A NEW WEAPON FOR MOVING BEYOND THE WAR FOR TALENT: USING HR ANALYTICS TO SUPPORT TALENT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

POSITIONING AND RESEARCH GAPS

It is now widely acknowledged that the attraction, development and retention of talent is one of the most crucial issues for organizations (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). However, the rapid changes happening at the demographic and technological level are having a disruptive effect on traditional talent management (TM) practices, which seem not to be suitable anymore for the needs of workers and organizations (Claus, 2019). This had some consequences for the way organizations compete. In fact, they moved beyond the traditional war for talent, a lose-lose situation where companies stole their best employees from each other (Taamneh et al., 2021), to a new competition regarding the engagement and the retention of valuable employees by providing them with stimulating working experiences (Claus, 2019), thus shifting TM focus from the organizational to the individual level (Festing and Schäfer, 2014).

Meanwhile, digital transformation had a disruptive effect which deeply affected and modified the human resource (HR) role (Mazánek et al., 2017). In fact, many HR activities were affected by technology changes, with effects also on TM, which requires always more real time data to find out what issues are most relevant for employees right now (Claus, 2019). In this sense, HR analytics, which is defined as the use of data, analysis and systemic reasoning in relation to the people involved and/or connected to the organization (van den Heuvel and Bondarouk, 2017), can offer its contribution. In fact, it allows to thoroughly analyze the whole HR decision-making process (Dahlbom et al., 2019) and to determine the causal relationship between HR practices and performance metrics (Lawler III et al., 2004).

Thus, practitioners feel more than ever the need for answers regarding practical TM issues. However, most studies on the topic focus their attention at the organizational level, neglecting the individual-level (Festing and Schäfer, 2014; Sparrow, 2019). Furthermore, the role played by the internal organizational context has mostly not been stressed out by previous studies (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Consequently, to fill the highlighted gaps, HR analytics may play a crucial role. In fact, it will enable organizations to make TM a data-driven process, differently from its classical conception

(Gurusinghe et al., 2021). This will allow to carefully weigh TM activities on the company's internal context, making it possible to meet the specific need of individuals (Marler and Boudreau, 2017). By doing so, TM will truly become a source of competitive advantage.

OBJECTIVES

Building on the contingency theory (Harney, 2016), stating that HR management activities will increase their effectiveness as they will increase their consistency with the characteristics of the organizations and of its context, the objective of this study is to investigate the positive moderating effect of HR analytics activities on the relationship between TM activities and three TM classical outcomes: a) quality of hire; b) talent satisfaction and; c) talent retention.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This will be an empirical, survey-based, quantitative studies. Questionnaires will be completed by HR managers of European organizations which have been implementing HR analytics activities in the last 3 years. Organizations will be selected through the Orbis Database by looking for companies with an active status, with at least 10.000 employees, a production value of at least €100 million, of very large dimension and constituted before 2018.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

We expect a positive and significant relationship to exist between TM activities and TM outcomes. Furthermore, and more interestingly, we expect HR analytics activities to positively moderate this relationship. In fact, TM must not be considered as an autonomous process, as it has to be designed and implemented according to the peculiarities of the company and of the context it is operating in (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). HR analytics may thus be the perfect tool for providing the needed analytical information and insight in real time (Falletta and Combs, 2021), enabling the inclusion of sophisticated HR data analysis and the integration of data coming from several organization's departments and from the external environment (Marler and Boudreau, 2017). Furthermore, it makes it possible to include the perspectives and the interests of several stakeholders (Falletta and Combs, 2021), enabling the adoption of an holistic approach able to provide a more exhaustive comprehension of the dynamics of TM within companies (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020).

Consequently, HR analytics will allow organizations to attract and retain the most valuable talents, thus obtaining a competitive advantage (Falletta and Combs, 2021), as it can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs regarding organizations' talents, enabling a microscopic view of the

issues which are likely to arise in the future (Patre, 2016). Furthermore, by collecting data regarding the best practices, organizations can monitor the decision regarding their talents in a more constant and precise way (Patre, 2016).

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

First, this study will contribute to TM literature by providing empirical evidence of the impact of HR analytics. To the best of our knowledge, no previous empirical research was conducted on this topic. Secondly, we will contribute to the literature by focusing our attention on the individual level of TM, which has often been neglected in HRM literature (Festing and Schäfer, 2014; Sparrow, 2019). Thirdly, we will contribute to contingency theory by providing additional empirical evidence supporting it in a new and exciting domain (HR analytics). Lastly, we will help practitioners by providing them with useful tools to enhance the efficacy of their TM activities, thus improving key HR outcomes that are strategical for the organizations.

Keywords: talent management; HR analytics; quality of hire; talent satisfaction; talent management

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