted a number of additional theoretical views in addition to the theories summarised above, including institutional theory, organizational climate theory, social capital theory, and attribution theory (see Table 1). In the strategic HRM literature, each of these ideas has been applied to explain various research topics. For instance, institutional theory is useful for comprehending how organizations implement HRM systems based on the setting of a firm. Wright and McMahan (1992) contend that despite rational decision-making being based on an organization's strategic goals, the implementation of HRM systems may not necessarily be the end outcome of that process. Instead, the organization may be forced to implement specific HRM practices as a result of internal and external circumstances in order to establish credibility. In order to comprehend why different employees react in various ways to the same HRM systems, attribution theory has lately been incorporated into the strategic HRM literature. Employee attributions on the goal of putting HRM systems in place can affect their group behaviors and unit performance, according to Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008). We are unable to fully introduce each of the hypotheses given in the Table due to the length of this review. We direct those who are interested in finding out more about these theories to the supplementary material¹ and suggest that they read other reviews that place a stronger emphasis on the theoretical underpinnings of

strategic HRM (Gile et al., 2022). Future studies may take into account some of the less often used.

Empirical findings of strategic HRM

We base our discussion of the empirical findings of strategic HRM on the four meta-analytic reviews that have been completed (Gile et al., 2022), even though the majority of conceptual reviews of strategic HRM have summarised the findings of empirical studies. The associations between HRM systems and organizational results were investigated in all four of the meta-analyses. In their groundbreaking meta-analysis of strategic HRM, Gile (2022) discovered beneficial connections between high-performance work systems (HPWSs) and organizational performance. They also looked at how the different types of industries and performance outcomes affect the primary impact of SHRM.

The findings of Solomon & Lemma (2022) emphasize the significance of grouping HRM practices into bundles intended to improve particular traits of human capital. Additionally, the moderating effects of national characteristics on the association between HPWSs and business performance were the main focus of Tufa & Kant (2023) research. They discovered that countries with a closely knit national culture that is more consistent with HPWSs (such as low power distance or high-performance orientation) also had a stronger positive association between HPWSs and business performance. Their findings demonstrate how crucial national cultures are to comprehending the connection between HPWSs and corporate performance.

Solomon & Lemma (2022) looked at the mediating mechanisms of the association between HRM practices and financial performance, which was different from the previous three meta-analyses. They also used the AMO model to divide HRM practices into three different policy domains. They discovered that, compared to the motivation-enhancing and opportunity-enhancing HRM policy domains, the skill-enhancing HRM policy domain has a stronger relationship with human capital and a weaker relationship with employee motivation. This finding demonstrates how various approaches exist for HRM system elements to influence results. The discovery by Gile et al., (2022) that the two employee outcomes moderate the effects of HRM systems on organisations' operational and financial success is another contribution to the field.

When taken as a whole, the meta-analytic evaluations have revealed significant modifiers of this relationship across levels and have offered substantial evidence for the beneficial association between HRM systems and various organizational outcomes. They also offer some preliminary findings for the mediating processes of the association between HRM systems and performance outcomes. Although all of the meta-analytic studies to date have concentrated on the connection between HRM systems and performance outcomes, the meta-analyses also provide potential for future quantitative reviews. It's crucial to comprehend the variables, such as organizational traits and environmental circumstances, which affect how HRM systems are adopted in organizations.

Furthermore, such meta-analytic evaluations heavily relied on bivariate correlations between organizational results and HRM systems. As more studies become available that offer sufficient data from which partial correlations can be generated, future study can use partial correlation coefficients to confirm the results of prior meta-analyses. Meta-analyses based on partial correlations are more rigorous in their analysis of the relationship between HRM systems and organizational results than typical meta-analytic reviews because they may estimate the main association while controlling for other variables. Additionally, the qualitative review by Gile et al., (2022) discovered discrepancies in the findings of moderating effects, such as the moderating influence of company strategy. Future meta-analyses are required to thoroughly synthesize the moderating effects on the link between HRM systems and performance outcomes and to resolve the conflicting findings.

Methodology

Numerous review articles have reviewed the theoretical underpinnings and empirical results of strategic HRM in addition to discussing methodological concerns. As shown in Table 2, we divided the frequently debated methodological difficulties into five categories: level of analysis, assessment of HRM systems and measurement of performance outcomes, research design, and missing data. Since measuring HRM systems has received the most attention from previous reviews and is strongly tied to other methodological concerns, we focus primarily on these topics in the current review. We advise researchers interested in additional methodological issues to consult numerous earlier reviews.

Results

Table 2. Summary of methodological issues of strategic HRM in prior reviews.

Methodological issues Numbers of times identified in prior reviews	
Measurement of HRM systems	31
Measurement of performance outcomes	20
Level of analysis	16
Research design	15
Missing variables	5

Source: Researcher own Meta-analysis, 2023

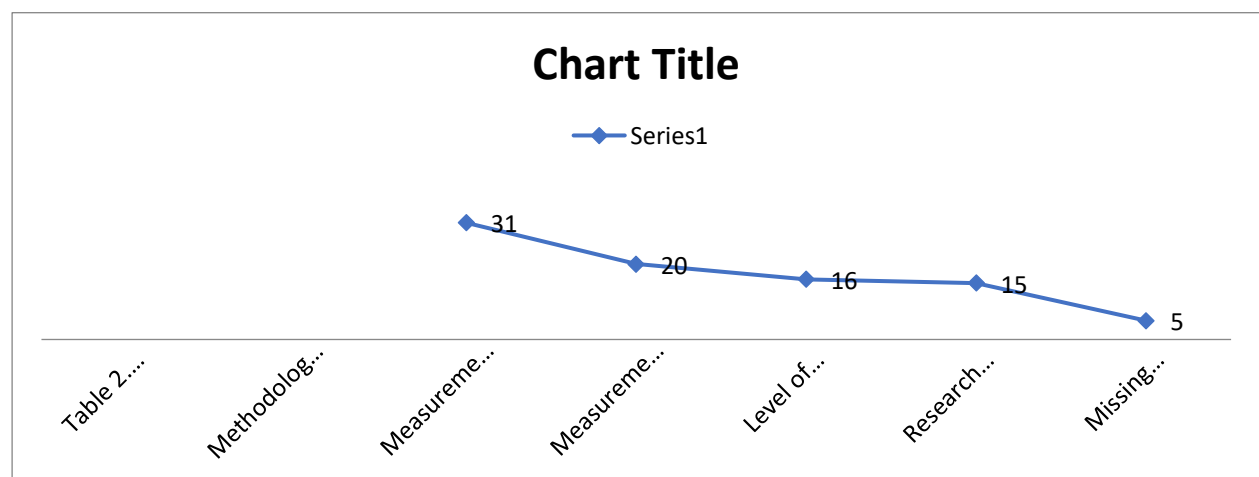


Figure 3. Empirical review
(Source: Researcher own Meta analysis, 2023)

In such a scenario, it is crucial for strategic HRM researchers to outline the different employee categories that the HRM systems are intended to cover before creating specific practises to represent the systems. For instance, Solomon & Lemma (2022) concentrated on HRM systems for managing staff members who interact with customers. Solomon & Lemma (2022) looked at middle managers' use of HRM systems. Researchers can pick the best practises that relate to certain employees by concentrating on a particular job group of employees. Instead of describing HRM systems only by identifying a set of practices, this may offer more accurate information. Relatedly, the ways that HRM systems are used by organizations may differ based on those reasons. Collins and Clark (2003), for instance, designed an HRM system designed to create the

social network of senior management teams. In Solomon & Lemma (2022) suggested an HRM system for workplace safety. A HRM system was created to improve customer happiness and service performance. According to this school of thought, researchers must develop HRM systems for particular organizational aims and necessary role behaviors if they are to accurately conceptualize HRM.

Although studies have come to the conclusion that HR systems are a collection of practices, there is much less agreement over the conceptualization and operationalization of these systems (Panigrahi et al., 2022). It is challenging to compile and compare the results of HRM systems from various studies due to the lack of agreement regarding HR system components. Previous reviews have covered a number of issues. Researchers must first acknowledge that there is no one HR system that can be used to handle all employee types in an organization. Due to each type of employee's distinct contributions to organizational goals, several academics have proposed that organizations utilize various HR practices to manage those (Panigrahi et al., 2022).

Second, research must take into account which practices should be incorporated in the HRM system after identifying the scope and goal of the system. Hundreds of HRM practices have been utilized in past studies, according to reviews that have recently been published (Solomon & Lemma (2022)). The specific practices incorporated in HRM systems also differ significantly from study to study. Many academics have proposed using a theoretical framework to direct the choice of practices rather than picking practices at random from a long list of HRM practices. According to Boxall & Purcell (2008), Jiang et al. (2012) a, and Lepak et al. (2006), the AMO model, for instance, offers a framework for academics to group various HRM practices into three bundles.

Third, in addition to choosing the level to measure the system at, researchers must also consider the major elements that make up an HRM system. The structural hierarchy found in HRM systems, such as the HRM philosophy, HRM policies, and HRM practices, is referred to as the "level" in this context (Schuler, 1992). HRM policies are defined as "the firm's or business unit's stated intentions about the kinds of HR programs, processes, and techniques that should be carried out in the organization" (Wright and Boswell, 2002, p. 263). It is possible to compare how people are managed across organizations by concentrating on HRM policies, regardless of the methods used to carry them out. Focusing on HRM rules, however, may result in erroneous HRM practices because policies cannot reflect the actual practices adopted in the organizations.

Recent trends of strategic HRM

Additionally, we looked for empirical research that looked at the connections between HRM practises and performance results. By doing this, we hope to show how the area of strategic HRM has changed since its inception and to point out some trends that have emerged in the last ten years. Since this is congruent with the notion of strategic HRM scholarship (Jackson et al., 2014), we restricted our search to works that examined HRM systems at the unit level of analysis. However, we also included articles looking at outcomes at the individual and unit levels. A final sample of 183 empirical studies was obtained through the principal databases' searches (such as EBSCO and Web of Science).

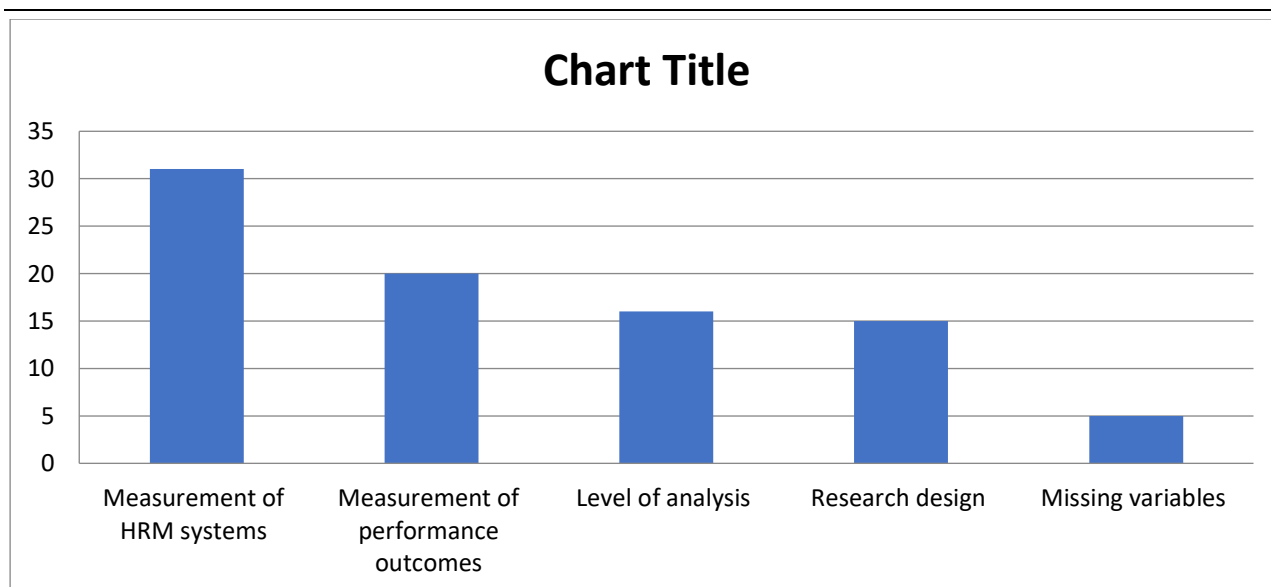


Figure 4. Number Of Studies Research Analysis Type
(Source: Researcher own Meta analysis, 2023)

Levels of analysis, research models, and research designs were the three categories we used to code the empirical publications. First, the levels of analysis show whether a study looks at connections between HRM systems and results at a single level (such as businesses and enterprises) or across levels. The unit-level analysis has dominated strategic HRM research for the past 20 years, as illustrated in Figure 2, as a result of academics' dedication to proving the impact of HRM systems on organizational results. However, since the late 2010s, academics have been more interested in multilevel research in the field of strategic HRM. The development of multilevel methodology and researchers' interest in comprehending employees' views of and responses to HRM systems have fueled interest in this multilevel approach.

Second, we classified whether an empirical study assessed the main impact of HRM systems on outcomes, including a moderation test, a mediation test, or neither. Figure 3 illustrates how many studies in the early stages of strategic HRM research concentrated on the primary impact of HRM systems. However, by looking at the moderators and mediation processes of the relationship between HRM systems and performance outcomes in organizations, researchers have considerably expanded the field of strategic HRM research. Jackson and colleagues (2014) have provided a thorough analysis of the moderators and mediators looked at in earlier studies.

Third, we categorized whether an empirical study employed a longitudinal, time-lagged, or cross-sectional design. A time-lagged design refers to collecting performance outcomes data after HRM systems data has been collected, whereas a cross-sectional design refers to gathering data on both at the same time. A longitudinal design is distinct from these two in that it involves gathering repeated measurements of HRM systems and performance outcomes over time. As can be seen in Figure 4, our coding findings agree with (Gile et al., 2022) assertion that cross-sectional designs have been used in the majority of strategic HRM research.

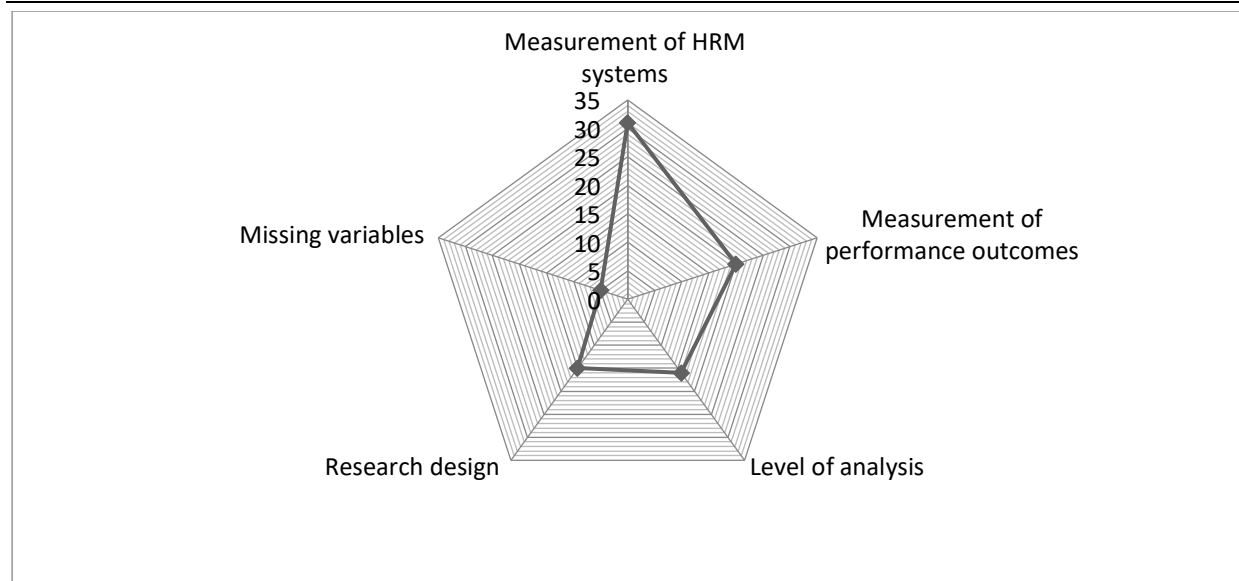


Figure 5. Measurement method Meta-analysis

Yet, over the past ten years in particular, the number of research adopting a time-lagged design has gradually increased. More recently, researchers have begun to look at the long-term effects of HRM systems or the effects of changes to HRM systems on performance outcomes (Gile et al., 2022). This is because there are several longitudinal data sets available. Longitudinal designs are useful for reaching more accurate findings on the causal linkages between HRM systems and performance outcomes than cross-sectional and time-lagged methods.

Conclusion

The strategic function of HRM in organizations has received a lot of attention during the past 30 years. The field's theoretical and empirical development has improved the rigor of scholarship and the caliber of conclusions that can be made. But a lot is still uncertain. The key theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, methodological issues, and current trends in strategic HRM research are hoped to be better understood by scholars with the aid of this review. Additionally, we believe that this publication will offer illuminating advice for future strategic HRM research. In the twenty-first century, strategic management of human capital will probably be a distinguishing characteristic of success, necessitating a greater emphasis on the ideologies, regulations, and procedures used to maximize SHRs. Strategic HRM is in a good position to contribute to this debate as long as the industry keeps posing and addressing worthwhile, strategic research topics.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest

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