

Developing a Human Resources Management Model Based on Health Sector Indicators Using the Meta-Synthesis Method

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to develop a comprehensive human resource management (HRM) model tailored to the health sector, addressing the gap in existing literature by proposing a context-specific framework for Iranian healthcare organizations.

Methodology: Employing a qualitative meta-synthesis approach, this study followed the procedure proposed by Erwin et al. (2014). A comprehensive literature search across Persian and Latin databases yielded 107 initial sources, which were evaluated using quality assessment criteria, resulting in a final sample of 14 sources that achieved theoretical saturation. Inter-coder reliability was calculated at 73 percent, confirming the reliability of the analysis.

Findings: The analysis identified five main components and twenty sub-components: Performance Management, Training, Development and Recruitment, Systems Thinking, Organizational Achievements, and Labor and Employee Relations.

Conclusion: Grounded in resource-based theory, the proposed model provides a comprehensive HRM framework for the health sector. The findings highlight the necessity of tailored HR practices to address healthcare organizations' unique characteristics. The study offers practical implications for health policymakers and managers, emphasizing the revitalization of HRM units as strategic partners for achieving organizational excellence and sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Health Sector, Meta-Synthesis, Resource-Based View, Healthcare Organizations.

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1. Introduction

The most valuable resource of any organization is its employees. In today's world, humanity has reached remarkable heights in science and technology, and knowledge has enabled individuals to become the most critical asset of organizations (Atkin, 2023). In developed countries, for instance, only 16 percent of added value is attributed to natural and physical capital, while 84 percent comes from human capital. One key indicator distinguishing developed from underdeveloped nations is the presence of specialized human resources tailored to their needs—resources that have been deliberately cultivated to achieve organizational excellence and to foster economic, social, political, and educational growth, as well as community health (Xiao, 2022).

In modern management paradigms, the role of human resources in realizing organizational goals has become so significant that they are now referred to as "human capital." This capital constitutes the intellectual core and the processing backbone of any organization's software and hardware systems. Many experts argue that human resources are the sole sustainable competitive advantage, and organizations must take appropriate measures to transform this potential force into actual performance, aligning it with organizational objectives. Without efficient human resources, organizations cannot hope to achieve their goals. In other words, human resources are pivotal in maintaining market competitiveness (Sadatifaw, 2023).

Knowledge-based human resources, equipped with relevant expertise and efficiency, are among the most critical elements of any organization. Their knowledge and skills can profoundly influence the growth and service delivery of the institution. For this reason, human resource management (HRM), as the developer of this strategic capital, plays a vital role. HRM involves coordinating an organization's workforce to achieve specific objectives, assessing employee needs, and maintaining their satisfaction (Lee, 2024).

Given the evolution and growing importance of HRM in today's world, its underlying philosophy is clear: first, it establishes the necessary alignment between the organization and its employees around shared goals; subsequently, it ensures the realization of both organizational and individual objectives (Osanloo & Grant, 2024). The service sector, in particular, places great emphasis on managing this factor of production due to the practical role of human resources in service delivery. However, the importance of human resources varies across different service sectors. In recent years, given the human dimension of development, many countries have prioritized human capital in their development programs (Chen et al., 2022). Education and health are regarded as two of the most critical aspects of human capital, making HRM especially significant in organizations operating in these fields. In health and treatment services, human resources are considered the most vital element for organizational success, and creating a sustainable competitive advantage remains a key managerial concern (Anwar, 2021).

HRM in the health sector of many developing countries is weak and fragmented, with lack of motivation being one of the most pressing issues in their health systems. Human resources are among the most important components of health service delivery, as the application of

health technologies in service management and provision—aimed at improving health outcomes—falls under their responsibility (Davidescu, 2023). In Iran, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education employs over 320,000 people, making this sector one of the largest service employers. The national health system is one of the most complex economic structures in terms of labor force in any country. It encompasses a wide range of personnel, from administrative staff to highly specialized medical professionals, which complicates human resource planning. As a government sector, the health system has distinctive characteristics, including political influences, budget constraints, extensive geographical coverage, and other unique challenges (Chen & Sitspace, 2020). Although numerous studies have developed HRM models, none have comprehensively addressed the health sector. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by carefully examining existing models.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

In organizational classification, human resource management is often grouped alongside production management, financial management, and similar functions, with its responsibilities assigned to a specific domain. This domain may operate directly under the organization's president or through intermediaries, and it involves highly specialized tasks that significantly impact the organization's ultimate success. However, because organizations are designed and managed by people, and because employees across all levels are the primary focus of HRM, human resource issues cannot be confined to a single specialized area. Consequently, the decisions and performance of personnel officers at all organizational levels influence the overall performance of the organization (Saadat, 2017). Effective HRM encourages employees to pursue and achieve their personal life goals. HRM can be divided into specific categories, including job analysis, recruitment processes, trends and orientations, training, employee and employer interactions, performance evaluation, improvement, and discipline (Mache et al., 2014).

HRM encompasses various practices used to manage people in organizations, typically grouped into subsystems such as selection, training, evaluation, and reward—functions generally considered core to the HR department. However, there is no clear, consistent, or universally accepted definition of HRM in the literature; authors have proposed various definitions or applied them differently in their research. Many scholars have attempted to classify the diverse areas that fall under HRM. For instance, one classic HR text describes HRM based on a fourfold classification: employee effects, human resource flow, reward systems, and work systems. Others have categorized HRM tasks into four domains: acquisition, retention, motivation, and development. Still others present HRM as an interconnected chain of activities, such as a five-step cycle comprising selection, performance appraisal, reward, and development (Ramzani & Bagherieh-Mashadi, 2016).

2. 1. Research Background

Xiaoping et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive review of human resource management (HRM) in healthcare, aiming to delineate the current status, global trends, and future research directions in this domain. Data were extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection, yielding 833 publications that have shown a steady increase over the past three decades. The findings indicated that 93 countries and regions have contributed to this body of literature, with the United States and Australia being the most prolific. The predominant research themes were clustered around performance, job satisfaction, HRM practices, occupational and mental health, and quality of care.

Paulina et al. (2019) explored quality indicators and the evaluation of HRM in the health sector through a qualitative study involving nursing managers and university professors. The study aimed to understand their experiences with quality indicator utilization. Participants included 12 university professors and 10 directors from four educational and auxiliary institutions—both public and private—in São Paulo. The analysis revealed two main categories: institutional and professional dimensions. The former encompassed perceptions, feelings, and expectations related to organizational dynamics, while the latter addressed intervening factors such as professional motivations, interests, and needs in carrying out institutional tasks. The study underscored the processual nature of constructing and validating indicators as a quality management tool in HRM.

Vakili et al. (2024) employed a meta-synthesis approach to identify the roles of human resource managers in the health and treatment sector. This mixed-methods study, applied in purpose, involved a qualitative phase in which 177 documents were retrieved from scientific databases, and after screening, 87 studies were included for analysis. In the quantitative phase, the Shannon entropy weighting method was used to rank the identified roles, with data collected via a questionnaire administered to 10 HR managers. The analysis resulted in the identification of seven key roles: developmental, functional, support and service, communication, change-driving, researcher, and strategic. Prioritization results indicated that empowerment (developmental role), mastery of HR affairs (functional role), employee support (support and service role), policy design and strategic consultation (strategic role), network building (communication role), innovation in implementation (change-driving role), and anticipatory opportunism (researcher role) were ranked as the most critical sub-dimensions.

Masoud Sinki et al. (2024) investigated the indicators of collaborative HRM in the health sector using a meta-composition method. Through content analysis, five main categories and 19 subcategories were identified. These included: collaboration context (collaborative recruitment, organizational culture, training, assessment, job design, conflict of interest management, and communication), collaboration incentives (perceived justice, trust-building, collaborative rewards, motivation, and resource provision), collaboration facilitators (collaborative leadership, support for collaborative activities, and emotional intelligence), collaboration achievements (collaborative outcomes), and joint collaboration (team building,

shared goals, and joint planning). The study was contextualized within Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences.

Amiri and Sortchi (2022) developed a risk model for HRM in the health sector, also focusing on Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences. This applied, descriptive-analytical study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected using a questionnaire validated through the fuzzy Delphi method with input from HR experts. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and exploratory factor analysis with principal component analysis and Varimax rotation were utilized. The KMO index and Bartlett's test confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. SEM was conducted using the PLS approach in two stages: first, the measurement model was assessed via validity, reliability, and confirmatory factor analysis; second, the structural model was evaluated by estimating path coefficients. The results indicated that among 24 components, reward and compensation risks ranked first, customer neglect risks ranked second, and human resource provision risks ranked third. Conversely, the risk of lacking strategic capabilities was deemed least significant according to the Friedman ranking.

Ashrafi et al. (2022) designed a comprehensive HRM model for the health sector under health crisis conditions. The findings revealed that the first, second, and fourth HR functions should be prioritized in the pre-crisis phase; the third and fifth functions during the crisis; and the sixth function in the post-crisis period. The study proposed four distinct models: HRM models for pre-crisis, during-crisis, and post-crisis conditions, along with an overarching comprehensive HRM model tailored to health crises.

Mirmoeini et al. (2022) formulated a model for resilient HRM functions within the national health system. Based on thematic analysis of interview transcripts, the model comprised 66 basic themes, 18 organizing themes, and 5 global themes, which included: labor-employee relations, compensation systems, planning systems, recruitment and hiring, human resource development, and employee performance management. SEM confirmed the validity of the extracted model, with an overall goodness-of-fit index of 0.529, indicating strong model fit.

Asgarnejad Nouri and Mir Mousavi (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of key HRM indicators influencing employee performance improvement. The statistical population encompassed 252 studies; following meta-analytic standards, 165 were excluded, and 23 independent variables derived from 87 studies were retained. The results demonstrated that variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, compensation systems, quality of work life, leader-member exchange, organizational justice, organizational support, performance appraisal, organizational culture, creativity and innovation, participatory management, training and development, job meaningfulness, employee empowerment, job security, organizational climate, work autonomy, career advancement, and work motivation positively affected employee performance. However, the effects of organizational politics, role ambiguity, job redesign, and job demands on performance improvement were not confirmed.

Forough Al-Sadat et al. (2019) examined the pathology of human resources in a healthcare network using the triangulation model. The average scores for structural factors (2.86) and behavioral factors (2.77) indicated unfavorable conditions, while the contextual factors averaged 3.23, reflecting a satisfactory state and thus not considered detrimental. The most

significant pathological components were identified as the payment system, motivation and job satisfaction (structural dimension), and contractors and consultants (contextual dimension).

Shams Lahrudi et al. (2018) investigated the tools and challenges of HRM in health service delivery. Employing an analytical-review approach, the study sought to outline the principal tools, persistent challenges, and strategic mechanisms that can generate competitive advantage in the health sector, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive and adaptive HRM frameworks.

2. 2. Theoretical Foundation of the Proposed Model

The proposed model is grounded in resource-based theory (RBV). According to RBV, some scholars—including Barney and Wright (1998), Foss (2007), and Pletocarpi and Tswicki (2006)—argue that possessing valuable and unique resources does not necessarily guarantee superior performance; rather, organizations must also develop appropriate mechanisms to exploit these resources effectively (Lopez-Cabrels et al., 2009). Extending RBV, Lepak and Snell (2007) introduced the human resource architecture approach, which suggests that instead of applying a single HR model across the organization, employers should tailor their practices based on the strategic contribution of different employee groups (Marchington et al., 2021). Consequently, from an RBV perspective, a firm's competitive advantage is determined by its distinctive capabilities. In the health sector, adopting a distinctive HRM model can facilitate the development of unique competencies (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

3. Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of orientation, as it aims to develop a human resource management model based on health sector indicators. In terms of strategy, this research adopts a qualitative approach and employs the meta-synthesis method to examine the roles and tasks of human resource managers in the health sector. The meta-synthesis method, as one of the contemporary approaches to synthesizing qualitative studies, enables social science researchers to contribute to theory development and generation. Essentially, meta-synthesis is a type of qualitative study that incorporates findings from prior qualitative research on a specific topic into the analysis process as data. Accordingly, the samples in a meta-synthesis study consist of previous qualitative investigations that the researcher selects based on the research question at hand (Sandelowski, 2008). In other words, meta-synthesis refers to a set of approaches and procedures used to synthesize the findings of qualitative studies with the aim of offering a novel interpretation of the subject matter. That is, meta-synthesis seeks to interpret, compare, and translate diverse qualitative studies through a different conceptual framework in order to generate comprehensive knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation (Bergdahl, 2019). These interpretations are essentially perceptions and conclusions derived from reviewing all articles related to the phenomenon; therefore, the findings and interpretations emerging from a meta-synthesis study are not present in any single initial article (Abedi-Jafari & Amiri, 2019). Through the qualitative meta-synthesis process, a new and integrated interpretation of findings

is obtained that is more substantiated than the results of previous individual studies (Feingold, 2003).

The meta-synthesis approach is not merely a comprehensive review or summary of existing literature, but rather a highly complex process of synthesis and analysis of qualitative research (Irwin et al., 2011). Meta-synthesis also differs from secondary analysis, as the latter involves the re-analysis of raw primary data, whereas meta-synthesis analyzes the results and interpretations of prior studies rather than raw data (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). The meta-synthesis process comprises discrete steps that enable the researcher to identify a research question and subsequently explore, select, evaluate, summarize, and synthesize evidence to address that question. Although different scholars have described the meta-synthesis process somewhat differently, the underlying logic and fundamental steps remain consistent (Abedi-Jafari & Amiri, 2019). One area of variation concerns the number of steps proposed. For instance, Noblit and Hare (1988) introduced three main phases: selecting studies, translating and comparing findings, and synthesizing interpretations. Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) proposed a seven-step approach, while Hughes-Morley et al. (2015) outlined three general steps: systematic review, quality assessment, and synthesis. Compared to these existing frameworks, the process proposed by Erwin et al. (2014) comprises fewer steps while still encompassing all the essential phases required in the meta-synthesis method.

4. Findings

The meta-synthesis process employed in the present study follows the procedure proposed by Erwin et al. (2014), which comprises the following stages:

Stage 1) Question Formulation: In this initial stage, consistent with all research endeavors, the primary research question (or questions) is formulated. At this stage, three general criteria—namely, "what," "who or when," and "how"—can be commonly utilized to structure the research questions. Table 1 presents the questions developed based on these three criteria, in alignment with the objectives of the present study:

Table-1: Research questions (Source: By author)

Description	Criteria
What are the dimensions and components of the human resources management model based on health indicators?	What
What are the human resource management based on health indicators in foreign books and articles from 2000 to 2021, and in domestic books and articles from 1380 to 1400 published in reputable and accessible scientific databases?	Who) when(
How do the dimensions of the human resource management model based on health indicators relate to each other?	How

Stage 2) Comprehensive Search of Research Literature: At this stage, considerable effort is required to compile a comprehensive list of existing studies relevant to the research subject. Researchers can access all available databases within the desired timeframe by identifying and employing appropriate "research keywords" (Irwin et al., 2011). As presented in Table 2, a range of keywords—including "human resource management," "human resource management

indicators," and "health field"—were utilized in both Persian and Latin to search reputable scientific databases. This process ultimately yielded 107 sources, which were subsequently entered into the next stage (Stage 3) for further evaluation and final selection.

Table 2. Keywords and selected scientific databases (Source: By author)

Address Scientific database	Language Optional	Scientific database Selected	Vocabulary
https://www.sid.ir/	Persian	Jihad Daneshgahi Scientific Information Center Database (SID)	Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management Indicators, Health Sector
https://civilica.com/	Persian	Knowledge Reference (Civilika)	
http://www.ensani.ir/	Persian	Comprehensive Humanities Portal	
https://ganj.irandoc.ac.ir/	Persian	Iranian Scientific Information Database (Ganj)	
http://www.gigalib.org/	English	Giga Digital Library (Gigalib)	Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management Indicators, Health Sector

Stage 3) Evaluation and Quality Assessment of Primary Sources: At this stage, it is necessary to determine which of the existing sources meet the requisite criteria for inclusion in the synthesis process. Prior to conducting the synthesis, primary sources must be critically appraised and evaluated (Bonds & Hall, 2007). In the present study, the researcher initially assessed the suitability of the articles identified in the previous stage based on the criteria proposed by Erwin et al. (2011). Accordingly, the sources obtained from the search were first reviewed, and those that were not aligned with the research problem and objectives were excluded. Subsequently, the remaining articles were evaluated in terms of methodology, findings, and recommendations, with low-quality articles being discarded at each step. More precisely, at this stage, the researcher applied the 15 criteria proposed by Erwin et al. (2011). This involved evaluating each primary source individually and assigning a score to it. The maximum possible score for each source is 15, and the scores obtained by the articles using the proposed quality assessment checklist are summarized in Table 3. Based on the scores and results obtained, the researcher only included sources that met the general standards of quality and credibility at high or moderate levels. The final sample selected for this study comprised 14 sources, which, according to the researcher's review and expert opinion, achieved theoretical saturation. Furthermore, in accordance with the recommendation of Agouri and Bolton (2014), an overview of the overall process followed at this stage—including the number of articles identified, screened, excluded, and finally included—is presented in Figure 1. As illustrated, out of 107 initial records, 42 were excluded at the title/abstract screening stage, and 51 were excluded after full-text assessment due to low-quality scores or lack of relevance. Ultimately, 14 articles met the inclusion criteria and achieved theoretical saturation.



Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of the Study Selection Process (Source: By author)

Table 3. Classification of resources according to total scores in the CAQRP method (Source: By author)

Number of assigned articles	Related category
107	Has low overall quality and reliability standards (5-1)
4	Has overall quality and credibility standards at an average level (10-6)
10	Has high overall quality and reliability standards (11-15)

Stage 4) Synthesis of Qualitative Research Results: The analysis of findings in meta-synthesis studies, akin to other qualitative analyses, necessitates the final synthesis of the findings (Timulak, 2009). In fact, the final synthesis provides a context against which the value of meta-synthesis studies is judged (Walsh & Dunn, 2005). A common approach in analyzing findings is to avoid employing a predetermined conceptual framework (Abedi-Jafari & Amiri, 2019). In such cases, the data analysis process commences with examining and re-reading the findings from each source, gradually progressing toward synthesizing (combining) and interpreting the findings throughout the re-reading process.

In the present study, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the selected articles several times during the analysis process in order to discern the findings embedded within the content of the studies. The categorization method employed in this study is as follows: First, the reference details of each source—including authors' names and publication year—are recorded, followed

by the identification and documentation of characteristics related to the human resource management model in the health sector. Second, the identified characteristics (as codes) are integrated by assigning a reference number to the corresponding source. It should be noted that virtually all identified factors (codes) are associated with more than one reference number.

In the initial stages of analysis, a substantial number of codes emerge—akin to the open coding process in grounded theory, as the researcher endeavors to include all identified features from the sources into the analysis process without any modification or transformation. No attempt is made to combine codes at this stage; consequently, the number of codes increases significantly by the end of this step. Typically, approximately 20 to 60 initial codes can be extracted from the first 10 identified sources. It is at this juncture that researchers often experience confusion and frustration, as no coherent understanding emerges regarding how to interpret such seemingly disparate codes. In this regard, Joya (2004) posits that this bewilderment is significant, asserting that the researcher must navigate through an extensive volume of identified codes before discovering a meaningful clue.

As the analysis progresses, the researcher begins to identify similarities and differences among the various codes, building upon the previous stage (similar to axial coding in grounded theory). During this step, related codes are consolidated and reduced—for instance, to approximately 8 to 10 categories. Subsequently, each category is assigned a title or interpretive term, and the content of each is carefully considered by the researcher. Thus, at this stage, the researcher, as an expert and thinker on the subject, must simultaneously engage in inference and analysis—both at the level of technical terms and codes, and at a more abstract, second-order theoretical level concerning dimensions, while addressing the critical question of what is theoretically relevant within each category.

Continuing the analytical process, the researcher attains a theoretical level aimed at relating the constructed categories to concepts that can elucidate and explain the phenomenon under investigation. At this step, the researcher pays particular attention to concepts that are sufficiently robust in terms of theoretical references yet absent from the existing literature—what Corley and Joya (2004) describe as possessing "identity ambiguity." Alternatively, these may be existing concepts whose application to a new field has facilitated an external leap, achieving what Joya et al. (2010) term "optimal distinction."

In the final step, the researcher arrives at a comprehensive and coherent set of codes, categories, and concepts—theoretical adequacy, as introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the qualitative analysis process. The results obtained not only enable the researcher to configure the identified codes and categories into a logical visual framework but also provide a graphical representation of how raw data is transformed into terms and themes throughout the analysis process—a key component in demonstrating rigor in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010).

Accordingly, the coding process in the present study parallels the procedure proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), which constitutes a systematic approach for discovering categories, characteristics, and dimensions of data. Through this coding process, a theoretical model will be developed to describe and explain the human resource management model based on health indicators. To develop the aforementioned model, the researcher continuously and iteratively

moved between open and axial coding during the data analysis process, ensuring that concepts and categories were identified and categorized with sufficient precision.

Stage 5) Assessing the Validity and Reliability of the Results: Most qualitative researchers acknowledge that some qualitative studies are more rigorous than others, and generally employ the concept of content validity to denote such differences. In qualitative research, terms such as credibility, defensibility, and trustworthiness are predominantly used to demonstrate validity. In the present study, by accepting these criteria as indicators for evaluating a qualitative study, both credibility and defensibility are considered very high due to the citation of data from credible studies (as per Stage 3) and the attribution of all data to identified sources.

Furthermore, the repeatability index has been utilized to examine reliability. Inter-coder reliability (repeatability) refers to the degree to which two or more coders produce consistent results. The coding process is deemed repeatable if coders code and classify a text in an identical manner:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{n_A}{n_T} \times 100$$

In the aforementioned formula, n_A represents the number of agreements and n_T represents the total number of codes. If the reliability percentage exceeds 60 percent, the coding performed is considered to have adequate reliability. The inter-coder reliability for the compilation model in this study was calculated at 73 percent, which exceeds the acceptance criterion; accordingly, it can be asserted that the reliability of the analysis is satisfactory.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the human resource management model based on health sector indicators comprises 5 main components and 20 sub-components (tasks), as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Final Model of Human Resource Management in the Health Sector (Source: By author)

Main Component	Sub-Components (Tasks)	Key References
1. Performance Management	• Compensation • Reward • Performance Evaluation • Job Security	Salamat et al. (2019); Badzrafshan et al. (2010); Bazarafshan et al. (2010); Walton (1985); Hassan Talesh et al. (2021)
2. Training, Development, and Recruitment	• Recruitment and Selection • Training • Organizational Structure	Timori et al. (2018); Gholipour (2023)
3. Systems Thinking	• Planning • Knowledge, Abilities, and Skills	Qasemi et al. (2016); Panahi (2016); Sheikhhinejad et al. (2016); Moradi et al. (2023); Salvati et al. (2023)

	• Organizational Politics • Organizational Dynamics	
4. Organizational Achievements	• Coordination and Development of Human Resources • Participation • Organizational Commitment • Employee Trust • Job Enrichment	Zia al-Dinini & Moradi Shahr-Babak (2016); Ardalan et al. (2019); Darvishi (2022); Saunders & Thornhill (2004); Iranzadeh et al. (2021)
5. Labor and Employee Relations	• Employee Behavior • Employee Relations • Motivation and Job Satisfaction • Maintaining and Improving Human Resources	Moradi (2022); Moradian et al. (2021); Sohrabi et al. (2019); Norouzzadeh & Kazemi (2019)

1) Performance Management: In today's competitive environment, organizations must continuously enhance their performance to ensure survival and growth. Human resources are recognized as one of the most critical organizational assets, and contemporary organizations have come to understand that effective HRM and the establishment of a comprehensive HR system exert a profound influence on overall organizational performance. Performance management has emerged as one of the most significant and constructive developments in HRM in recent years, predicated on the belief that a more coherent and sustainable system is essential for managing performance and its associated rewards. Performance management is considered a key strategy for improving and modernizing human resources, thereby fostering workforce development and productivity (Salamat et al., 2019). The sub-components of performance management include:

- **Compensation:** In the context of global change, strategic HRM places considerable emphasis on employees as the fundamental axis of the organization, a consideration that must be reflected in the design of compensation systems. Adequate wages and income not only address employees' livelihood needs but also significantly influence behavior, standard of living, purchasing power, mental health, and the incidence of crime and social abnormalities. A well-designed retention system reduces turnover and enhances organizational productivity, preventing the waste of resources invested in recruitment, training, and development (Badzrafshan et al., 2010).
- **Reward:** The concept of reward is intrinsically linked to motivation, encompassing the forces that energize, guide, and sustain individual behavior within the organization. Reward systems comprise processes, policies, and strategies designed to motivate individuals toward achieving strategic goals and enhancing organizational productivity and efficiency. A comprehensive reward strategy in public organizations should pursue two objectives: motivating individual performance and supporting employee job satisfaction and commitment (Bazarafshan et al., 2010).

- **Performance Evaluation:** Walton (1985) proposed that HRM should develop strategies to foster employee participation rather than serve as a mechanism for control. Subsequent models, such as the Harvard framework, advocate for soft HRM that considers stakeholder interests, situational factors, HRM outputs, and long-term consequences. Performance evaluation is directly linked to organizational goals and must be conducted using appropriate measures, which are themselves influenced by environmental, value, and normative contexts.
- **Job Security:** Job security refers to the perception of having a suitable position and the assurance of its continuation, free from threats to working conditions. Job insecurity arises from the individual's assessment of threatening factors and their perceived inability to cope with them, with more severe evaluations leading to heightened insecurity (Hassan Talesh et al., 2021).

2) Training, Development, and Recruitment: Training and development are key strategies for positive adaptation to changing conditions and serve as a competitive advantage, rendering their strategic importance undeniable. When employed effectively, training significantly enhances organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Recruitment and selection involve actions taken to identify and attract individuals capable of contributing to strategic goals, creating a pool of desirable candidates, and increasing the likelihood of job offer acceptance. This process is critical for organizational success, as human capital increasingly replaces other forms of capital as the primary source of sustainable competitive advantage. Sub-components include:

- **Recruitment and Selection:** An organization achieves success only when it attracts individuals with the ability and interest to fulfill its mission. The recruitment process plays a pivotal role in facilitating organizational success, with strategic impact increasingly recognized in recent years. Organizations with a competitive advantage in recruitment follow specific standards, collecting comprehensive information about candidates, addressing deficiencies in work quality, and planning strategically for workforce entry and exit (Timori et al., 2018).
- **Training:** Human resources are the most fundamental factor of production, playing a key role in goods and services delivery. Training improves knowledge, skills, and behavior, increasing organizational efficiency. The scope of training benefits is extensive, encompassing all levels of the organization (Timori et al., 2018).
- **Organizational Structure:** Organizational structure defines the framework of relationships governing jobs, units, and individuals, facilitating coordination, distributing authority, and streamlining communication. It must accelerate decision-making, respond appropriately to the environment, and resolve inter-unit conflicts. Structure includes macro- and detailed organizational charts, job titles, and staffing levels (Gholipour, 2023).

3) Systems Thinking: Systems thinking is a conceptual framework for systematic problem-solving, examining the interrelationships among system components and considering both detail and broader context. In strategic thinking, systems thinking represents a fundamental shift in perspective (Salvati et al., 2023). Sub-components include:

- **Planning:** Human resource planning is essential for achieving the skills, training needs, and improvement of human resources, as human capital constitutes the main source of competitive advantage (Qasemi et al., 2016).
- **Knowledge, Abilities, and Skills:** Organizational survival depends on the capabilities, skills, and knowledge of its human resources. Organizations must adapt to technological progress by empowering their workforce (Panahi, 2016).
- **Organizational Politics:** Organizational politics is subjectively perceived and originates from individual perceptions and reactions to self-interest. Perceived reality is the most important determinant of employee attitudes and behavior (Sheikhinejad et al., 2016).
- **Organizational Dynamics:** Organizations operate in complex and dynamic environments, requiring dynamic capabilities to respond actively to changing conditions and create sustainable competitive advantage (Moradi et al., 2023).

4) Organizational Achievements: The main reason for organizational development is the goals it pursues; every organization needs to improve performance and develop capabilities for growth and change. Sub-components include:

- **Coordination and Development of Human Resources:** Effective strategies for motivation and achieving organizational goals enhance human resource productivity.
- **Participation:** Organizations that promote employee participation and synergy achieve greater effectiveness than traditional organizations (Zia al-Dinini & Moradi Shahr-Babak, 2016).
- **Organizational Commitment:** Organizational commitment is a key to competitive advantage. High levels of commitment yield positive outcomes, making it a desirable quality that should be cultivated in employees (Ardalan et al., 2019).
- **Employee Trust:** Trust in the workplace is shaped by perceptions of organizational processes and leadership. Perceived justice positively affects employee trust, with management focusing on fairness and transparency (Darvishi, 2022; Saunders & Thornhill, 2004).
- **Job Enrichment:** Job enrichment, first proposed by Herzberg, involves redesigning jobs to increase employees' sense of responsibility, job satisfaction, and empowerment (Iranzadeh et al., 2021).

5) Labor and Employee Relations: Employee relations are fundamental to HRM, as they govern formal employment contracts. Without sound labor relations, training, development, and compensation efforts cannot achieve optimal results. Sub-components include:

- **Employee Behavior:** Understanding human resource behaviors, conflicts, and their causes is essential for improving employee performance and achieving organizational missions (Moradi, 2022).
- **Employee Relations:** Successful managers must predict, guide, control, and change employee behavior, requiring extensive research and attention to individual differences and cultural contexts (Moradian et al., 2021).

- **Motivation and Job Satisfaction:** Employee health, satisfaction, and motivation are as important as productivity. These factors significantly affect organizational performance, and their neglect has numerous negative consequences (Sohrabi et al., 2019).
- **Maintaining and Improving Human Resources:** Training and development are key strategies for positive adaptation and competitive advantage, with undeniable strategic importance for organizational survival and development (Norouzzadeh & Kazemi, 2019).

Drawing upon experience and knowledge of functional units within the health system—such as hospitals, clinics, and other health-related areas—it appears that one of the major gaps in the Iranian health system is the absence of a robust mechanism and structure for human resource management. Given the presence of highly specialized professionals, including physicians whose decision-making power often outweighs managerial authority, the health sector faces unique challenges. Furthermore, the imbalance in resource distribution, which tends to favor physicians, has led to dissatisfaction among other key personnel, such as nurses.

Within the HRM paradigm, the workforce is regarded as the most valuable organizational asset, and therefore, meeting employee needs and providing conditions for optimal performance should be a priority. However, in many Iranian organizations, the HR unit functions merely as a clerical body for employee selection and administrative tasks, rather than as a strategic partner. In the health system, if managers prioritize the revitalization of the HR unit, it can identify structural gaps through analytical and pathological perspectives and take corrective action. Properly directed human resources can serve as the foundation for reforming other structures within the health system. Because health sector professionals are highly specialized, their engagement and development will ultimately determine the success or failure of any reform initiative, making HRM a critical lever for systemic change.

Declarations

Author Contributions (CRediT taxonomy)

Authors have participated in this research in equal proportion.

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Ethical Statement

Ethical approval was not required as this was a secondary data analysis.

Authors' AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript for writing, analysis, or data generation. All content is the result of the authors' own human effort and judgment.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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