



Research Paper

Evaluating the Qualitative Significance of Human Resource Management in Promoting International Relations

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the impact of globalization on understanding the blend between Human Resource Management and International Relations. The paper seeks to understand as to why the global business models implemented through human resource management give due importance to globalization so as to promote international relations in the contemporary times. In this vein, it concludes that the synchronisation between human resource management and international relations reflects the interdisciplinary agenda of both academic and business that is needed for not only to benefit the global community but also to overcome prevalent challenges of varied kinds. The study adopts the qualitative method of research to analyse the key aspects concerning the main theme, and is largely a descriptive in nature based on the review of secondary sources of data.

KEYWORDS: Globalization, Human Resource Management, International Relations, Ethical Dilemma, Interdisciplinary Agenda

Received 02 August, 2021; Revised: 14 August, 2021; Accepted 16 August, 2021 © The author(s) 2021. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Political and global changes have had a tremendous impact on International Relations which in turn have influenced the development of technology, organization and workforce in order to shape the modern society. With more and more people now opting for international corporations or global international supply chains, the study of international relations in terms of understanding how the world works when it comes to the management of human resources, holds enormous importance. The blend between International Relations (IR) and Human Resource Management (HRM) enables to understand political affairs which plays an important role in global businesses. Besides, the ethical dilemma that are associated with business and management is complemented by modules of politics and International Relations. Even the roles and responsibilities of Human Resource departments are transforming as the modern business faces pressures of globalization. Today, the geographical boundaries are being replaced by multinational firms and the firms move with the entire human capital which leads to mobility of culture, food and traditions. What one may find in the present day is that in order to continue in profitable and sustainable process, global staffing and management of a workforce varied in culture and language skills are distributed in different nations, thus giving a push to promoting international relations.

Taking into consideration the above background the paper makes an attempt to examine if only those organizations with systems and processes in place that support quick and easy adaptation of their human resource practices in line with the changing global labour market can attract and retain high performing and motivated staff. However, the main objective of this paper is to investigate into how significant is the human resource management in promoting international relations and vice versa. In the process, it seeks to understand as to why the global business models in which human resource management is an important component have been reshaped under the impact of globalization which contributes tremendously to promoting international relations in the contemporary times. It argues that Strategic Human Resource Management and International Relations are the two sides of the same coin where strategy is a tactical course of action which includes vision, mission and objectives whereas levels of strategy are corporate, business and functional strategy. Among other things, it also evaluates if the synchronisation between human resource management and international relations

reflects the interdisciplinary agenda of both academic and business values not only to benefit the global community but also to overcome relative challenges.

II. METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the review of literature related to main theme available in the form of books and articles including those available on internet. The study is largely a descriptive in nature and employs secondary sources of data. It is an attempt to elaborate the concept of globalization and its impact on human resource management and international relations. It adopts qualitative method to analyse why the global business models in which human resource management is an important component have been reshaped under the impact of globalization, and how these models have raised the profile of human resource management in promoting international relations in the contemporary times. In addition, the study also makes an effort to establish the connect between human resource management and international relations from the perspective of an interdisciplinary agenda.

III. HRM AND IR IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

In the post-Cold War period, it has been seen that the blend between human resource management and international relations has enabled us to understand the global political affairs through the prism of globalization. In terms of definition globalization can be defined as “all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society” (Albrow and King 1990). Thus, globalization is a process by which the people of the world are united into a single society. This process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, and political forces. However, from the business point of view, globalization can be considered only on the basis of economic and technological forces, though organizations going for global business do consider socio-cultural and political forces of the countries concerned in order to implement their strategies which have to play a key role in global businesses. But at the same time, the ethical dilemma that are associated with business and management is complemented by modules of politics and International Relations. International relations, on the other hand, is a multidisciplinary field and is becoming increasingly relevant as the world grows due to interconnection through trade and commerce, migration, media etc. International relations is also largely concerned with relations across boundaries of nation states and it addresses international political economy, global governance, diplomacy, security and many more such issues.

With international corporations and globalization of human resource functions coming to the fore, the study of international relations too holds enormous importance in terms of understanding how the world works. We all, as the students of management, know that human resource management is about the relationship between employers and employees and the way people are managed in the workplace is an important part of any business, whether it is located locally or globally. Since globalization has been making a profound effect on International relations, the latter have used globalization to reach its goal of understanding cultures. In other words, international relations focus on how countries, people and organizations interact. Understanding culture, globalization, and international relations is critical for the future of not only governments, people, and businesses, but also for the survival of the human race.

Talking about International human resource management one may find that it focusses on the management of human resources on a global basis. The globalization strategy of an organization strongly reflects the approach it takes to international human resource management. Such approach in turn influences the implementation of the major international human resource management functions of recruitment and selection, development and training, performance evaluation, remuneration and benefits, and labour relations. There are different approaches that can be highlighted here: companies taking an ethnocentric approach try to impose their home country methods on their subsidiaries; the polycentric approach follows local practices; and finally, a geocentric or global approach develops practices for worldwide use (Treven 2001). Many of the leading issues in today's increasingly interdependent world concern international affairs. Due to the continuing impact of globalization, the integration process of the countries is ongoing in all parts of the globe. It is a complex interconnection between capitalism and democracy, which involves positive and negative features that both empowers and disempowers individuals and groups. As globalization signifies a new paradigm within world politics and multilateral economic relations, international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have now become crucial role players (Amirkhanyan 2012).

In fact, HRM is a product of the human relations movement of the early 20th century, when researchers began documenting ways of creating business value through the strategic management of the workforce. The function was initially dominated by transactional work, such as payroll and benefits administration, but due to globalization, company consolidation, technological advancement, and further research, the human resource (HR) now focuses on strategic initiatives like mergers and acquisitions, talent management, succession planning, industrial and labour relations, ethical considerations, diversity and inclusion. These, among other

initiatives, contribute to the understanding of Human Resource Management as a contemporary issue owing to their sustained evolutionary nature. Tracing the roots of HRM during pre-historic times, Rotich (2015) find that “there existed consistent methods for selection of tribal leaders.” While hunting the practice of safety and health care was passed on from generation to generation. Another evidence is that from 2000 BC to 1500 BC, whereas the Chinese used employee screening techniques, the Greeks used an apprentice system (Obedgiu 2017; Rotich 2015). These actions recognized the need to select and train individuals for jobs. However, the Humanitarian, Cooperative and Marxist theories of the early 1900s underlined the potential conflicts between employee and employer interests in modern industry which gave way to the growth of trade unionism and industrial relations systems, thus making them important elements of contemporary HRM (Nankervis et.al 2011).

During this period, management theorists in the United States and United Kingdom began to examine the nature of work and work systems so as to develop models based upon emerging psychological and sociological research. The ways in which these theories have developed, and have been applied by both general management and HR professionals, reflect changing attitudes to jobs, work processes and organizational structures. While it is difficult to ascertain the nature of HRM in the future, its theory and practice appear to be continuously transforming as a consequence of globalization, new technology and associated fundamental changes in the nature of work and jobs. Rotich (2015) argues that “these external and internal pressures and their possible impacts on organizations, employees and overall employment conditions is what informs the continuing evolution of HRM as a contemporary discourse as well as the need for continuous innovation on the part of HRM professionals and thinkers.” Both International relations and Human resource management has evolved with time since the two are related to human being and human is self-evolving in nature (Rotich 2015).

The last three decades or so have seen the evolution of the global manufacturing environment, where majority of the manufacturers have global presence through exports, strategic alliances, joint ventures or as a part of a committed strategy to sell and produce in foreign markets. McFarlin (2019) makes it clear that “as globalization becomes more prevalent, companies deal with increased cultural diversity within the workforce.” According to him, these changes require small and large businesses adopt new policies and guidelines for workers. “This increased cultural diversity also has produced many benefits as companies gain new insights into different cultures from a management and a marketing standpoint” (McFarlin 2019). What basically needs to understand is that both international relations and human resource management are evolving due to globalization and being closely linked due to shrinking of the world they work hand in hand. There are, however, various driving forces which keep them going and growing. There is tremendous growth potential in the global markets which intensifies competition in the local markets as well as in the small and medium sized companies to upgrade besides expanding internationally. It is, thus, obvious that HRM and IR is moving in the context of globalization which leads to exposure and expansion.

IV. IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In recent years, the task of managing employees has become more challenging by rapid changes in the business environment, which owes much to globalization. Therefore, the focus has been shifted to the contemporary and practical issues, particularly about how people are organised and managed in the workplace and that too in an international environment. The impact of globalization, however, has led to understanding the complex relationship between the employer and employee in facilitating the organisation and production of goods and services taking into consideration the locational value of the organisation beyond the national boundaries. Due to globalization there has been immense mobility which has created pressure of competition and hence the scarcity between demand and supply of talent is continuing to escalate, particularly for high skilled workers and for the next generation of business administrators. However, the geographical boundaries have now been replaced by multinational firms and these firms move with the entire human capital which leads to mobility of culture, food and traditions. Therefore, in order to continue in profitable and sustainable process, global staffing and management of a workforce varied in culture and language skills are distributed in different nations. In the process, it has come to notice that only those organizations with systems and processes in place that support quick and easy adaptation of their human resource practices in line with the changing global labour market can attract and retain high performing and motivated staffs.

Such positive impact of globalization is indicative to the fact that the importance of human resource management has increased at the global level which in its own way contributes to promoting the international businesses, and so the international relations. There is a major impact on the pattern of employment due to globalization by forcing business organizations to organize their business around their core competence to face competitive threats effectively. In other words, “competition means companies must keep up with cutting-edge developments and stay assertive in the global marketplace to survive” (Globalization Partners 2020). Saranya and Asok (2019) are of the opinion that “in the globalization era, the primary means of developing competitive advantage at the market place is [now] no longer the physical and financial resources but the human resources.” They stress that globalization clears the way for rapid technological development and assimilation which

influences human resource development. Consequently, new technology is made accessible to various operators demanding new skills in human resources, and human resource, in turn, becomes capable of working in the changing work environment that may have occurred under the impact of globalization. In terms of socio-cultural and economic implications, globalization increases the prospects of people of a country in the form of international exposure which enhances not only an increased monetary gain but also the treatment they receive in an international environment (Erixon 2018). Globalization also brings modern management practices that could be applicable to work practices as well. For example, due to globalization a number of innovative ideas have been introduced by Indian organizations in managing their human resource, such as employee empowerment, work-life balance, alternate work schedule options etc. (Saranya and Asok 2019).

However, it may be noted that with a growing number of businesses functioning in accordance with the international rules and regulations, the impact of globalization on human resource can be difficult to handle. Globalization implies that various laws, cultures and norms have to be considered while drafting and making HR regulations (Bradley 2018). Some countries are more progressive where gender is given priority than others, and this distinction can lead to misinterpretations, thus leading to the loss of valuable employees. In such a situation, maintaining balance is a daunting task. Many organizations, however, are realizing the benefit of hiring employees who come from diverse backgrounds (Bradley n.d.). It allows a company to connect with more consumers in the markets, thus bringing a novel ideas and values to the workplace. Thus, employees with multicultural background who are also well-educated can be an asset to the organisations. Keeping this in mind business owners and managers can open up their recruitment to a wider audience by advertising in more places and by demonstrating a desire to attract multicultural people (Bradley n.d.). Similarly, once the employees come on board, the company or organisation must ensure to retain them by considering a diverse range of practical adjustments. All this is done to support a workforce that is often spread throughout several countries having diverse cultural identities. Therefore, as Natter (2020) stresses, “Human Resource departments must adapt their thinking and practices to include cultural differences, foreign regulations and technological developments.”

Since a company’s ability to move into new markets depends on its ability to have skilled workforce with competent employees having diverse cultural background, one of the most effective ways to retain employees from other countries is through eliminating the cultural and language differences that create barriers. In this sense, “employers that blend diversity management and inclusiveness can be successful at attracting foreign talent and encouraging home-base employees to embrace differences” (Mayhew n.d.). For example, “companies with global reach and global talent provide translations of their websites in as many languages as they have global markets”, Mayhew cites and adds, “another example is employer-sponsored language instruction and training or events that expose employees to the differences in global business culture and protocol.” However, there is a need for more employee training in a workplace where cultural, religious and ethnic diversity remains in sight. Managers too need to implement company’s policies and provide training to existing employees to make sure everyone can accept one another. This is required to protect the companies and their new employees from any kind of discrimination (MacFarlin 2019). So, any business at home or overseas is good if its employees are good in terms of talent with assurances of facing no languages barriers and cultural differences. Globalization has indeed widened the scope of leveraging the company’s human resource requirements in a global market. In other words, globalization has had profound effects on human resource management as it has “created an opportunity for containing human resource costs while still getting the job done” (Metcalf n.d.).

The greatest resource available to any organisation is the workforce it acquires and retains. As the organisation or for that matter a company extends its base to a foreign shore, the impact of such globalization efforts on HR procedures extend to both the current workers as well as the new employees. As a result, the HR department requires to increase support of its current staff as they are transferred overseas to new positions. Not only assistance with visas, work permits, and housing are required, but also the training in cultural issues and perhaps language acquisition become important. New local talent, however, needs to be acquired and developed. This is so because a company’s ability to move into new markets depends on its ability to fill its needs with skilled workers. As discussed elsewhere businesses tend to have their own corporate cultures or ways of operating, but there are societal and cultural differences between people as well. Cultural norms within a society affect the workforce and their views on jobs, especially in relation to time spent with their family and ideas about employment expectations (Heathfield 2020). Some cultures may also have fluctuating customs about gender roles, particularly concerning the role of women in leadership. Similarly, a manager brought in from the home office may not be the best person to manage an overseas staff, because they do not understand all the nuances of the local culture and what is considered as acceptable business practice. Global expansion is also affected by varying tax and labour laws, and hence HR departments need to be prepared to deal with different tax rates, benefit requirements or labour and environmental regulations. Globalization in human resource management means managing employees over great distances and perhaps in several sites spread around the globe (Natter 2020). Therefore, recruiting globally does not just help one to make better products and find better

people but also helps build a brand in other countries. In this sense, “the recruiting activities can be a marketing tool that increases awareness of ones brand in those countries, as well as a way to get a foothold in talent communities both from a recruiting and from a marketing perspective” (Lander n.d.).

V. SHRM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and International Relations are the two sides of the same coin where strategy is a tactical course of action which includes vision, mission and objectives whereas levels of strategy are corporate, business and functional strategy. Global business models are based on politics, international relations and the management of institutions. With the global pandemic taking its toll, no single discipline seems to be in a position to solve various problems facing the world. The SHRM implies that there should be a connection between a business strategy and the use of its human resources (Fahim 2019). Conferring to this viewpoint, Human resource management can be a crucial basis of continued competitive gain. The central foundation for SHRM thinking is that by assimilating HRM with the business strategy, rather than human resources strategies, employees can be managed more effectively, besides improving organizational performance so as to achieve a commercial success. The SHRM focusses on applying strategic modification and growing the skill base of the organization to ensure that the business can compete effectively in the future. In order to have a strategic role and get effective results in the organization, HRM departments are required to design their practices and functions consistent with the strategies and objectives of the organization. Though the business is focused on little operative expenses, the human resource plan must reflect that strategy by familiarizing high levels of employee self-service. Nevertheless, distinguished organizations trust on people to draw up value, so “a human capital management” strategy is considered to be the priority.

Abilities and capabilities of the worker can be established and enhanced with systematically planned HRM functions and the purpose of SHRM is to expand business performance through people management in an effective and efficient manner to get the preferred goals and objectives (Wright and McMahan 1992). The SHRM differs from traditional human resource management in very many ways (Fottler 2013). Even Wright and McMahan (1992) argue that the challenge in defining strategic HR theory starts from the failure to achieve a real strategic integration between the HR practices. Meanwhile, the SHRM emphasizes the need for HRM plans and strategies to be formulated within the context of overall organizational strategies and objectives, and to be responsive to the changing nature of the organization’s external environment. Thus, the overall themes of SHRM are the integration of all HRM functions, adherence to broad organizational goals and responsiveness to the external environment. The term strategy is used to explain both the processes, i.e., organizational restructuring and the outcomes, i.e., market position of chosen long-term directions (Nankervis et.al 2020). The SHRM, in fact, is concerned with ensuring a strategic ‘right’ between business and HRM strategies which undoubtedly concerns an evaluation of the possible impacts of both the external and internal organizational environment, the long-term goals of the organization and the ways in which HRM strategy will enable the adaptation of human resources towards these goals (Panayotopoulou et.al 2003).

Such a transition of personnel management to human resource management has signalled not just new rhetoric, but also significant new thinking on the part of managers (Taylor 2011). The integration of personnel management and industrial relations and HRM into a coordinated and strategic approach to the management of an organization’s people is an indicative of the eventual birth of strategic human resource management (Nankervis et.al 2020). Therefore, scholars and practitioners believe that the SHRM can be perceived as a ‘macro’ perspective, such as strategies and policies, whereas HRM represents more of a ‘micro’ approach, such as activities, functions and processes. In other words, the SHRM gives an extra dimension to the alignment of the goals and outcomes of all HRM processes with those of their organizations as a whole, though both are entwined. In addition, “the SHRM also provides practitioners with renewed confidence to perform their activities as an integral component of organizational success” (Nankervis et.al 2020). The SHRM is bound to ensure a strategic step between corporate and HRM plans to assist the adaptation of the employers to operate smoothly at international level. On the other hand, International Human Resource Management (IHRM) is a branch of management studies that inspects the design and effects of organizational human resource practices in cross-cultural contexts. In that sense, IHRM can be said to be the process of sourcing, allocating and effectively utilizing human resources in a multinational set up (Nuangjamnong and Maj 2017). In a nutshell, both the SHRM and IHRM are important for managing human resources, especially in terms of international business opportunities in the cross-border environment and hence, contribute much to the development of international relations not only at institutional and/or organizational level but also at political level.

VI. HRM AND IR: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AGENDA

A key issue that confronts today both the academic as well as the business community is the dilemma of considering human resource management and international relations as part of interdisciplinary agenda. Yet, there is no doubt that the study of international relations as a subdiscipline of political science has become truly

global in nature and scope as the world stands politically organized in various nation states, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. The globalization of political economies and the “internationalization” of the nation state system remain to be the most characteristic feature of the 21st century. Moreover, the integration of economies in the age of globalization together with advanced communication technologies has brought the world closer. While political power is an important variable, economic forms of power predominate today in real terms. The importance of military forms of power too remains important but as symbols of theoretical value. All these changes have had an impact on theories and practices of international relations, expanding the scope of the discipline by introducing new approaches to the study of the subject. International relations as an academic discipline initially focused on the study of diplomatic and political relations, but later commercial/economic and trade relations among sovereign states became the main focus (Basu 2012).

On the other side, the role of HRM is becoming crucial due to information explosion and technological advances and developments taking place almost every day. Today the strategic business decisions, from the smallest to the largest, depend on global politics, the politics of states and the politics of regions. The interrelationships between business, the economy, and political decision-making are, therefore, obvious in this era of globalization as business does not happen in isolation to the environment in which it exists. Thus, bringing human resource management into the folds of international relations indeed reflects the interdisciplinary agenda of both academic and business value that is required not only to benefit the global community but also to overcome prevalent challenges. As such importance of external factors on HRM practices cannot be overlooked since its impact is unavoidable. That is why HRM practices vary from organization to organization at national and international level. Human resource management is being considered as one of the vital factors affecting organizational performance because it is the human resource that can provide competitive advantage in highly competitive business environment (Noe et al. 2012). International HRM, thus, is an example of changing HRM practices with the effect of globalization (Torrington et al., 2008). Among the external factors, political factors can be considered as one of the major forces which are responsible for a company’s mission and strategy that is directly related to HRM practices, both at home and abroad. Noe et al. (2012) argue that political and legal factors are one of those factors which affect HR practices.

Global politics has essentially brought many new things which helped us shape our society. Throughout the history, politics has contributed the most to produce a civilized and structured culture but this tool can cause trouble if used to oppress societies. The society needs the politics to take the lead in shaping the world for a better humanitarian and economic future (Salma and Khan 2016). However, external factors like political crisis at global level are not controllable and they have intense impact on the people of MNCs. These factors not only affect business performance but also enforce the HR professionals to take necessary measures to cope with issues due to the impact of external business factors which results in redesigning of HR practices. These external factors include economic factors, legal factors, demographic factors, cultural factors, political factors and technological factors. All these factors have transformed the HR practices with the passage of time and now HR practices have become more efficient in delivering the value to organization through changing the system of recruitment and hiring, training and development, and compensation and benefits (Salma and Khan 2016). Since the global political crisis has been affecting HR practices of MNCs around the globe, both international relations and human resource management are together engaged in balancing the forces of globalization and its impact in order to move with it.

Undoubtedly, both HRM and IR are complementary to each other and therefore, International relations and politics affect businesses in the same way businesses exert their impact on international politics, thus affecting international relations. There are various conduct or behaviour in which businesses can distress international relations, dialogues, and organizations. Big business can intensify economic misunderstanding in international relations through the precipitation of trade conflict and financial crunch. In the post-Cold War period, green politics, human rights, and public health arose as international subjects. Since then, the international community has remained attentive to the impact of businesses because of which global issues began to be addressed and there emerged the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which grips businesses answerable for the social problems they cause or they lead to (Kojo 2018, Vogel 2006). In such cases, “profit-maximizing strategies chosen by companies or firms have had serious impact on the way global issues are addressed”, Kojo (2018) stresses and adds, “businesses, then, can affect international regime formation on global issues”. Therefore, there is no exaggeration to say that the HRM and IR form part of an interdisciplinary agenda.

VII. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that the impact of globalization has largely been positive in terms of blending the human resource management with international relations, the roles and responsibilities of human resource management are continuously transforming as the modern business to a certain extent also faces pressures of globalization. Yet, with more and more people now opting for international corporations or global international

supply chains, the study of international relations in terms of understanding how the world works when it comes to the management of human resources, holds enormous importance. This is more so because instead of an ideal business model we require a deeper understanding of politics, international relations and the management of institutions locally, regionally and globally. Global pandemics like COVID 19 have made it obvious that no business can take place in isolation but in tandem with the role of the state and the role of business in our economies and societies. In fact, we need people who understand the world well enough to lead and are aware of their responsibilities to navigate complexities and succeed not only in business and management but also in exploring viable relations between nations. That is where human resource management can be complemented by modules in Politics and IR in an era where global issues are at a peak and the ability to reshape modern society in terms of economy and business is vital.

No wonder then that the human resource management holds qualitative significance in promoting international relations, both from the academic and business perspectives, so as to benefit the global community in very many ways, besides overcoming challenges of varied nature and similar impact is seen of international relations over businesses in specific to human resource since human capital plays an important role and is dynamic and ever-changing. The synchronisation between human resource management and international relations thus reflects the interdisciplinary agenda of both academic and business values not only to benefit the global community but also to overcome relative challenges. That is to say that both HRM and IR are impacted or affected by each other but awareness and adjustments keep them moving. The fast changing scenario in the dynamic International relations and the Human capital keep both the subjects play an important role in this globalised world which is overflowing with techniques, ideas, innovation and opportunities.

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