


# Global talent management during the COVID-19 pandemic? The Gods must be crazy!

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## Abstract

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought terrifying effects for labor markets all around the world. Just as we witness rapid changes in terms of the ways of working (working from home), we are also observing an increase in unemployment. The ways in which major corporations with international operations process their global talent management (GTM) already represents a challenge in relatively stable times and clearly, in a period of such great and sustained turbulence as current experienced, this task becomes still more difficult. Hence, our research aims to study the impact of GTM on the international performance of major companies during the COVID-19 pandemic period. To this end, we surveyed a sample of 59 large companies that act in external markets. Through recourse to multiple linear regressions, we conclude that GTM practices return positive impacts on levels of international performance. Our research returns theoretical implications in terms of the application of integrated GTM models and with the results of significant relevance to corporations operating internationally, and thus enabling them to better understand which strategic human resource management policies will return the best GTM results.

## KEYWORDS

COVID-19, global talent management, international performance

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Research into talent management began in the 1990s with the consultancy McKinsey coining the expression “the war for talent” to reflect the core importance of employees to the sustained success of any company (Michaels, Hanfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). However, only in the early 21st century did the theme of talent management achieve recognition by the mainstream professional management community as a key activity within the scope of organizational management (Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010). Thus, talent management has gained widespread recognition as one of the core priorities for chief executive officer (CEOs) all around the world with due recognition that they spend an average of around 20% of their time on talent

management (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2006). According to Groysberg and Connolly (2015), given the global operations prevailing in contemporary markets, talent management remains very much a key priority for CEOs. Within this framework, we may expect the major multinationals to have developed highly efficient and effective talent management systems, which significantly contribute toward their sustainable organizational performance (Collings, 2016; de Frutos-Belzón, Martín-Alcázar, & Sánchez-Gardey, 2020). Global talent management (GTM) includes all the organizational activities undertaken with the objective of attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining the best employees in the most strategic roles on a global scale (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2019; Scullion et al., 2010; Tarique & Schuler, 2009). Such is the perceived importance of GTM

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that some studies identify the lack of a pipeline of talent as a restriction on the company's capacity for growth and achieving its strategic priorities (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Pananond & Giroud, 2016; PwC, 2016). Hence, international management studies of human resources have focused their attention on the difference in large companies that act in external markets across different aspects of their internationalization, strategies and international experiences as well as the prevailing economic and institutional conditions in their countries of origin (Cooke, Wood, Wang, & Veen, 2019; Cooke, Wu, Zhou, Zhong, & Wang, 2018; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018; Pananond & Giroud, 2016; Shen & Edwards, 2013) and alongside what these differences imply in terms of the difficulties in attracting global talent (Cooke et al., 2018; Froese, Shen, Sekiguchi, & Davies, 2020; Glassdoor, 2018; Huang, Yang, & Sekiguchi, 2020). Thus, the advance of globalization has generated major opportunities and challenges for companies seeking to act in external markets (Froese et al., 2020). However, the single greatest challenge faced by these companies is how to manage an increasingly diversified, educated, and globally mobile workforce (Froese et al., 2020; Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015). Were such challenges not sufficient in themselves, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2) pandemic has produced, at least since October 2020, a massive impact on the level of employment and the ways in which people work (Kocha, Plattfaut, & Kregel, 2021). At the global level, this foresees Gross Domestic Product shrinking by 3%, far worse than during the 2008–2009 financial crisis (International Monetary Fund, 2020). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that almost one-half of the global workforce is at risk of losing its means of subsistence with hundreds of thousands of companies facing bankruptcy (ILO, 2020). Another alteration brought about by the pandemic stems from the surge in the numbers working from home (Venkatesh, 2020; Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, & Bendz, 2020), consequently leading organizations to react to the COVID-19 pandemic through investing in information technology (IT) (Dwivedi et al., 2020; He, Zhang, & Li, 2021; Iivari, Sharma, & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020). All of these changes have resulted in many challenges both for employees, who have had to adapt to these new circumstances, and for organizations that technically had to enable their staff to work remotely. However, these same circumstances have led to the cancelation of various different recruitment activities (Bartik, Cullen, Glaeser, Luca, & Stanton, 2020; Gerards, van Wetten, & van Sambeek, 2020; Montenovolo et al., 2020).

We may thus conclude that while GTM was already a complex process prior to COVID-19, the pandemic has only rendered still greater the challenges facing major companies operating in international markets in terms of their GTM processes. To this end, our research aims to answer the following question: *what is the impact of GTM on the international performance of large companies acting in external markets throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?*

In order to evaluate the GTM impact on the international performance of large companies with international business operations, we applied the integrated talent management model of Jayaraman, Talib, and Khan (2018), which is made up of four constructs: identifying critical positions (ICPs), competence training (CT), development (D), and

reward management (RM). We made recourse to a sample of 59 large companies that do business in external markets and deployed multiple linear regressions. We thus verified that the constructs ICPs, development (D), and RM return positive effects on the international performance of such large companies with international operations.

Through our research study, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of the debate around convergence and divergence in the international management of human resources through studying the GTM of large companies that operate in external markets (Budhwar, Varma, & Patel, 2016; Farndale, Brewster, Ligthart, & Poutsma, 2017). This study also contributes through its testing of the effect of GTM on international performance over the durations of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating that GTM steps in to play an important role whenever companies face challenges or more adverse circumstances.

After the introduction, we present the literature review, development of the hypotheses under study and the conceptual model. In Section 3 we present the methodology, then the results and in Section 5 we present the implications. Finally, we present the final considerations limitations and future lines of research.

## 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the core challenges that the talent management facing essentially involves establishing the intellectual boundaries and academic merits of the concept. According to Lewis and Heckman (2006), there is a disturbing lack of clarity in relation to the definition and general objectives of talent management. Lewis and Heckman (2006) identify three strands to the thinking around talent management: (i) the talent management label merely replacing that of human resource management (very often limiting its focus to specific human resource practices); (ii) developing pools of talent in keeping with the needs of employees and managing their progression across different positions and responsibilities; and (iii) managing talented persons. Collings and Mellahi (2009) identify another current in the thinking that emphasizes the identification of key positions that have the potential for impacting directly and positively on the competitive advantage of companies.

According to Scullion et al. (2010), the great variations in terms of the definitions attributed to talent management deepen two main challenges that apply equally to GTM. The first stems from how researchers in this field need to obtain clarity and consensus on the meaning of GTM spanning its different practical, conceptual, and theoretical dimensions. The second challenge derives from the need to differentiate GTM from international human resource management. This does not mean that GTM may not draw upon the field of international human resource management (Tarique & Schuler, 2009) but that the field does need to differentiate its scope and establish its own positioning among the interests of researchers and managers.

Stahl et al. (2007) define GTM as arising from the efforts an organization makes in order to attract, select, develop, and retain talented staff on a global scale. Hence, a fundamental facet of this definition is its focus on a core group of employees within large companies and

corporations engaged in external markets (Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). We may thus account for how GTM throws a spotlight on the international perspective in addition to highlighting the role of the internal systems of multinational corporations in guaranteeing the capacity to attract, retain, and make best usage of strategically deployed employees within the scope of meeting the strategic needs of the organization (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007; Huselid, Beatty, & Becker, 2005; Scullion et al., 2010).

GTM thus emerges as a multidisciplinary field of research while above all representing a strategic issue for internationalized companies for a series of different reasons: (i) there is growing recognition of the critical role performed by globally competent management whose talents ensure the success of the international operations of companies and corporations, reflecting the intensification of global competition and the greater need for learning and innovation in the multinational corporate sector (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989); (ii) the competition among employers for such talent has changed whether approached at the national, regional, or even at the global level (Ready & Conger, 2007; Sparrow, Brewster, & Harris, 2004; Stahl et al., 2007); (iii) the scarcity of management resources and professional talent emerges as the main challenge for the majority of large companies that engage in external markets (Bjorkman & Lervik, 2007); and (iv) the success or failure of international strategies directly interrelate with GTM (Cohn, Khurana, & Reeves, 2005; Stahl et al., 2007).

The emphasis on human resource practices under the auspices of GTM therefore incorporates the deepening of motivation, commitment, and the development of staff holding leading positions. The main objective behind implementing a GTM system in an organization targets to improve the core abilities and essential capabilities of members of staff in senior positions and recognize and reward those who contribute toward valuing and building the competitive advantage of an organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Correspondingly, Jayaraman et al. (2018) identify how GTM involves: ICPs, CT, development (D), and RM.

In summary, despite the rhetoric insisting on maximizing the individual talent of members of staff as an essential source of the competitive advantages of major companies engaged in international business dealings, this also acknowledges the difficulties in effectively managing talent on a global scale (Scullion & Collings, 2006). Collings, Scullion, and Morley (2007) convey how major internationalized companies are frequently unable to identify their most talented staff both within their home market and elsewhere around the world. The management of global talent is thus critical as companies are not able to leverage a specific asset when unable to identify their possession of it (Scullion et al., 2010).

## 2.1 | Hypotheses

### 2.1.1 | Identifying critical positions

ICPs constitute a fundamental facet to any GTM system (Jayaraman et al., 2018). In this perspective, approaching the deployment of staff is crucial to GTM with the identification and development of talented

individuals constitutes the first stage in any GTM process (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Organizations do recognize the need for differentiating functions, hence, and as defended by Becker et al. (2009), large corporations with international operations need to understand who makes the greatest contribution to their international performance results. This therefore identifies “alpha” members of staff and develops company practices for their training, development, and retention (Jayaraman et al., 2018). Alternatively expressed, there is a crucial need to identify the key positions with the potential to directly impact on the international performance and drive the competitive advantage of large-scale companies engaged in external markets (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007). We may therefore conclude that internal training and talent development represent important facets for such organizations as they strive to improve their international performances (Lepak & Snell, 2002).

We now arrive at our first research hypothesis:

**H1:** *ICPs generates a positive impact on international performance.*

### 2.1.2 | Competence training

Penrose (1959) defends the essential need for companies to develop their internal human capital resources as exploratory tools for the knowledge and innovation that provide the means to add value and enhance their strategic positioning. This thereby strengthens growth and the acceptance of internal resources as sources of competitive advantage while simultaneously validating the position adopted by various human resource researchers; that people are strategically important to organizational success (Gronroos, 2004; Luo & Tung, 2007). When the knowledge base of employees becomes a key factor of differentiation and a source of competitive advantage, organizations need to steadily and sustainably invest in the training and development of the specific abilities of these staff members so as return better levels of international performance (Becker et al., 2009; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). In this context, there is a fundamental need to verify the impact of CT on the international performance of major companies engaged in international operations. We may thus propose our second research hypothesis:

**H2:** *CT generates a positive impact on international performance.*

### 2.1.3 | Development (D)

Talent development reflects an important factor within the overall framework of any GTM process (Cappelli, 2009). While CT focuses on improving the abilities for undertaking the current positions of employees, the need for development emerges in keeping with the future requirements of business environments undergoing constant change and the need for organizations to correspondingly adjust and evolve (Jayaraman

et al., 2018). Garavan, Carbery, and Rock (2012) define talent development as concentrating on the planning, selection, and implementation of development strategies for the entire pool of talent in order to guarantee that the organization maintains not only the current but also the future supply of talent necessary to meet its strategic objectives. Therefore, high potential talents are able to obtain better results and hence produce a better standard of international performance (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Ready & Conger, 2007).

This leads to our third research hypothesis:

**H3:** *Development (D) generates a positive impact on international performance.*

### 2.1.4 | Reward management

The study of the impact of employee rewards began with Vroom (1964) putting forward his expectation theory. In this theory, Vroom introduces a qualitative approach coupled with a quantitative dimension to rewards. Herzberg (1968), in his two-factor theory, highlights the intrinsic factors, such as career progression, recognition, responsibility, and the sense of achievement in undertaking a significant job as more important motivators than wages and other similar types of incentives. Within this framework, the debate on the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors and the ways in which these motivate individual performance and their impacts on organizational performance (Jayaraman et al., 2018) dates back to the middle of the last century. Hence, any RM system consists of the policies, practices, processes, and procedures (Armstrong, 2001). Both the intrinsic and the extrinsic means of rewards hold importance to the motivations of individuals committed to their work (Cox, 2005). We thereby conclude that the nature of the relationship between the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation are mutually complementary and drive better performances at both the individual and the organization levels (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000; Sansone & Smith, 2000).

We may thus posit our fourth research hypothesis:

**H4:** *RM generates a positive impact on international performance.*

## 3 | METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 | Data and method

This research applies a correlational design to examine the impact of talent management on the international performance of large companies/corporations, particularly the impact of the dimensions of Talent management, ICPs, CT, Development (D), and RM on international performance. In order to test these relationships, we drafted a research instrument and developed scales of measurement (Figure 1).

The questionnaire scales of measurement depict the talent management practices. In order to define the questionnaire, we made recourse to existing scales, already subject to adaptation and

adjustment to this context and are written in Portuguese. The following sections discuss each of these items and their respective variables and measurement scales.

In order to carry out the study, the identified target sample consisted of leaders and managers of large companies engaged in international markets. In terms of the sampling strategy, the data collection instrument, highlighting the guarantee of anonymity, involved prior telephone contact with 200 companies selected randomly from a database containing the contacts of 500 leaders/managers at large export companies who agreed to participate in the study. We gathered the data between September and December 2021, having received a total of 72 valid responses to the questionnaire even while only 59 of the received answers remain valid following thorough analysis with the questionnaire response rate thus standing at 29.5%.

Furthermore, and in addition, certain company characteristics (activity and region) served to compare the answers received in the months of September and October with those delivered in November and December (Chi-squared test) with this process returning no statistically significant differences between the earlier and the later respondents.

This evaluated the distribution of these characteristics in the sample followed the same pattern as in the population (Chi-squared test) and not encountering any statistically significant differences. These results provide evidence as to the lack of any chronological or nonresponse biases.

As regards testing the hypotheses, in order to evaluate the impact of ICPs, CT, Development (D), and RM on international performance, we applied multiple linear regression.

We analyzed all data according to the IBM-SPSS software version 27.0 (IBM Corporation, New York, NY).

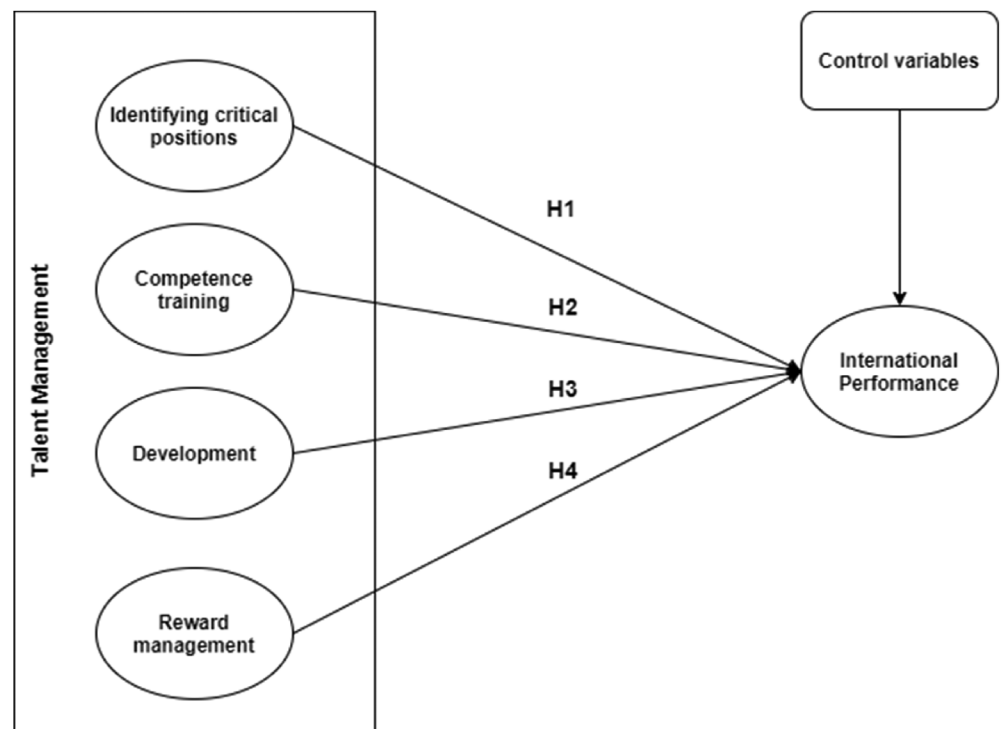
### 3.2 | Measures

We measured all of the constructs according to Likert-type scales with a range of between 1 and 7. In total, this included 26 questions in addition to those ascertaining the demography of the multinational covering all of the variables included in the hypotheses. In order to evaluate the talent management, we applied the Integrated Talent Management Scale designed by Jayaraman et al. (2018). This scale includes constructs for ICPs, CT, Development (D), and RM. Cronbach's alpha served to examine the reliability of the respective constructs.

The ICPs construct involves establishing a pool of talent, identifying the critical responsibilities and positions, and differentiating them based on their contribution to the success of the organization (Jayaraman et al., 2018). This four-item construct returned a Cronbach's Alpha result of .934 conveying the existence of very high levels of reliability. In order to calculate the score for this construct, we applied the measurement of the four items that compose the construct.

The CT construct includes the continuous investment of time and money in talents in order to empower them to acquire specific competences for their current and future jobs and tasks (Jayaraman et al., 2018), and contains a total of six items. This construct produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .918, equally reporting a very high level of reliability with the calculation of this score resulting from the average of the six items making up the construct.

**FIGURE 1** Our conceptual model



As regards the Development (D) construct, the five items incorporate information on feedback, the existence of clear career paths that take into account the expectations of the talents identified in accordance with their capabilities and performance. In turn, this construct attained an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha result (.722) following the calculation of the average for the five items included within the scope of this construct.

Reward management includes 11 items conveying details about the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in effect with the former involving learning, growth in career, feelings of self-esteem, interesting and challenging work, and a supportive working environment (Jayaraman et al., 2018). In turn, the extrinsic rewards feature competitive levels of payment, wage increases, productivity bonuses, variable remunerations, and the social climate (Jayaraman et al., 2018). This construct returned an extremely high level of reliability (Alpha = .922) following the calculation of the construct in accordance with the average of the 11 items making up the construct.

In order to measure the international performance, we adopted the variable reflecting the percentage of business turnover resulting from international activities.

The demographic characteristics gathered from participating companies included the sector of economic activity, the company's longevity, location, and whether part of a group. The items included in the data collection and measurement process feature in Table A1.

### 3.3 | Common method bias

As the questionnaire employed to gather the data was self-response in structure and distributed at the same time to the same participants, common method variance might represent a problem. This question

arises due to the independent variables deriving from the perceptions of respondents, the application of the same type of scale throughout the questionnaire and the different constructs undergoing simultaneous measurement by the same questionnaire.

As some of the procedures applied in this study may trigger the existence of common method variance, we applied Harman's single-factor test and a common latent-factor test.

Following the Harman test, a single factor accounts for 15.7% of the explained variance with five factors present returning results in excess of 1 and explaining 65.4% of total variation. The results of these analytical procedures demonstrate that common method variance is not present and correspondingly does not influence the results.

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Sample characterization

Table 1 sets out the characteristics of the 59 companies included in the study. In terms of their sectors of activity, 44.1% belong to the transformative industries, 32.2% are service providers, and 23.7% engage in agricultural activities. The location of the largest number of companies is in the Norte Region (35.6%), ahead of the Greater Lisbon (30.5%) and Centro (22.0%) regions. The average longevity of sample companies stood at 23.7 years.

### 4.2 | Testing of hypotheses

To testing the research hypothesis we used multiple linear regressions. The first equation explaining the effects of the control

**TABLE 1** Sample characterization

		N	%
Economic activity	Agriculture	14	23.7
	Transformative industry	26	44.1
	Services	19	32.2
Average company longevity (years), mean (range)		23.7 (12–77)	
Region	Alentejo	3	5.1
	Algarve	4	6.8
	Centro	13	22.0
	Greater Lisbon	18	30.5
	Norte	21	35.6

**TABLE 2** Regression models: dependent variable – international performance. Variable coefficients (SE)

	Model 1	Model 2
Company longevity	0.34 (0.25)	0.27 (0.14)
Activity = transformative industry	23.66 (12.5)	10.79 (6.64)
Activity = services	–8.71 (11.99)*	–9.77 (6.71)
Region = greater Lisbon	0.87 (10.25)	–0.48 (5.41)
Region = Norte	16.9 (14.8)	–1.24 (7.96)
Identifying critical positions		12.94 (6.01)*
Competence training		–6.82 (5.91)
Development		18.32 (4.79)**
Reward management		11.72 (4.04)**
R squared	13.9%	68.8%
Adjusted R squared	5.7%	64.9%
F Statistics	1.708	20.234***

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

variables (region, activity, longevity) for international performance and the second including, in addition to the control variables, the four constructs interconnected with talent management: ICPs, CT, Development (D), and RM. Table 2 presents the respective results.

As regards the effect of the control variables for international performance, Model 1 details how service companies on average register 8.7% less of their turnover as deriving from international activities ( $B = -8.71$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

As regards talent management, we may confirm ICPs ( $B = 12.96$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and thereby providing support to H1. We thus demonstrate how ICP constitutes a fundamental factor for any GTM system (Jayaraman et al., 2018). The identification of “alpha” members of staff, their development and the implementation of practices that ensure their training, development, and retention generate a positive impact on international performance (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). As regards Development (D;  $B = 18.32$ ;  $p < .001$ ), our results do underpin H3. We thereby align with other authors who maintain that the development of talents not only represents an extremely important component for any GTM process but also to the international performance standards of large companies engaged in international operations

(Cappelli, 2009; Jayaraman et al., 2018). As regards RM ( $B = 11.72$ ;  $p < .01$ ), our results also enable us to confirm H4. Hence, we may state that companies running RM systems consisting of politics, practices, processes, and procedures returns a positive impact on the international operations of large companies (Armstrong, 2001). Hence, there is a complementary relationship ongoing between the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation that drives better levels of international performance (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000; Sansone & Smith, 2000).

Our results however do not provide support for H2. Thus, our sample does not justify the conclusion that the training and development of specific abilities of staff generate a positive impact on the international performance (Becker et al., 2009; Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Finally, we evaluated which of the talent management dimensions generates the greatest impact on the international performance through the betas estimated for the already calculated model 2. Figure 2 displays the respective results that show how the Development (D;  $\beta = 0.762$ ) construct holds the greatest impact on the international performance followed by the construct for ICPs ( $\beta = 0.471$ ).

## 5 | IMPLICATIONS

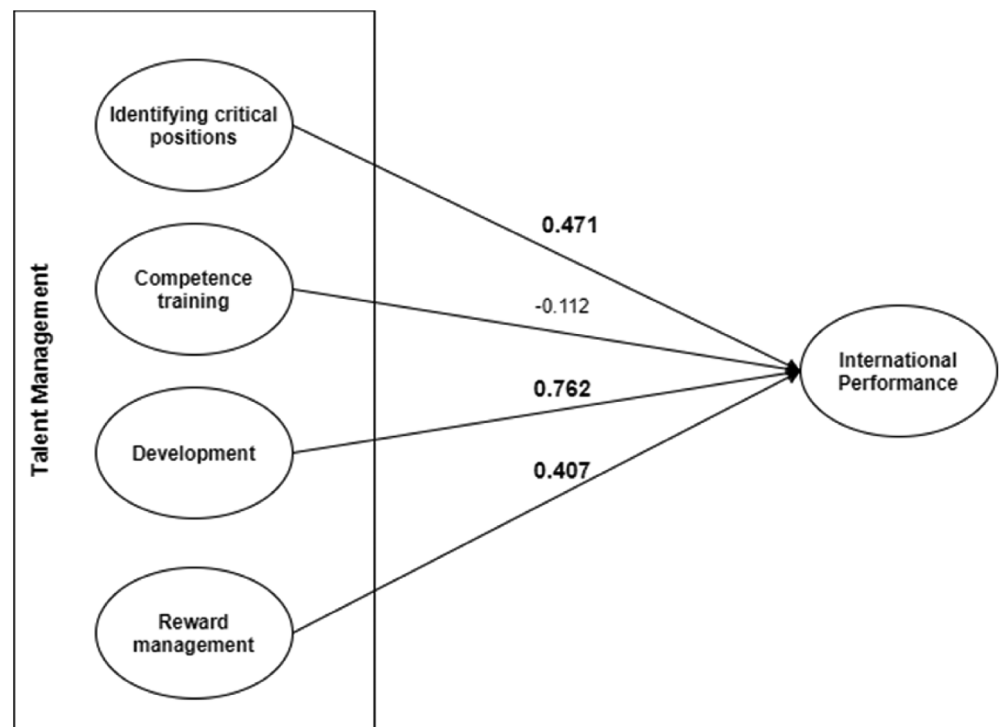
### 5.1 | Theoretical implications

The main theoretical implication of our research stems from its application of the integrated talent management model proposed by Jayaraman et al. (2018) for the analysis of GTM and the consequent impacts on international performance. Following such application, our results hold relevant implications, especially in terms of the importance of ICPs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009); CT (Gronroos, 2004; Luo & Tung, 2007); development (D; Cappelli, 2009; Clark, Davila, Regis, & Kraus, 2020) and RM (Cox, 2005). Organizations implementing talent management strategies may deploy our results in the planning of their GTM practices. The availability of this integrated model enables researchers to measure GTM and its impacts on company performance while simultaneously also allowing for study of the effectiveness of the GTM strategies of large firms doing business in different markets. Another theoretical implication of our research stems from the clear demonstration of the fact that GTM did enable companies to achieve better financial performances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, we may verify how the implementation of strategic orientations across every level, and in this specific case the management of human resources, enables companies not only to generate competitive advantages but also to return high levels of performance.

### 5.2 | Management implications

This article also contains significant practical implications for major companies with substantial international operations, which are currently experiencing significant adversities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and as well as difficulties in attracting,

**FIGURE 2** Beta coefficients and hypothesis validated



motivating and retaining global talent. We identify how human resource management practices, such as ICPs, development (D), and RM, are fundamental tools for companies striving to boost their international performance standards. We may also report that companies with organizational cultures focused on development and deploying talent motivational policies for their staff obtain high levels of international performance (Davies & Froese, 2019; Froese et al., 2020). For multinationals to really become global businesses and be able to ensure appropriate levels of GTM, they may well need to rethink their organizational cultures and modernize their internal practices. Large companies with international scale operations therefore require organizational cultures and systems that foster welcoming environments so as to enable the better integration of expatriate staff (Glover & Wilkinson, 2007). This need for change causes considerable implications for international staff and for their training prior to departure as well as their orientation and development when working outside their home markets. Hence, whenever major companies undertaking operations in external markets lack experience in implementing change, they may consider contracting external specialists to help in organizational change processes and thereby obtain the very best level of international performance.

## 6 | FINAL CONSIDERATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

Arriving here, it seems important to make a final allusion to the title that inspired us: “Global talent management during the covid-19 pandemic? The Gods must be crazy!”. In fact, managing a company with

internationalization activities in times of pandemic is already a challenge more than enough, managing talent at an international level can only seem like madness from the Gods! From here we go to our research question: *what is the impact of GTM on the international performance of large companies with operations in external markets during the COVID-19 pandemic?* At this stage, we may indeed conclude that, in accordance with the integrated talent management model put forward by Jayaraman et al. (2018), the application of GTM has had positive impacts on the performance levels of large companies with substantial international operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our approach is furthermore consistent with that of differentiating the workforce through identifying the most critical positions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Our approach also echoes the results of various authors (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000; Jayaraman et al., 2018) who affirm that employee performance levels emerge as a function of capability, motivation, and opportunity. Similar to Lepak and Snell (2002), our research also adopts a human capital-based approach consistent with a differentiated architecture for human resources and specifically with the organizational implementation of talent management practices. RM represents an important factor in GTM with this facet aligning with the theory of social exchange, which depicts a relationship of exchange between individuals and organizations.

Irrespective of the contributions made, the implications and considerations of our research, this study does contain certain limitations. The first derives from how the study focused on a small research sample of large corporations with operations outside of Portugal. Therefore, future studies need to apply this model in large samples and other countries to see whether the approach returns different conclusions. Another limitation arises from not having tested each one of

the variables constituting each of the constructs but rather calculating them collectively. The verification of the differences existing among the variables contained within each of the four constructs composing the integrated talent management model represents a fundamental step for the literature.

Correspondingly, new lines of research based on GTM and its impact on international levels of performance would render greater clarity, for example, applying Vroom's theory of expectations might assist in explaining core research issues inherent to GTM and its impacts on international performance.

A future study might adopt a longitudinal approach to enable deeper insights to our results (e.g., whether the effect of GTM changes in keeping with the economic situation and thus studying the ongoing effects of the pandemic as this evolves both positively and negatively) and thereby potentially enabling understandings of the causal relationships driving the strategic orientations of large companies engaged in international operations.

In summary, we would suggest continuing to develop efforts within the scope of attempting to foster discussion and debates to broaden and deepen the theories about internationalization and the strategic management of human resources designed to stimulate and explain the behaviors of "alpha" members of staff and so as to advance this field of research.

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## APPENDIX A.

TABLE A1 Integrated talent management scale

Questions
<p>Identifying critical positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My company identifies the critical positions aligned with business strategies.</li> <li>My company builds up talent pool in the organization.</li> <li>My company differentiates the identified talent based on their contribution levels.</li> <li>My company identifies the talent that makes maximum impact on organization success.</li> </ul>
<p>Competence training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The training activities for the identified talent are focused on required competencies.</li> <li>The training activities for identified talent are implemented continuously.</li> <li>The content of the training activities for the identified talent are based on job performance.</li> <li>The training activities for the identified talent require time and extensive financial resources.</li> <li>The training activities for the identified talent are designed to develop firm-specific skills/knowledge.</li> <li>Training activities for the identified talent are in line with assigned critical tasks.</li> <li>Identified talent has many opportunities for upward mobility.</li> </ul>
<p>Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development needs are identified for talent</li> <li>Talents have clear career paths in this organization.</li> <li>Talents have more than one avenue for promotion.</li> <li>Developmental activities include feedback on developmental growth agenda for the identified talents.</li> </ul>
<p>Reward management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My company provides recognition, for example, financial recognition such as cash, paid travel, incentive bonus/variable pay, etc.</li> <li>My supervisor discusses and provides meaningful and helpful feedback on job performance.</li> <li>My company values my work and contribution.</li> <li>I believe that my company has a fair and just system of rewarding employees.</li> <li>My company sets challenging targets in my job.</li> <li>I have supportive and likeminded colleagues.</li> <li>My company supports a balanced lifestyle (between my work and personal life).</li> <li>My company encourages and organizes team building or other social networking activities among employees.</li> <li>My company provides a competitive pay package (i.e., basic salary plus benefits, allowances or variable pay).</li> <li>My company provides medical aid, retirement, and pension benefits.</li> <li>My company provides recognition via nonfinancial means, for example, certificates of recognition.</li> </ul>