

## Influence of national, organizational and relational contexts on the human resource function performance in Morocco

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### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the human resources function (HRF) is based on the performance of several management levels which call on different factors. In this article, we explain the influence of national, organizational and relational contexts on the effectiveness and the efficiency of human resources management (HRM) policies and practices.

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**Keywords:** Human resources function, Performance, Organizational performance, National context, Organizational context, Relational context, Human resources management.

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### 1. Introduction

Contingency school (that is of dependence) is known by its break with the traditional currents of thought which defend the existence of a single structural form better than the others. This movement, which brings together the work of several authors from the 1950s to the 1970s, attempts to clarify the way in which organizations are structured by studying the influence of context variables on their characteristics (Organization Contingency Theory: OCT). Representatives of this school used to be classified into two categories, depending on whether they favor internal contingency factors or external contingency factors.

However, in the sense of success, the perception of performance may vary depending on the objectives. Thus, the performance concept acquires a multi-dimensionality character which brings together the different dimensions which have interests to assert in an organization as proposed by Ref. [1] when he suggested a model of organizational performance that includes the economic, political, systemic and social dimensions.

In this article, we will focus on explaining how internal and external contingency factors can influence the performance of the HR function as being an important tool of both management and development within companies.

### 2. Materials and methods

In order to conduct this study, we proceeded by a qualitative research method because this kind of method ensures "the understanding of the meaning of decisions and behaviors" [2]. "Contextual, powerful and robust" [3].

The processing of qualitative data was carried out from a semantic point of view [4]. In this type of processing, the analysis is carried out by hand according to the approach of content analysis. This consists in examining a text at its most fundamental level: the content. It is an analysis of the frequency and patterns of use of terms or phrases and has been applied to various research approaches. Although content analysis was generally applied to print / text, it also allowed analysis of visual artifacts. It is an approach adopted by several researchers ([5], [6], [7]).

Thus, we interviewed 30 HR managers and directors in relation to the different practices of human resources management (HRM) as well as in relation to the difficulties that block better management. Differentiation between participants based on their gender and firm's activity sector is given by Fig.1 and Fig.2.

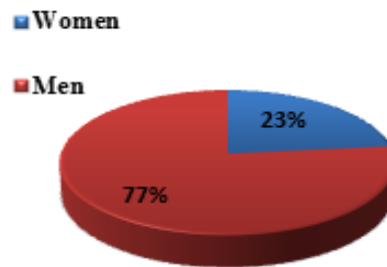


Figure 1. Participants gender

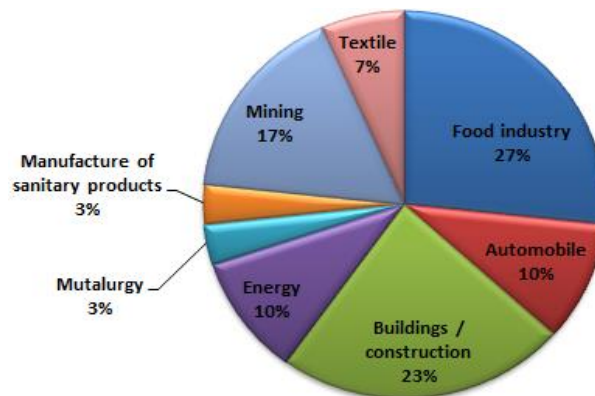


Figure 2. Activity sector of participating companies

We also reviewed related studies that were conducted on organizations implemented on the Moroccan territory. Hence, we combined our inquiry results and others studies' findings in order to explain how national, organizational and relational contexts affect the HR function performance and implementations of adequate practices.

### 3. Results

Based on our inquiry, we found that the success of choosing and implementing good HRM practices is related to three dimensions which are: the national, organizational and relational contexts.

#### 3.1. The national context

##### 3.1.1 The national culture of the country

Based on personal experiences, daily lived within companies, I always observe the presence of the cultural aspect during the choice and implementation of the practices to be adopted. For example, in companies whose activity is linked to a site and requiring job rotation, girls wishing to join these companies do not accept to work

overnight because, in most cases, their families do not accept it. This type of firm therefore avoids as much as possible (or even outright) that a girl is part of a night shift. Sometimes they even avoid the recruitment of girls for technical positions so that they avoid the drop in productivity due to a high rate of body fatigue, or that the person concerned is negatively influenced by the male culture during the performance of his work.

There is also the language variable. Indeed, during training sessions (especially for certain categories of employees), we note that after a certain time, the interlocutors no longer continue to adhere if we continue to make the presentation in French or English only. It is thus necessary to attract the attention of the participants by means of change of language (use the Moroccan dialect), the vocation of example having relation with the national context.... Similar conclusions have been made by other researchers namely by Ref. [8] who found that knowledge of Moroccan culture and the difference in the way of sending a message were key factors to be able to transfer knowledge from parent companies to their subsidiaries in Morocco. He also noted that the implementation of a badge reader to secure access to the headquarters of a multinational subsidiary in Morocco was perceived in a different way by the employees. The latter considered it as a means of controlling their actions and not an action to secure access to the firm. These were different perceptions of the concept of security. The way we look at things can have a deep effect on HR practices. Indeed, in relation to the system of occupational medicine, we recall that a respondent had declared: "our system of occupational medicine manifests itself through a doctor who comes to visit the site of the company every Wednesday. On this day if one of the employees has a health problem, he can then consult him, the doctor then makes the decision in terms of the care to be given, to grant him a period of rest, or to recommend him to change post office if his case requires it ". The role of the occupational doctor in this example is to justify the absence of employees and not the application of occupational medicine. The management of this company believed they were applying a system of occupational medicine. This generally results either from a lack of culture vis-à-vis the aspect of occupational medicine (which is not sufficiently addressed in Morocco), or because the establishment of a system of occupational medicine does not have the objective of occupational medicine in itself but rather to have only a reputation for it because the company finds itself constrained to competitive challenges (requirements of transactions with foreign countries).

When one of the participants in our exploratory study declared that "administrative procedures are often the cause of the cumulative delay", or when another said that "even if the procedures to be followed are generally clear and well structured, but they are often rigid in terms of application ... ". This refers to the impact of staff perception (managers and employees) vis-à-vis the implementation of procedures organizing the workflow. When procedures are mobilized to facilitate and organize work by making it more comfortable, they are seen as a factor generating delay.

### **3.1.2 The institutional profile**

Interested in revealing characters of the HRM within companies in the light of economic and political events that were known by Morocco, Ref. [9] revealed that the weaknesses identified spread to all management systems, including Moroccan public organizations and companies that are starting to implement principles of governance [10]. These institutions are still in the first phase of integrating management systems through "integrated management" ([11], [12]).

These weaknesses detected at the level of the country's institutional system affect HR practices within companies. Indeed, the participants in our first study confirmed the irrelevance of the academic training received by new recruits, which results from the existence of a gap between the needs of the labor market and the orientations of the education system in Morocco. As a result, some companies are forced to provide technical training for their new recruits in order to improve their skills: "generally, new recruits do not have sufficiently solid and adequate academic training for their missions within the company, hence the need to re-train them before they start their work inside the company".

The impact of the Moroccan institutional framework on the training component is not limited only to the lack of adequacy between the needs of the labor market and the training provided within educational establishments in Morocco, but this influence also shrinks the business action circle in terms of promotion and development of the training component. For example, Ref. [8] found that, given that the individual right to training (DIF) is a principle recognized, regulated and validated by law in France, “the ALPHA group has followed this trend, by allowing employees to mobilize an annual credit for cumulative hours at their convenience. As this type of legal device has not yet been developed in Morocco, the ALPHA subsidiary in Morocco has continued to deal with the training aspect according to the particularities of the Moroccan regulatory framework. ”

The country's institutional profile also affects the recruitment process for companies, especially for large construction sites. Indeed, for this type of working environment, the State requires that a percentage of the inhabitants of the area surrounding the site and the inhabitants of the same city must be recruited in order to avoid ensuring socio-political stability of the region in question. This type of requirement is generally implemented through the signing of conventional agreements before the start of the project.

The Moroccan institutional framework also impacts the HR practices adopted in terms of remuneration. On the one hand, the recruitment system must therefore take into account the levels of remuneration implicitly recognized for each profile, and also integrate all the deductions made from salaries while respecting the rates in force. On the other hand, at the level of subsidiaries of multinational companies, the absence of legislation requiring compliance with the same salary range adopted in the parent company leads to a decrease in the salary range implemented in Morocco.

### **3.1.3 The area of the activity**

The activity sector of a firm affects its choices and actions in terms of HR practices. For example, companies operating in the field of canned fish must respect the biological rest period. Consequently, they opt for seasonal recruitment of their employees. By analyzing the information collected during our quantitative study, we found that the food industry and the "building / construction" sector perform more metrological measurements compared to other business sectors. This seems obvious because these two areas are often forced to respect recognized standards in terms of quality. The results also revealed that the area of "building / construction" requires more security measures. This kind of practice is dominant in very large companies and multinational firms.

The industry also influences recruitment and training processes. To this end, the more the company's activity requires a high level of skills, the more selective the recruitment process and the training programs are periodic and spread over time as in the aeronautical sector.

## **3.2. The organizational context**

### **3.2.1 The structure of the company**

Throughout the analysis of the results of this work, the size and the way they are structured, companies were a distinguishing factor between their HR practices. A participant clarified that this factor constitutes a catalyst for the establishment of good practices by affirming: "the fact that our company has not yet passed the personnel management phase, so we do not do forecast management of jobs and skills because this requires the prior existence of certain conditions in terms of the structuring of the HR function, management tools, etc., and that is the thing that we do not have until now ”.

Other researchers interested in studying Moroccan companies made similar conclusions. For example, Ref. [13] stated that "the size factor has a very significant influence on the organizational structure of the company [...]. In medium-sized companies, the human resources function can only be a simple service responsible for carrying out routine administrative tasks. In the big firms, the function takes a more evolved and more structured form. ”. In this context, Ref. [14] stated: “the structuring of the HR function is a predisposing condition for its performance”. Reference [15] defend the same idea.

### 3.2.2 The firm's culture

The culture of a company affects its practices. This translates into rigidity in terms of management control which would be linked to the internal culture of the company as expressed by one participant: "personally I feel an absence of flexibility of decision-makers within our company". , management control has become an important element of organizational performance. In this context, Ref. [16], collected important observations concerning management control within Moroccan companies. It also pointed out that management control systems within Moroccan companies remains very limited for reasons related to the deficit in managerial culture and lack of clearance regarding the contributions of this function. Ref.[14] confirmed, that the HR function performance is more focusing on administrative issues than on the managerial ones. This is due to the corporate culture which remains closed.

The corporate culture identifies also in which sense management control is envisaged. Indeed, Ref. [17] announced that within Moroccan companies: "this control is more focused on controlling the administrative budget than on management, and accepted by the heads of public enterprises, who are often former senior civil servants in the administration, influenced by a purely administrative concept of management control. ". Ref. [18], Ref. [19] and Ref. [20] defend the same ideas.

In addition, the results we have obtained remain adequate with the definition of management performance where, for example, communication constitutes an effective tool for supporting organizational changes [21], or since good communication is recognized as an essential process to set up to ensure the proper functioning of a work team [22]. The culture of knowledge sharing within a company generates a kind of social awareness, the usefulness of which is helping employees make good decisions when circumstances change. Sharing knowledge increases their sense of integration and commitment to the achievement of society's goals. Sharing the company's vision with HR managers and involving them in strategic decision-making is also part of the company's culture [23].

### 3.2.3 The strategy

"The word" strategy "is taken from military vocabulary to define the scale of the means deployed in relation to the tactics which serve it. It refers both to the battle against competitors and to the conduct of war, that is to say to leadership" [24]. This word also refers to "a combination of the ends (objectives) that the firm strives to achieve and the means (measures) by which it seeks to achieve them" [25].

Definitions of the concept of "strategy" of a company lead it to adapt its practices according to its objectives. It will thus be able to adhere to a relational or transactional HR management policy. The relational vision aims to build good relationships with employees and promote their feelings of commitment and integrity, while a transactional strategy tends to assess employees based on the amount of work done. It is in this context that companies differentiate their staff motivation processes. And that is why we find that one respondent said: "We recognize people's efforts, we organize meetings to resolve the problems encountered, which promotes team spirit". Or again: "in the context of creating a good working environment, we organize excursions, outings, sporting events between the staff of the various departments". Another focused on motivation based on the quantified performance of the employee: "among the means of motivation of the personnel used within our company, there is motivation by bonuses: job bonus, quality bonus, and bonuses offered according to the work and the objectives achieved by each employee ". Multinational subsidiaries in Morocco often opt for transactional HR management because they are constrained by deadlines for carrying out their projects. They are not interested in the employee as a contributor to the development and sustainability of the company but rather as a contributor to the realization of the current project in which he must help the progress of the work dictated by the document work planning.

Like the modalities of the motivation system, the strategy also affects the training aspect. A strategy aimed at increasing the level of competitiveness of the company will envisage more training improving the technical and interpersonal skills of its employees, while a strategy oriented towards increasing productivity for a fixed period will avoid any non-training. closely related and necessary for the accomplishment of the employee's mission.

#### **3.2.4 The capacity for dissemination and absorption**

The performance of the HRF is also linked to the company's ability to draw inspiration from good practices and ultimately integrate them. Indeed, we have found that large companies and multinational subsidiaries are the most fulfilling in terms of structuring the HRF and adopting good practices. This stems from their ability to take advantage of the cultural mix internally, and to be able to adapt to the demands and competition within their external environment.

The capacity of said integration affects the effectiveness and efficiency of its management systems as stated by Ref. [26]. Reference [27] rightly point out that a human resources policy is evaluated on the basis of their results obtained and not on the logic of being effective: "a human resources policy is also evaluated on the basis of 'an image which owes as much to perceptions and value judgments (equity, trust, modernity, etc.) as to the logic of efficiency'. The notion of efficiency has also been defended throughout the literature by several authors such as Ref. [28], Ref. [29].

#### **3.3. The relational context**

Reference [30] affirms that "an essential element of organizations rests on the will of people to make their individual efforts contribute in a cooperative system ...". Through our empirical study, we have been able to observe that the establishment of good HR practices promotes manager satisfaction with their employees. This obviously has a positive impact on the overall performance of the company.

Indeed, the good management of skills and competences, the establishment of an adequate occupational health system and the monitoring of employee safety [31] arouses their feelings of confidence and support for the company. These practices thus increase their motivation and their awareness of the importance of delivering a good job ensuring the achievement of the objectives set by the company. This not only finds solid support from schools known throughout all the HRM literature, but it also pushes us to support the idea of "mirror of satisfaction" through which Ref. [32] affirm the link between staff satisfaction and the quality of the services offered, as argued by Ref. [33] by linking the development of employee skills to the improvement of organizational performance.

#### **4. Discussion**

As the concept of performance acquires a multidimensional character (economic, political, systemic and social aspects), it is understandable that several researchers such as Ref. [34] called upon the global, organizational and individual contexts during its evaluation.

Through literature, many researchers agreed with our inquiry findings regarding the influence of national, organizational and relational contexts on the HR function performance. For instance, Ref. [35] confirm, by studying multinational subsidiaries, that the evaluation of performance is influenced by the context where the organizational factor of the parent company and the cultural factor of the host country of the subsidiary influence the performance evaluation.

As part of this, Ref. [36] suggests designing a global evaluation system, but one that can be modeled in accordance with the context of the company.

In particular, the influence of organizational and cultural factors on the evaluation of the performance of the HRF could also be projected on the HR practices to be adopted. Indeed, HRM practices deemed effective in a

particular context should not be projected without flexibility in a different context because the impact of the economic, political and cultural context is decisive in the success or failure of reforms, in terms of HRM as in other areas.

Within the framework of this, Ref. [35], by studying some HR practices, note the existence of a link between the recruitment process, training and the criteria of performance evaluation. The performance management must allow the adaptation of the training system by seeking compatibility between the individual objectives of employees and organizational of the company.

More broadly, Ref. [37] conceptualize the context around five dimensions: technological, environmental, cultural, decision-making and strategic dimension.

In the following lines of this paragraph, we will focus on some researches that stated out the importance of some ideas defended by our findings:

#### **4.1 The country effect**

The effect of the country includes the national culture, the political, social, economic and legal system of the country [38].

The country's economic strength influences HRM practices within firms. This idea will be easier to explain by evoking the example of multinational companies (MNC). MNC generally tend to globalize their HRM practices by trying to apply the same policy from the parent company to the host country of the subsidiary. Of course, they are constrained to different local requirements. For example, in Germany, the State forces MNCs established on its territory to adopt the same system of wage representations even if it may be different from that of the parent company of the subsidiary. Thus, the more the economy of the host country is dependent on the MNC, the more its influence on the HR practices adopted in its territory by these subsidiaries is reduced [39]. This leads to the fact that even if the MNC respect local employment practices, they tend, on the one hand, to choose host countries with weak regulatory systems [40] or, on the other hand, to use nested methods so that they are more free to choose the practices to adopt [41]. Consequently, we note that, especially after the economic crisis, large global companies have outsourced parts of their activities to less developed countries where they enjoy advantages that do not even exist in their countries of origin in terms of respecting working hours, salary range, training plans, compliance with legislation in terms of suspension or termination of employment contracts, or even in terms of compliance with employee safety measures.

In addition, the institutional system linked to the ministry of employment in a country plays a vital role in the implementation and compliance with labor regulations by all firms.

For their part, union representations also influence the HR practices adopted by firms by pushing them to avoid provoking conflicts with union rules or regarding employee attitudes.

Thus, the effect of the country turns out to be decisive in the selection of HR practices adopted by companies. This influence depends on the economic power of the country, the strength of its regulations and the quality of its infrastructure.

#### **4.2 The effect of the country's culture**

The concept of "culture" is polysemous. It refers to the ideologies, attitudes, habits, concepts, values, standards, symbols, rites and myths of a society [42]. Ref. [43] defines it as the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes members of one society from another.

Believing that it is the national culture that differentiates groups belonging to a homogeneous international company, Ref. [43] conducted a study on 116000 employees of IBM company in more than 40 countries of which he found six factors allowing better understanding cultural differences:

##### **4.2.1 hierarchical distance**

Ref. [43] defines the concept of hierarchical distance as being the perception of the degree of power inequality between those who hold hierarchical power and those who are subject to them. It therefore manifests as being the desire for equality and independence of society members. In societies with high hierarchical distance, the status of the person determines his power and therefore guarantees him respect of other members, unlike cultures with low hierarchical distance which try to treat all members of the society with equal footing whatever their societal position.

Indeed, the hierarchical difference in a company can be observed through several signs, namely the parking spaces allocated according to the status of the employee, the reception area which overwhelms the visitor by its size, the elevators reserved for the ruling elite who occupy the highest floors, the word "hello" which is not said to everyone, the whisper of employees in the corridors, the striking dress codes, the long meeting tables around which the employees do not sit randomly but they respect the hierarchical links even when speaking. In addition, people do not usually collaborate, they monitor each other.

In opposite, in an environment with a low hierarchical distance, the reception space has a high ceiling with more colorful walls, the offices are assembled by work team and not hierarchical level, the implementation of places of collective work in coffee mode, the meeting tables are round or oval, the dress code does not identify the employee's status ...

#### **4.2.2 Individualism and collectivism**

These notions refer to the psycho-social relationships maintained between the individual and his community. This dimension has enabled author of Ref. [43] to classify societies into two categories: individualistic societies where members maintain weak relationships with one another and promote individual freedom by valuing privacy and the challenge of finding fulfilling work. And collectivist communities that treat the individual as a representative of their group, family or ethnicity which promotes a sense of protection among group members. On the managerial level, the index of individuality or collectivism affects, for example, the perception of hierarchy by employees, their ability to learn in a group, and their relationship to labor disputes ...

#### **4.2.3 Femininity and masculinity**

The daily interactions between members of a society identify their femininity or masculinity. This index is based on the fact that the distribution of social roles, according to the gender of individuals, is not done in the same way for all societies. Thus, the more a society differentiates the roles, the more it manifests masculine characters (favoring traditionally masculine values such as competition, the demand for success, assertiveness and materialism) and vice versa: the more the roles are interchangeable the more community is considered feminist. Within companies, the femininity and masculinity of society affect the concepts of compensation, recognition, promotion, team spirit and job security. Indeed, on one hand, in male countries, employees generally seek to earn more, to climb the social ladder, whether their skills are recognized or not and whether the work is motivating and fulfilling or not. On the other hand, the female communities encourage the maintenance of good relations at work, collaboration, and the search for job security.

#### **4.2.4 Uncertainty control**

This index assesses the degree of tolerance that a culture can accept in the face of anxiety caused by future events [44]. This is the feeling of unease that is caused by uncertainty in a business. The reaction of the latter is mainly dictated by its institutional, technological and religious frame of reference.

In countries with high levels of uncertainty, management follows a series of standardized procedures and constantly seeks to assess the risks and manage uncertain incidents. In countries that accept uncertainty, personal risk-taking and initiative are more pronounced than elsewhere.

#### **4.2.5 Short-long term orientation**



The short-long term orientation highlights the important differences between countries. It refers to values such as persistence, economy, shame feeling, respect for status and traditions, politeness and individual thoroughness. Therefore, Ref. [44] classifies countries into two groups: countries with a short-term orientation and countries with a long-term orientation. As regards the first group, citizens seek results, respect traditions and social obligations as they attach importance to affection, the equivalent of a boyfriend for women, and to the value of gifts as a stimulant pleasure, and perceive old age as a sad period that begins late.... As regards the second group, it is necessary to retain the countries with long-term orientation whose members are characterized by a sense of economy and savings, perseverance, shame and respect for the circumstances. They also attach importance to affection referring to the husband for women and to the value of gifts seen as a means of education and development. People in long-term countries perceive old age as a happy period that begins early.

#### **4.2.6 Indulgence and severity**

Ref. [45] highlighted indulgence via opposition to severity as a cultural dimension of societies. It is about the perception of the feeling of personal happiness. In other words, indulgence represents the tendency to liberate personal satisfaction from the fundamental and natural desires of man related to pleasure and distraction. However, severity refers to the belief that this satisfaction must obey the rigorous standards of society. Although these dimensions are not new, the contribution of Ref. [45] remains important because it has successfully conceptualized them and created a profile culture for each country studied even if it was criticized for generalizing the results when we cannot predict the behavior of a particular member.

#### **4.2.7 The effect of the country's institutional profile**

The institutional profile of a country influences corporate policies clearly because they are mainly managed according to the laws of this country. Ref. [46] describes this concept by addressing three dimensions: regulatory, cognitive and normative.

The regulatory dimension refers to all the laws and rules of conduct that a firm must comply with within a country. The cognitive dimension specifies the "cognitive categories" usually shared by the inhabitants of a country and influencing the perception and interpretation of events that occur in a given organizational context. While the normative component refers, as its name suggests, to the values, norms and standards governing the social life of a group, in particular by defining the way of accomplishing things. These last two components remain close to the notion of "national culture" as Ref. [46] asserts.

Therefore, like history, ethics, the dominant religion and languages spoken in a country, the standards and values of that country also influence communication, conflict management, decision making, how to manage projects, the terminology used and the implemented procedures.

#### **4.2.8 The effect of the organizational culture of the firm**

Reference [47] defines organizational culture as the benchmark which defines, for each individual, the desired behaviors and guides decisions within the group. More specifically, Ref. [48] and Ref. [49], two of the most cited researchers in this field, sees that organizational culture can be defined according to three levels:

- **the observable in the organization:** the remarkable organizational processes, namely the language used, the dominant rules, the architecture, behaviors and customs,
- **organizational values:** these are the values guiding the nature of the objectives set, the organization's strategy and the management style adopted,
- the third component corresponds to **the ultimate source** of the values of the organization acquired by the employees, but which are difficult to observe.

Organizational culture allows leaders to acquire power over the behaviors of actors within the firm.

## 5. Conclusion

Starting from the postulate of Ref. [50] which defines the organization as being an entity embedded in an environment, we have adopted a contingency approach highlighting the influence of the environment (internal and external) of the company on the performance of the FRH in particular on the application of HR practices. Thus, we have exposed the impact of the external environment by addressing the national context (cultural, institutional factors and sector of activity), while we have explained the influence of the internal environment through organizational and relational factors.

Finally, the need to take into account the environment confirms the dynamic aspect of the company which consists of integrating, building and recombining internal and external skills, in order to respond quickly to changing environments [51].

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