
A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD OF INTERNAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN SUSTAINABILITY

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DOI: [10.13165/PSPO-21-26-23](https://doi.org/10.13165/PSPO-21-26-23)

Abstract. *More and more companies and institutions claim day by day to be committed to sustainability, a multidisciplinary concept comprising social, environmental, and economic issues, as well as directly reflected in terms of people's welfare, quality of life and security. As a result, sustainability appears as a concept closely linked to social responsibility –or to corporate social responsibility in case of organizations– and, consequently, as a very difficult concept to be concisely defined.*

In this sense, and even when sustainability involves both internal and external dimensions, most sustainable policies and actions have been –and still are– aimed at external target audiences. Meanwhile, evidence of the incorporation of sustainable and responsible principles into internal management in organizations are not so common, even when this same evidence also shows that most effective external actions are supported by the prior commitment of employees to responsibility and sustainability (just as in case of internal marketing or internal corporate social responsibility regarding their external counterparts).

Similarly, the content of the contributions in the academic literature has been mostly devoted to the external aspects of corporate responsibility and sustainability and –although an increasing number– a few of them have focused on their internal dimensions, then suggesting that there is still much to be done.

On the above, once approached the concepts of internal marketing and internal social responsibility, and based on the academic literature, this paper aims to analyse the relationship between corporate social responsibility and human resource management. Then, with an exploratory purpose, a first and general overview about the number of contributions published in the field is intended, as well as about the way in which academic literature discusses and analyses how sustainable principles are being adopted in human resource management in organizations. This way, using the publications included in the Google Scholar database as a reference, we can conclude a preliminary idea of how this topic has been contributing and can contribute in the near future (reinforced by the current relevance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals –and specifically the SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth–) to the achievement of successful sustainable practices, as a starting point for further research and developments.

Keywords: *corporate Social Responsibility, Human Resource Management, Sustainability, Employees, Internal Marketing, Internal Social Responsibility.*

Introduction

After the unexpected and harsh first impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated confinement in 2020, day by day more and more companies and institutions claim to be to some extent committed to sustainability, a multidisciplinary concept comprising social, environmental and economic issues (see e.g. Alhaddi, 2015), as well as directly reflected in terms of people's welfare (e.g. DiMaria, 2019), quality of life (e.g. Fuchs et al, 2020; Grum and Grum, 2020) and security from different views, as food security (e.g. Michalk et al, 2019; Schleifer and Sun, 2020; Subramaniam, Masron and Azman, 2020), energy security (e.g. Axon and Darton, 2021; Balezentis et al, 2021), etc. In this last sense, a relationship between sustainability and its promotion through security and safety education has also been claimed (Gawlik-Kobylnska, 2021). As a result, sustainability appears as a concept closely linked to social responsibility –or to corporate social responsibility in case of organizations– and, consequently, as a very difficult concept to be defined (Taticchi and Demartini, 2020).

What is more, sustainability involves internal and external dimensions (Spallini et al, 2021) and practices, but most sustainable policies and actions have been –and still are– aimed at external target audiences. Evidence of the incorporation of sustainable and responsible principles into internal management in organizations is not so common, even when most effective external actions seem to be supported by the prior commitment of employees to sustainability (e.g. Low, 2016; Buell and Kalkanci, 2021), just as in case of internal marketing (Sánchez-Hernández and Grayson, 2012) or internal corporate social responsibility regarding their external counterparts (Sánchez-Hernández et al, 2016).

Similarly, the content of the contributions in the academic literature has been mostly devoted to the consideration of external aspects of corporate responsibility and sustainability and –although there is an increasing number of such contributions– a few of them have focused on internal dimensions, then suggesting that there is a gap in the existing literature as well as still much to be done, starting by shedding light on the situation of the research in this field up to the present time.

On the above, and based on existing contributions, the purpose of this paper is twofold: firstly, we aim to explore the linkage of the concepts of internal marketing and internal social responsibility in the literature on Human Resource Management (HRM); secondly, we also aim to determine the potential stages in the evolution of the number of publications connecting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and HRM practices, putting the seed to the development of the different aspects of internal CSR.

At this purpose, the next section approaches the concepts of internal marketing and internal social responsibility as a continuation or development of the theories on human resource management, as well as the inclusion of the concerned issues in an Integral Corporate Social Action Plan. Then, the third section shows, with an exploratory aim, a first and general overview about the number of contributions published in the field, by using the publications included in the Google Scholar database up to 2020 (and specifically in the period 2000-2020) as a reference. The way in which academic literature focuses on how sustainable principles are being adopted in human resource management in organizations is also discussed and a proposal on the stages in the evolution in the number of publications in the field is suggested. The fourth section includes a consideration on the relevance of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) to the development of future research linking CSR and HRM practices. Finally, conclusions are presented.

Internal marketing and internal social responsibility as a continuation of HRM theories

Practices related to systems and techniques of personnel organization and management –albeit more or less consciously considered and conducted– go back to the time when people began to consider the achievement of goals by working together. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century, once the Second Industrial Revolution was consolidated, when the basis was settled to properly begin to talk about a real theory of organization and management of human resources (Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 1999 and 2017).

In such context, Frederick Winslow Taylor’s “Principles of Scientific Management” constituted a “revolution” in systems and techniques of personnel organization and management when published in 1911, just as technical advances revolutionized working conditions and work itself.

Changes in market circumstances and requirements were reflected in the application, modification or substitution of Scientific Management principles, thus giving chance to new models or theories in HRM, such as Theories X and Y. Specifically, Theory X appeared when Douglas McGregor (1960) intended to name his assumptions on “traditional” approaches related to human nature and, specifically, to the nature of workers. To be precise, he chose the term “X” as preferring a “neutral” terminology to characterize and define such principles, so avoiding other terms with negative or pejorative connotations, but keeping in mind the idea of defining a frame representing the “old”, “antiquate” or “obsolete” face in HRM, all within a context of rigid, static and markedly pessimistic work. The classical topic in Labour Law about the “class struggle” between rights and commitments of those who “order” and those who “obey” was around at the time, that is, the antithesis of interests between “maximization of benefit” vs. “minimization of effort”.

In contrast with Theory X, McGregor also suggested the postulates of Theory Y. This was also a “neutral” terminology aimed to clearly define what he considered positive or laudable principles characterizing “new”, “current”, “good”, “flexible” or “up-to-date” and “successful” approaches in practices dealing with HRM and administration. The working context was presented as dynamic, flexible and optimistic, clearly stressing the desirability of having motivated and satisfied workers at disposal and encouraging self-control and free initiative (within limits).

In the 50s, while the abundance of workforce in Western countries allowed the development of mass production and consumption, the situation in Japan after the big World War was pretty different, thus leading to the transformation of Taylorism with quite different parameters. The new working approach was known as Toyotism (as mainly attributed to Toyota’s founder, Sakichi Toyoda, together with his son Kiichiro Toyoda and the engineer Taiichi Ohno), and aimed the maximization of efficiency due to the need of producing relatively small quantities of many products, so being designed to be very flexible and to face difficult diversification circumstances (Coriat, 1995) increasing productivity through effective management and combined work, a step forward from mechanization and individualism that characterized Taylorist and Fordist processes. Later on, Toyotism would evolve into Lean Manufacturing and other hybrid approaches to work management in Western countries.

Some years later (in the 70s and 80s) the first postulates of Theory Z appeared in personnel management (then this terminology being considered as preferable to that of “human resource”), based on different contributions by Japanese authors as Ouchi (1981) or Amako (1982). Performing accordingly to this reasoning, higher levels of commitment in all involved workers would be assured, regardless of their specific tasks or positions in hierarchical scales. While corporate philosophy and values would be in charge of guiding and

directing the personnel management practices, a comprehensive approach to working in organizations would be advocated and encouraged in contrast to the risk of a hypothetical loss of personal identity of the individual in favour of corporate identity. Workers were considered as having an immense imaginative and creative potential, which could be exploited when pursuing collective goals far away from outdated reductionist identification of workers as merely another productive factor.

More recently, influenced by the evolution of economic, social, labour, legal, demographic and other environmental circumstances, personnel management methods and strategies had to face the adaptation to increasingly competitive environments, thus leading to discussion on the desirability of designing and implementing new models in accordance with requirements at any time. The new paradigm, perceived as a step forward when compared to Theory Z, was internal marketing (Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 1999 and 2017).

On the basis of pioneer conceptual attempts in academic literature (Arndt 1983, Grönroos, 1984; Levionnois, 1987), this marketing branch, located halfway between the departmental functions of marketing and human resource management, and using similar tools to those of its external counterpart, aims at motivating all people in the staff or working somehow with the organization, thus guiding them to accomplish the broad objective of profitability and subsistence in the market. Internal marketing focuses on personnel management and considers employees as part of a target market to be analysed, segmented and offered an adequate and attractive product, transcending and going beyond a mere job and a wage to fulfil as much as possible individuals' desires for self-realization, while achieving higher performance and integration levels according to the philosophy and objectives in the organization (Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 1999 and 2017).

As also highlighted from the very beginning in the contributions on the topic, three are the main areas of impact or “sensitive” areas in the organization which, after being affected, should be adapted to the new personnel assessment and management (Barranco, 1993):

1. Labour relationships must be reoriented towards a new style, considering workers as people with a virtually unlimited creative potential which the organization could take advantage of, and not as only a “human resource” to be optimized through guided exploitation without any margin for personal initiative or freedom of action. The new approach appears much more as a qualitative than as a quantitative one.

2. Organizational structures must increase their adaptation possibilities to changing needs in markets, which in most cases imply suppressing essentially rigid and hierarchical systems for the higher levels of flexibility achieved by moving responsibilities closer to operational positions at the basis of the pyramid of command.

3. Management systems (taking the concept in a general sense and specifically when related to the personnel area) should also be readapted to stimulate the participation of each and every member of the staff through the adequate design and implementation of those incentives which appear as most appropriate at any time to encourage the initiative of the whole organizational group.

This way, it is easy to perceive that internal marketing is to be closely linked to CSR, thus becoming a key element in the application of internal CSR. To be precise, CSR can be approached as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with the stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (EU Green Paper, 2001, p.7), and the integration of internal marketing and CSR implies (Sánchez-Hernández, 2008; Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 1999):

1. Simultaneous consideration of external (economic, legal, ethical, philanthropic) and internal (processes, management policies...) dimensions.

2. Development of trust and confidence to external audiences based on trust and commitment with internal target groups.

3. Direct and explicit involvement of staff in external actions of CSR and corporate social marketing.

At this purpose, references to remuneration and incentive systems deserve further consideration and analysis, requiring the design and implementation of an Integral Corporate Social Action (ICSA) Plan, which appears as a document within the overall strategy of the organization, where CSR goals and strategies are formulated, required resources are determined, and the consequent budget for incomes, expenses and expected benefits is established (Vázquez-Burgete, Licandro-Goldaracena and Lanero-Carrizo, 2014).

Summarily, such document will consist of: i) an introduction or delimitation (including target audiences in reference to both internal and external stakeholders); ii) information search, analysis and diagnosis; iii) definition of objectives and strategies, considering both internal and external dimensions or perspectives; and iv) quantification and budgeting of intended actions.

When specifically detailing internal objectives and strategies, to six different categories could be considered:

a) issues dealing with labour risk prevention (what, according to rules in force in a number of countries, could imply a proper plan –as a specific document– for prevention of occupational hazards);

b) issues dealing with continuous training at promotion at work (what, also according to rules in force in different countries, could imply a proper plan, specifically in case of continuous training);

c) issues dealing with equality at work (more and more countries also including in their labour legislation the requirement of a specific plan);

d) issues dealing with conciliation of work and family life (sometimes considered as issues dealing with equality at work, as usually including co-responsibility aspects, according to rules in force);

e) issues dealing with social volunteering actions (thus aiming not only organizations' corporate citizenship, but also that of their employees);

f) any other issues dealing with CSR and personnel management.

In summary, “obsolete” and closed payment systems structured on predefined elements must evolve to more open and flexible models aiming at the motivation and integration of the staff members through the combination of wages with other factors, also positively valued by people, such as recognition (congratulations on a well-done job or positive initiatives), stability (chance to remain in the job for those who have performed accordingly to expectations), safety (dealing with the implementation of sanitary and labour risk prevention measures as required and appropriate) and training (either as abilities for a proper performance at the time of recruitment or as recycling opportunities to continue successful performing).

So, as stated by some authors (e.g. Jürgens, Malsch and Dohse, 1993), Taylor's model could be considered as exhausted by the 60s or 70s, specifically in developed countries, and the situation would be similar with Theories X, Y and Z. However, reality in labour practice is quite different: chain work remains and there are also other possibilities.

Far from being considered an obsolete or exhausted model, some new forms of neo-Taylorism remain fully in force in productive organizations. Globalization has significantly contributed to new market conditions that have changed working schemes in productive organizations, market requirements being more and more focused on aspects dealing with

quality, flexibility, leading to time reduction and satisfaction of an increasing diversity of clients and tastes (Günsel and Yamen, 2020). To face this new context, organizations are not following a single direction. An example of the new approaches is Digital Taylorism or New-Taylorism, a system based on the global organization of the “knowledge work” that characterizes the information or third industrial revolution (Brown, Lauder and Asthon, 2011). The main hypothesis is that even when new jobs are much more related to workers’ qualifications and abilities, tasks are subject to the same scientific management processes that craft and chain work experienced once in time when reconsidered under the original principles of Taylorism.

Under the postulates of Digital Taylorism, creative and intellectual tasks –until recently considered as “non-machinable”– are subject to the same process as chain work. Once they have been codified and digitalized, the human capacity for decision and judgment can be replaced by automatic programs with computerized decision protocols. As processes can be easily relocated due to technical mobility possibilities -as proper of computerized global connections- jobs are easy to export, change or replace.

The effects of Digital Taylorism (where concrete forms of teleworking could also be included) are more visible in developed countries as computerized tasks are increasing day by day there, while in developing and underdeveloped countries wages remain at lower levels.

What is more, some other approaches dealing with Taylor’s principles may appear even when not so obviously or systematically applied, but being as much or even more effective in their results. So, within a generic category of “other forms of neo-Taylorism”, we could refer to a number of practices in organizations aiming at the reduction of time and resources in productive processes through maximization of efficiency, the basic principles that constituted the starting point to develop Taylor’s postulates. Among these practices, the aim of increasing value in customer service through reducing waiting time has led to single-queuing systems not only in customs, passport control or security access systems, but also in all other organizations which could experience a number of customers at a time (Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 2017). As a clear example, nowadays it is not rare entering a single-queue to pay in large supermarkets or hypermarkets, allowing not only to reduce waiting time to customers (which not always are fully convinced of the benefits of the new system) but simultaneously to decrease the number of staff workers in cash line and their idle time virtually to zero.

Another example of neo-Taylorism deals with the extension of “effective” working time beyond the “formal” working hours, not only through overtime but involving workers in issues related to the organization up to 24 hours a day (what can be also linked to Digital-Taylorism, giving rise to the claim of the right to “digital disconnection” of workers). The origins of these practices are also in Japanese culture (e.g. arranging collective activities for employees during weekends or encouraging development of teamwork projects after working hours).

One of the most well-known cases applying this philosophy is the Internet giant Google. Together with high wages, the company provides its employees all sorts of “extra benefits”, such as corporate transport, breakfast, lunch or dinner facilities, gyms and a wide range of activities for relaxation and leisure. At the first sight this can be perceived as a “maximum development” of the principles of internal marketing (up to the extent that Google occupies year after year top leading positions in the rankings of “most desired companies” when seeking for a job), but it may be also interpreted as the overexploitation of the imaginative and creative potential of a highly qualified personnel (thus dealing with Digital Taylorism) whose lives take place almost entirely in the working place and its immediate surroundings,

day and night sharing talks, comments, activities and experiences with colleagues in a very restricted affective circle where everything is related to the company, its projects and problems (Vázquez-Burguete and García-Miguélez, 2017).

Although economic conditions may be attractive and perception on other incentives may be favourable, the reality is that employees devote in one way or another 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year to the organization.

Therefore, we could not conclude but Taylor's principles remain fully in force. Of course, we are not specifically –or only– talking about their application in assembly lines or work chains, but about the usefulness and validity of general statements dealing with the maximization of efficiency through reduction of time and resources in production (something also closely related to current positions regarding sustainability of productive activity).

Additionally, we should also remember that internal marketing approaches are dynamic and, far away to come to a standstill focusing in solving troubles at a concrete time, they are characterized by being involved in a non-stop evolution contributing to new and creative solutions at any time based on the changes in the environment for their application field. As a concrete example of such evolution, we could refer to the recent and increasing inclusion among internal marketing principles of some new issues dealing with job training, safety and stability, some of them above mentioned. Most relevant, another example deals with the recent and increasing implementation of sustainability principles at personnel management, thus giving chance to internal sustainability.

At his point, we must keep in mind that, knowing that the sustainability purpose is collective and requires consistency between external and internal issues (on an ideological level), thus nurturing a sense of internal sustainable purpose. In other words, purpose-driven organizations should take a closer look at the internal dimension of sustainability (Dupret and Pultz, 2021).

An overview on the literature linking CSR and HRM

From the content of the previous section, it is easy to conclude (or at least to intuit) that contributions in the academic literature on CSR and/or sustainability have been mostly focused on the consideration of their external issues or dimensions. Aiming a deeper knowledge on this fact, Voetglin and Greenwood (2016) conducted a systematic review of academic literature linking CSR and HRM published prior to December 2014, based in 11 EBSCO online databases and concluding that, although the clear increasing in the number of such contributions in most recent years, in percentage terms only a few of them have focused on internal dimensions, then suggesting that there is still much to be done.

Obtained results are summarized in Figure 1. According to authors, three phases or stages can be identified in this evolution (contributions in 2015 are not representative, as the paper was written when the total figure for that year was not yet available):

- Stage 1: an early incubation phase from the earliest article retrieved (1975) to 2002 (a minimum figure of papers being published every year).
- Stage 2: a phase of incremental growth from 2003 to 2008 (the number of published papers increases year by year and “stabilises” at the end of the period).
- Stage 3: a phase of rapid growth between 2009 and 2014 (a new and higher increase in the number of published papers).

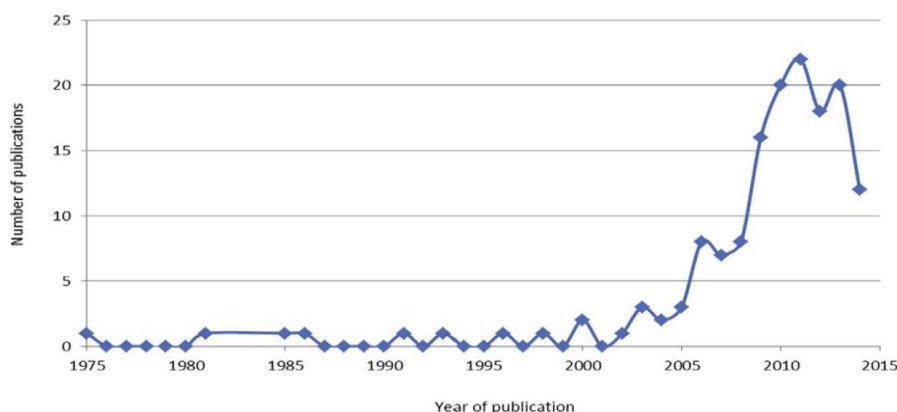


Figure 1. Evolution of publications linking CSR and HRM in selected EBSCO databases (1975-2014)
Source: Voetglin and Greenwood, 2016, p.184

Aiming a broader scope, as well as with an exploratory purpose, a first and general overview about the number of contributions published in the field can also be obtained if considering the publications included in the Google Scholar database as a reference for the intended analysis.

Then, and assuming that presence of publications in academic literature prior to 2000 (a total figure of 217) can be considered as testimonial (just as previously indicated in the research by Voetglin and Greenwood in 2016), the investigation has been focused on the time period 2000-2021.

Table 1 shows the total figure of papers that were published every year and included in Google Scholar, as well as the respective percentages of increase (or decrease) registered each year regarding the figure of papers published in the previous year (2021 was not included in the analysis, as having only a partial figure for the period from January 1st to April 15th when conducting the research –a little more than a trimester–, which was 539). Such percentages in the table reflect the trend in the evolution of the series, which can also be graphically appreciated in Figure 2.

Table 1. Evolution of publications linking CSR and HRM in Google Scholar (2000-2020)
Source: own elaboration based on Google Scholar results at 15 April 2021

Year	Publications		Year	Publications	
	Abs.	Δ%		Abs.	Δ%
Bef. 2000	217	--.--	2010	450	+35.95%
2000	30	--.--	2011	560	+24.44%
2001	37	+23.33%	2012	698	+24.64%
2002	44	+18.92%	2013	835	+19.63%
2003	63	+43.18%	2014	997	+19.40%
2004	96	+52.38%	2015	1030	+3.31%
2005	126	+31.25%	2016	1180	+14.56%
2006	179	+42.06%	2017	1360	+15.25%
2007	177	-1.12%	2018	1420	+4.41%
2008	269	+51.98%	2019	1820	+28.17%
2009	331	+23.05%	2020	2040	+12.09%

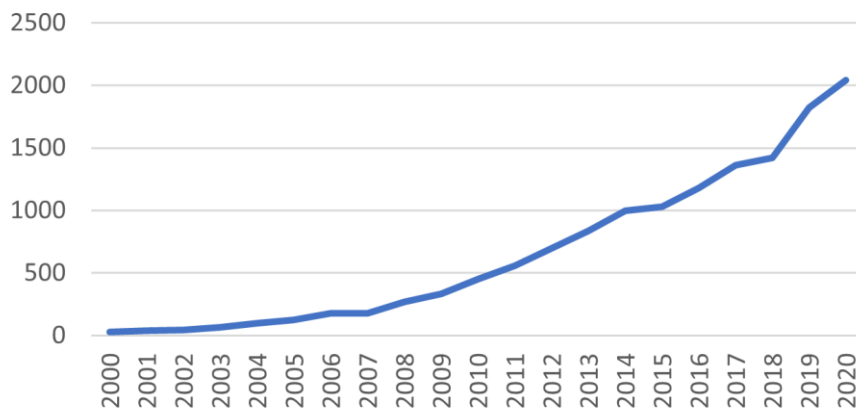


Figure 2. Evolution of publications linking CSR and HRM in Google Scholar (2000-2020)

Source: own elaboration based on Google Scholar results at 15 April 2021

From the data in the above table we can also –with slight adjustments– identify the three stages suggested by Voetglin and Greenwood, as well as to consider two additional ones in the period 2016-2020. Such five stages would be as follows:

- Stage 1: an early incubation phase up to 2002, with a minimum (testimonial) number of papers being published every year.
- Stage 2: a phase of incremental growth from 2003 to 2007, with an increase in the number of papers published every year until a stabilization at the end of the period.
- Stage 3: a phase of rapid growth between 2008 and 2015, with a new increase in the number of published papers until a new stabilization.
- Stage 4: a phase of consolidation, with a continuous (and not so rapid) growth in 2016 and 2017, and some certain stabilization in 2018.
- Stage 5: a phase of re-boosting starting in 2019, with a new increase in the number of published paper, thus consolidating or accelerating the increase tendency from stage 3 on (we should be cautious with the figure for 2020, as new papers are being added to the Google Scholar database day by day and this figure could increase).

Additionally, and without going into greater detail, from a first analysis on contents it is also worth noting the identification of the same three research trends pointed out for Voetglin and Greenwood (2016), and so:

- In some contributions HRM is considered as a component of CSR, either as an antecedent (workers –HRM– develop CSR practices, as e.g. Fenwick and Bierema, 2008) or a subset (HRM facilitates or enables CSR practices, just as in case of other factors, as e.g. Chen, Patten and Roberts, 2008). These contributions, which are more frequent in the first ones of above stages, taking CSR as the main research focus.
- At the other end (we could say nearly as just opposite), in some other contributions, CSR is seen as a component of HRM, either enabling a “responsible” (e.g. Bhattacharya, Sen and Korschun, 2008) or “effective” HRM (e.g. Deakin and Hobbs, 2007). In these cases, also more frequent in early stages, HRM constitutes the main research focus.
- Finally, what is more frequent in the last stages, CSR and HRM are seen as mutually dependent topics, either parallel (e.g. Smith and Langford, 2011) or interactive or overlapped (e.g. Westermann-Behaylo, Berman and Van Buren, 2014). Both of them are considered focus of the research.

The relevance of SDG 8 to the development of future research linking CSR and HRM

Nowadays, both CSR and HRM must face different challenges from a competitive and global point of view, the UN Sustainable Development Goals appearing as a mandatory reference. Among those objectives, the SDG 8 appears as especially relevant: *promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all* (Figure 3). “Decent” and “sustainable” work is understood as that which provides a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, thus offering better prospects for personal development and favouring social integration. All women and men should have equal opportunities in the workplace and governments can work to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, specifically promoting youth employment and women’s economic empowerment, as well as decent work for all, as the continuing lack of decent work opportunities, scarce investment and low consumption erode the basic social contract underlying democratic societies, that is, that we all should benefit from progress.



Figure 3. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8)
Source: UN (2021)

The International Labour Organization (ILO), as a specialized agency of the United Nations, has also endorsed SDG 8 and its goals, in accordance with its motto of “*advancing social justice, promoting decent work*” (ILO, 2021a). Such endorsement reached even a greater emphasis even if possible after the virtual World Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work held between July 1 and 9, 2020 to build a better future of work after the coronavirus crisis, in which strategies were discussed so that in the world of work, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the vulnerabilities revealed by the virus outbreak, in particular the lack of social protection, the informal economy, inequality and climate change, are addressed (ILO, 2021b).

It should also be noted that during the ILO World Summit in July 2020, several proposed strategies were discussed aiming the amendment of concrete vulnerabilities in the world of work that, although already pre-existing, have been highlighted as a result of the pandemic. In particular: i) the needs of people who carry out their work without social protection or in the informal economy; ii) the promotion of full and productive employment and sustainable enterprises; iii) the adoption of measures aimed at guaranteeing that the reduction of poverty, the promotion of equality and the fight against climate change are essential elements of the recovery process; and iv) the measures that the international community can take to promote compliance with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is, finally, evident in view of all the above, that there have been –and there are– many reflections that have taken place at the international level on the future of work and what should be, in logical consequence, the evolution of internal responsibility and sustainability.

What is more, as a result of these reflections, we now find ourselves with a wide catalogue of challenges that academic research will have to face. We must not forget that academia uses to be some way “daughter of its time” over the years, and in recent times it was adapting to the requirements of a model of economic development based on large-scale production, consumerism and profit maximization, which, in the vast majority of cases, was detrimental to the interests of the worker and social conquests that had taken many decades to achieve.

Just summarizing, a promising future for internal CSR and internal sustainability arises.

Conclusions

Even when they have been intended with an exploratory character, and in order to settle the basis for further research and developments, some conclusions can be drawn from previous pages. To be precise:

1. Talking on the first of the intended objectives, that is, the linkage of the concepts in the development of theories in human resource management, internal marketing and internal social responsibility can be considered as a “step forward” regarding previously suggested Theories X, Y and Z, parallel in recent times to new forms of Taylorism (or neo-Taylorism) in a globalized and highly competitive context. However, consciousness on sustainability – especially after the unexpected and harsh first impact of the COVID-19 pandemic associated confinement in 2020– has stressed the significance of internal sustainability as a new conjoint approach to HRM and (internal) CSR.

2. Regarding the second objective, and up to date, published academic contributions focusing on internal sustainability are scarce if compared to those focused in the external dimension –although there is an increasing number of such contributions–, just as it occurs in case of actions and practices in organizations. An overview on the situation allows the consideration of different stages in the evolution of the number of publications (specifically in the 21st century) as well as different research trends.

3. However, the relevance of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) and the current way in which academic literature focuses on how sustainable principles are being adopted in human resource management in organizations gives rise to think on a promising future for research dealing with internal CSR and internal sustainability issues.

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