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### SHRM in Iran

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify whether the shifting from Human resource management to strategic human resource management in the leading industries of Iran has passed its' fundamental alteration. Statistical Population covers 45 leading manufacturing organizations from three pioneer industries, comprising 1280 employees including, senior managers, and members of strategic committee, board of directors, department managers, line managers and staff experts. Sampling method is random and classified. 619 questionnaires out of totally 712 samples has returned (87% return rate). Research methodology is a descriptive survey in the field study. Results show that strategic human resource management in pioneer industries of Iran is not in a desirable status. It requires a foundation and intention to cultural, social and theoretical components so that concept of diversity from traditional human resource and staff management to strategic human resource management can be provided.

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#### Introduction

Although many scholars have strived to attain a coherent theory on Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) [1] but this term is ambiguous. The concept of SHRM was first introduced by the formation of two models at the Commercial Department of Harvard University. These two models focus on the integration of Human Resources Management (HRM) with organizational strategy. Fombrun and associates (1984) offered their first theory on SHRM within the framework of a compatible model. At the same time, the Harvard model was developed by Beer et al at the same university. These theorists insist on compatibility of HRM with the organizational strategy (Harpaz, Itzhak, Meshoulam & Ilan, 2010: 221; Beer et al, 1984).

Some experts consider SHRM as the output or the end. Some consider it as a process and yet others consider it a combination of both. Wright and McMahan believe that SHRM is an output and define this term as "The prototype planned to utilize human resources and activities in a manner to achieve organizational objectives and goals" (Wright, P.M. & McMahan, 1992). Wright & Snell have the same opinion, defining SHRM as organizational systems designed to gain sustainable competitive advantages by the means of employees (Wright, & Snell, 1998, 1991).

Ulrich and Lake describe SHRM as a process to correlate human resources with business strategy (Ulrich and Lake 1991). Bamberger and Meshoulam (2000) consider SHRM as an approach to human resources based on competences and insist on training human resources such that human resource turnover rate is reduced.

Truss and Gratton, combining these two perspectives, define the term SHRM as the relationship of human resources functions and organizational strategic goals; aiming to improve business performance and develop an organizational culture of innovation and flexibility (Lengnick-Hall et al, 2009: 65; Truss & Gratton, 1994).

Anyhow, given the lack of a specific definition, experts generally agree that the main feature of SHRM is designing a set of internally consistent policies and functions; to make sure human capital efforts contribute in accomplishing organizational goals (Chang et al, 2005; Gratton et al, 1995; Guest, 1987). This characteristic has been clearly outlined Cascio: "Practically, SHRM is a process that all staff, from the senior managers to the line workers must employ to perform what is needed to effectively execute the business strategy and to wisely benefit from human resources to provide organizational strategic necessities (Casio, 1998).

In the past, HRM did not play an important role in organizational strategic management. However, in the last two decades, HRM has become an integral part of organizations' strategies (Tichy et al, 1982). SHRM plays a strategic role in the formulation and implementation of long term plans of organizations. In other words, recent studies on SHRM have mainly focused on evaluating the relationship between organizational strategies with SHRM (HRM policies, measures, HRM systems) (Chadwick & Cappeli, 1998; Way et al, 2005; Wright & Sherman, 1999).

Studies show that for the first time, under the rules and regulations of new administrative system of Iran established in 1907, personnel management was considered one of the main duties of ministries. Personnel management duties included collecting personnel statistics, job classification, and work training. Yet, it wasn't until 1922 which the formal national employment law was passed which included some criteria, policies, and scientific methods governing public agencies (MirSepasi, 2003). British Petroleum Company, engaged in oil exploration in Iran, was the first organization to apply scientific methods and principles of HRM, then after the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran, the same personnel management established by the British consultants and experts was inherited by the Iranians; and since then, this system has been carried out in most public and private organizations in full extend. However, the role of HRM has not undergone a fundamental

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change and still, traditional personnel management tasks are emphasized. Furthermore, the term HRM in Iranian organizations does not have a long history and the strategic prefix being common since mid 80's in West, has been used only by a few Iranian pioneer organizations since less than a decade ago. Tayeb believes that HRM in Iran is the same personnel management and having emphasized on recruitment and staffing functions, socio-political considerations are preferred to work interests such that people in charge usually pull some strings for their relatives and friends (Tayeb, 2001). The results from recent research show that HRM in Iranian organizations, especially in the public sector is at the stage of personnel management (Yeganeh, 2008). In addition, in a research on the factors affecting the transition of HRM from West to Iran, Namazi & Roshan have claimed that HRM in Iran is not considered as strategic task and is more likely a personnel approach to fulfill administrative tasks, which this latter statement supports Tayeb's opinion. They believe that the presence of international companies in the recent years in Iran has outlined the significance of HRM as a strategic concept evermore in domestic companies (Namazi & Roshan, 2003). They concluded that there are major differences between HRM between West and Iran from the two aspects of theory and practice which is probably due to different cultural and social indicators and thus, the transition of management science, especially the concepts and fundamentals of HRM; from the West to Iran has been considerably slow.

This survey seeks to find out whether HR management has experienced any significant change in Iranian companies, and if so, to see whether this change has a strategic form. The originality of this survey is that in contrast to other studies which have assessed HRM by its applications and tasks, this study develops a conceptual model which leads to the accomplishment of research goal.

Present paper aims to investigate if HRM knowledge has effectively transferred to Iranian industries in practice. In other words if Iranian pioneer and successful industries have been able to provide their organizations with sustainable competitive advantages by carrying out HRM philosophy developed in Western countries.

With the entrance to the third millennium, experts become more assent that competitive advantages of every organization is most related to the quality of its HRM. Recently, most agree that SHRM can strengthen the organizations to stand present complicated environment. It has been claimed that by employing the new philosophy and scientific systems, and thus via policies and effective measures, SHRM can manage human resources of the organization, resulted to gain competitive advantages by employee effort and performance.

In the past, HRM emphasized on special employment functions of organizations and therefore it has been called the traditional HRM [4]. Since then, much has been done and now, this term carries the strategic prefix. Schuler & Jackson (1987) divide the evolution of SHRM into two phases; First, the transition of personnel management to traditional human resources management; and second moving from HRM to SHRM (Dyer & Holder, 1998; Wright & McMahan, 1992).

While affirming that the prevalent personnel management was entirely different from HRM and that they have different presumptions, Guest (1991, 1989 a, 1989 b) presents a coherent theoretical model for HRM and claims that by establishing the appropriate infrastructure the prerequisites for the integration of HRM policies and functionalities with organizational strategies will become obtainable and this will result into improved of

staff commitment, quality and the flexibility of human resources and therefore organizational effectiveness and success (Fisscher et al, 1992; Fombrun & Tichy, 1982).

Recently in the West, HRM has been considered as a strategic approach that benefits from HRM competitive advantage. The results from other researches show that organizations that have focused on SHRM, show better performance in compare to other organizations. Research all corroborate that adopting and implementing SHRM approach has enabled organizations to gain competitive advantages and resulted into higher performance and value making and it has supported the completion of quality projects (Armstrong, 2006; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Barney, 1991). Despite the profound evolutions in the approach and philosophy of HRM in the West, yet in Iran HRM has not been adopted much and it still persists on the traditional tasks of personnel management (Yeganeh & Sue, 2008: 216). In the years after the Islamic revolution, institutions such as the Council of Cultural Revolution, Cultural Researches Bureau, and teachers of this field reviewed the content of management courses in universities in according to the most eminent references used in famous universities worldwide. These efforts and also the establishment of Master and Doctorate programs fill in the present theoretical gap. Thus, we must disclose that HRM knowledge has been theoretically transferred into academic individuals. However, there is a gap between theory and practice in the area of HRM due to cultural and social issues and there is a lack of surveys to unveil the present state of HRM in pioneer organizations in Iran. Therefore, considering the new HRM philosophy, its strategic approach and concentration of major organizations on this subject in developed countries; recognizing the position and status of HRM emerging economies like Iran is very important.

Frequently, researches in the area of HRM take place with the objective to evaluate the present condition and policies and HRM measures (Budhwar, 2000). Such research have usually used questionnaires to assess the policies and measures of HRM from the viewpoint of the senior managers, personnel specialists, functional managers, and especially trade union managers whose job credits depend on their communication and continuous work with human resources under their supervision (Casio, 1998; Barney, 1991). According to Guest (1991, 1998), an effective way to evaluate the current state of HRM in any organization is to set boundaries to divide the strategies, policies and measures of HRM into four different categories: 1) strategic integration (vertical-horizontal), 2) employee commitment, 3) work force flexibility, and 4) work force quality. Accordingly, in this research, , in the first place a theoretical model is presented and then the assumptions of the essay based on this model are stated. The main goal of this research is to evaluate whether HRM in pioneer Iranian industries has a strategic position or not. Thus, in case there is not any strategic approach to HRM, potential deviations will be identified and appropriate solutions should be suggested.

The significance of this subject is the importance of SHRM issues on one hand, and the role SHRM plays in training human resources of a country, on the other.

This research strives to fill in the gap between theory and practice in HRM in Iranian organizations. Former research have not addressed this issue; while human resources issues in Iranian industries are vital (Mirsepasi, 2003) and very important, carrying out such a study is a positive step towards other scientific surveys in Iran and is the missing loop in the international science and to enhancing the HRM knowledge yet

another step. In addition, the results of this research can be considered a beneficial prototype for improving future researches in this field of study and its results may affect the organizations to review their theoretical foundations and executive systems of HRM and finally, lead to choose strategies that produce sustainable competitive advantages.

#### **Literature review**

In the theoretical framework of the article, below researches (Table 1) have been accurately evaluated from year 1990 to 2010 and from the conclusion section of the papers, the applied variables have been assessed and presented in the model given in Figure 1. The main part of this article is the model designed and its assessment. In this article a conceptual framework has been presented by studying all the fundamental theoretical work previously done on SHRM. This framework identifies and emphasizes the characteristics of SHRM, also the transition of personnel management to SHRM has been illustrated, and the factors affecting each stage of SHRM formation have been discussed. The suggested framework is presented in Figure 1 based on other previous models and research and also creativity of the researchers.

#### **Summary of the Theoretical Foundations**

Based on the human capitals perspective, employees are individual knowledge resources and the key to competitive advantage throughout the organization. According to Wright and Mc Mahan (1992), the Resources Based View is essential to SHRM. This theory has led scientific surveys to focus on the internal capital of the organization (core capitals) to achieve competitive advantages. This theory affirms that the internal resources of the organization are valuable, rare, unique, and cannot be replaced by other resources (Barney, 1991). The resource based theory is the theoretical basis of most SHRM researches. Researches have shown that SHRM can turn into competitive advantage and elevate the organizational effectiveness (Wright and McMahan, 1992).

Different factors determine the degree to which HRM can be considered strategic. Firstly, according to Welbourne and Cyr (1999), human resources experts play an important role in the strategic planning for, they design HR policies and procedures compatible with the business strategy; thus, they directly affect the development of organizations. In addition, they provide resources to carry out HR activities. Secondly, HRM must be designed compatible with the human resources system (internal integration) and also with the strategic and operational objectives (external integration). This compatibility must lead to a close relationship between human resources activities and other organizational activities. Last but not least, certain conditions including formal HRM planning and the degree to which line managers contribute in HR activities is yet another factor affecting the implementation of SHRM (Huang, 1998). All this is consistent with Guest's theory of HRM. Guest (1991) states that strategic coherence – sometimes named adaptation – is the main focus of HRM. He divides strategic coherence into three different occurrences: first, the relationship between business strategy and HRM; second, the degree to which various personnel policies and procedures coherently emphasize one common goal; third, the acceptance of these policies and procedures by the line managers. considering overall agreement over the main characteristics of strategic human resources management, its strategic properties are: the degree to which HR managers participate in organizational major decision making, play the role of business partner by providing ideas and suggestions related to human resources issues at the directors board, participate in designing and administrating the

organization strategy, and directly affect the decision making at the directors board, and promote HR unit's policies. Also the degree to which line managers accept the underlying values of human resources managers, the degree to which line managers support HR policies activities, and also take relative responsibilities.

Anyway, the lack of a theoretical framework to show these relationships has always been controversial and has brought about experts' criticism. However, a consistent well-formed theoretical framework can be obtained by understanding the process in which SHRM contributes in creating value and enhancing the organizational effectiveness.

In order to answer such a demand, many scholars consider the strategic integration of HRM, as an effective factor to achieve SHRM. And consider it as a thorough integration of HRM with business strategies, the consistency of HRM policies, and also bringing together HRM and line management activities (Schuler and Jackson, 1992; Beer, et al. 1985; Tichy, et al, 1982; Devanna, et al, 1984; Dyer, et al, 1988; Guest, 1987, 1989).

#### **Determining a Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework of this article has been defined by emphasizing the concept of strategy integration and on the basis of theoretical foundations, and adjustment of SHRM models including Schuler and Jackson (1987, 1992, 1999, 2000, 2001), Guest (1987, 1989, 19991), Way and Jackson (2005) and Sheehan (2005) models which all have correspondingly affected the transition from traditional personnel management to SHRM either directly or indirectly. In this framework, various factors or variables are involved in choosing a strategic approach to HRM, beginning from the stage of change process - which is the influence of organizational strategy on HRM policies and strategies – to the later stages of designing the strategies and carrying out HRM policies and obtaining the desired results. Here, the dominant characteristic of shifting from personnel management to SHRM is known to be the strategic compatibility or integration which has been accepted by many contemporary experts. The theoretical framework of this article which has been formed according to the above theories (Figure 1) has five separate sections which are: organizational strategies, prerequisites, the organizational responses as independent variables, adjusting variables, and the expected results or the consequences of strategic human resources as dependent variables. More details on these sections of the framework will follow.

#### **Business Strategies**

Tichy and associates (1982) believe there are three factors essential to effective performance of the organizations to perform effectively:

1. The organizational goals and strategies which authenticate the organizations existence and justify the utilization of means such as capitals, rare material, information, and human resources, in order to achieve goals.
2. Organizational structure which provides a network of formal relations, clarifies employee's tasks and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals and strategies.
3. HRM which enables the optimum utilization of human resources for performing tasks by providing the required resources and supervising their performance.

The first step in the theoretical framework in this investigation is the cognition of various aspects and the essence of these strategies (Way and Johnson, 2005; Tichy, 1982). Thus, the first step to analyze the HRM status in any organization is to identify its strategies. Organizational strategies have been classified in different ways from which Porter (1985) typology

is more widely accepted. Schuler and Jackson (1987; 1999) have developed some methods for designing the human resources strategy consistent with three strategies (reducing costs, concentration, and differentiation) by the inspiration of Porter's model.

The Porter typology has been utilized in designing HRM processes as well as strategic management. For instance, Guest (1997) has based his first HRM model components on Porter typology including three strategies: differentiation (innovation), focus (quality), cost (low cost) strategy. Huang (2001) While studying the relationship between business strategy and HRM, has followed Porter (1980), Schuler and also Jackson (1987) typology to recognize organizational strategy based on low cost, quality increase, and innovation. While studying the relation between HRM and organizational performance orientation, (Panayotopoulou, & Papalexandris, 2004) have also used Porter (1980, 1985) typology including differentiation, cost leadership, and focus to determine the organization strategies. Thus, due to the popularity of the Porter typology, it has been considered the basis of the strategy recognition approach for the theoretical framework of this study.

#### **Essentials and prerequisites**

It is notable that taking a strategic approach to HRM entails recognizing the importance of human resources, and appreciating the strategic role of these resources by top managers. In other words, the way senior managers acknowledge human resources and their significance in implementing organizational strategies, provides intellectual background necessary to the adoption, design, and implementation of SHRM. Therefore, acknowledging the role and importance of human resources to achieve organization goals has some requirements and prerequisites which have been projected in the theoretical framework of this survey. These prerequisites are: paying attention to human resources as the most significant resource towards achieving the organization roles, understanding the urgency of applying the principles of SHRM to obtain competitive advantage.

These prerequisites suggest the shift from traditional paradigm to the new paradigm of HRM. Which provide necessary intellectual backgrounds for the management commitment to the design and performance of strategies and policies of SHRM. The fundamental concept of SHRM is based on the assumption that human resources strategy supports the strategy implementation of the organization and also is affected by them. According to the RBV backing this new paradigm, investing on employees leads to value increase. As Barney (1991) asserts, the resource based strategies can develop the strategic capability and thus, the strategic goal will be: "to create organizations with higher levels of knowledge which are more flexible than rivals" (Boxall, 1996). Therefore, Resource Based strategies reinforce human and spiritual capital. Thus the realization of business strategies and producing competitive advantage require an intellectual environment in which the strategic approach to HRM is valued (Sheehan, 2005). This implies that the human resources must be considered as the basis for organizational success and gaining competitive advantage, therefore they must be treated as a significant strategic resource. If such assumptions are made, the performance of human resources and the obtained results will be considered the output of SHRM. Therefore, before designing and implementing HRM strategies some prerequisites must be met entail concentrating on the strategic approach to HRM.

#### **Organizational Responses**

In response the prerequisites, organizations will take strategic approaches to their HRM. It is understood from the SHRM concept that human resources strategies must be integrated with the organization strategy. The strategic approach to HRM was introduced at the mid 1980s and its concept was based on the strategic role of human resources in the realization of organizational strategies. This approach points out the integration of human resources strategy with the organization strategy and its main motivation is to practically obtain competitive advantage by the means of human resources (Guest, 1987, 1989, 1991). Miller (1989) believes that in order to provide such integration, the management activities in the human resources division must be coordinated with the decisions made by other active divisions. The main purpose of SHRM is to create strategic capacity and to make sure the organization has skilled and committed employees, motivated to produce sustainable competitive advantage throughout the organization. Fombrun et al (1984) believe the main function of management is to balance the formal structure and the human resources system such that strategies are implemented. Walker (1992) has indicated that human resources strategies are functional strategies like financial strategies, marketing, production, or information technology strategies. SHRM is a means by which business strategies are operated.

Guest (1989) suggests that SHRM mainly is primarily related to integration and cohesion, he believes that integration of the integration of HR strategies to business strategy is the key goal of SHRM. Tyson and Wicher (1994) believe that human resources strategies can be studied only from the business strategy perspective. Other experts consider integrating business strategies with human resources strategies as an obvious characteristic of SHRM (Armstrong, 2006). Story (1993) states that, until the corporate level strategies are not defined, coherence is meaningless. The idea of integration and coherence, sometimes called the compatibility model, is the main concept of SHRM. Strategy integration is required for the consistency of human resources strategy with the organizational strategies whereas these two strategies are supplements.

Successful implementation of strategy depends on vertical and horizontal integration, affirming that what forms SHRM, is the organization strategies. Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) define vertical or external integration as the compatibility of human resources strategies with business strategies. They believe when the integration aims the connection of human resources strategies and organizational strategies, it can be considered as vertical integration. Tyson and Wicher (1994) too, deem that human resources strategies can only be studied from the perspective of business strategies.

In conclusion, we can recite Guest's (1991) statement that the integration of human resources strategies with business strategies is the key goal to SHRM. As evaluating the status of HRM in any organization, entails understanding the designing process of human resources strategies at one end and the way these strategies and policies are implemented at other end; thus, in theoretical framework of this study, the main issue is to evaluate the methods of designing HR strategies and their implementation throughout the organization. These two domains are described as follow:

#### **a) Designing HR strategies**

The strategic integration ideally, attempts to balance the soft and hard aspects of HRM. Accordingly, in the theoretical framework of this paper, two important factors have been considered in designing HR strategies which follow:

1. The participation of human resources managers in strategic decision making processes
2. Increased responsibilities of line managers into human resources activities

These two factors provide general measures to evaluate the design method of human resources strategies and policies. These measures can be used to determine the degree to which HRM is approached strategically in the organization.

#### **b) Implementing Human Resources Strategies and Policies**

The next step in the theoretical is to determine how the HRM is implemented throughout the organization. As Heijltjes (2000) asserts, different aspects of human resources management such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, payment, and rewards must be integrated efficiently. Hendry and Pettigrew (1990) have also underscored the concept of strategic integration and asserted that integration can be achieved when a set of methods and policies of human resources are designed and implemented coherently; so that the organization strategies can lead to the successfully designating resources to organization needs, performance improvement, and high quality. Integration and coherence of the HR management as a whole, entails internal coordination or horizontal integration of the components of the HR system (Way and Johnson, 2005; Wright and Snell, 1998; Schuler and Jackson, 1987). Two factors can measure the degree to which HR system enjoys internal integration:

1. increasing the integral coherence of HR components
2. Increasing the coordination of policies and activities of HRM in the domains of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, payment, and rewards.

These two factors provide indicators to determine the degree of horizontal integration between HR system components and related policies.

#### **Adjusting Variables**

Inspiring from Sheehan (2005) model, in this survey four adjusting variables have been introduced affecting the relationship between dependent and independent variables. These adjusting variables are consisted of two groups; firstly, the variables highlighting the role and significance of human resources managers, and secondly, variables indicating the commitment of senior managers and the role of organizational culture.

Here the adjusting variables affect the relationship between the dependent and independent variables; meaning this third set of variables moderate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Significantly, the factors related to the significance and the roles of HRM are:

- a) The commitment of human resources managers to strategic HR innovation
- b) The commitment of human resources managers to business values
- c) Business awareness of HR managers

The considered factors related to senior manager's commitment are:

- a) The commitment of senior management to human resources innovations
- b) The commitment of organizational culture to human resources innovations

The commitment of the senior management to HRM in the realization of the expected results of HRM is considered an effective motivation (Sheehan, 2003). Scholars (Beer and Spector, 1985; Dyer and Holder, 1988) assert that senior management is the most powerful force to ensure the realization

of organizational objectives. Other experts have mentioned direct access to senior managers via formal reporting to be very important (Golden and Ramanujam, 1985; Lawler, 1995; Nininger, 1980). Recent scholars (Othman and Poon, 2000; Budhwar, 2000), are in agreement that the orientation of senior management is a significant factor to HRM accomplishment. Budhwar (2000) underscores that without the support of senior management, HRM will fail in the first stage of the strategic decision process. Recent research have emphasized the role of senior management and affirm that having a direct reporting connection and even a proper, informal working relationship between HR and senior manager, is not enough to support the innovation of human resources managers. Senior management not committed to HRM values and no cultural support to HRM initiative and the lack of organizational structure to deploy HRM in a good position; reveals that the senior management is not supporting the HRM initiatives.

#### **Expected Outcome**

As depicted in Figure 1, based on the theoretical framework of this study, expected outcomes are considered dependent variables. Obviously, according to this theoretical framework and the offered stages, if the required intellectual environment (prerequisites) for the realization of organization strategies leads to strategically approaching HRM (organization responses) and the strategies and policies of HRM are properly integrated with business strategies and also adjusting variables facilitate the process, one can expect that the desired results i.e. vertical and, horizontal coherence, and the integration of human resources responsibilities with line manager activities, will be obtained. Furthermore, as Guest (1989) asserts, SHRM follows specific goals which their realization determines the SHRM status in the organization. Guest introduces these goals as the employee commitment, flexibility of work force, and the quality of the work force.

Also in the Harvard model, Beer et al (1984) have determined commitment, competence, compatibility, and cost effectiveness as the desired outcome of SHRM goals; underscoring the aspects mentioned by Guest (1991). The only difference is, Guest (1991) does not consider the cost effectiveness since it is not a consequence of human resources. Therefore, the expected outcome of present model, following Guest (1991) model, are consisted of commitment, quality and flexibility of work force together with the vertical coherence and horizontal coherence presented in Sheehan (2005) model. The five above mentioned indicators make possible the evaluation of the strategic aspect of the HRM. For instance, in order to ensure an organization enjoys strategic coherence, integration of business strategies with human resources strategies can be examined.

#### **Research Assumptions**

The model presented in this paper, approaches SHRM as an organizational response to the strategic prerequisites which has been considered the independent variable, therefore the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and also the effect of adjusting variables on this relationship must be investigated in regard to the research assumptions. These assumptions have been articulated based on the fundamental literature and theoretical research presented in Table 1; whereas in recent surveys.

**The main Assumption:** There is a positive relationship between characteristics of SHRM and the strategic orientation and expected outcomes.

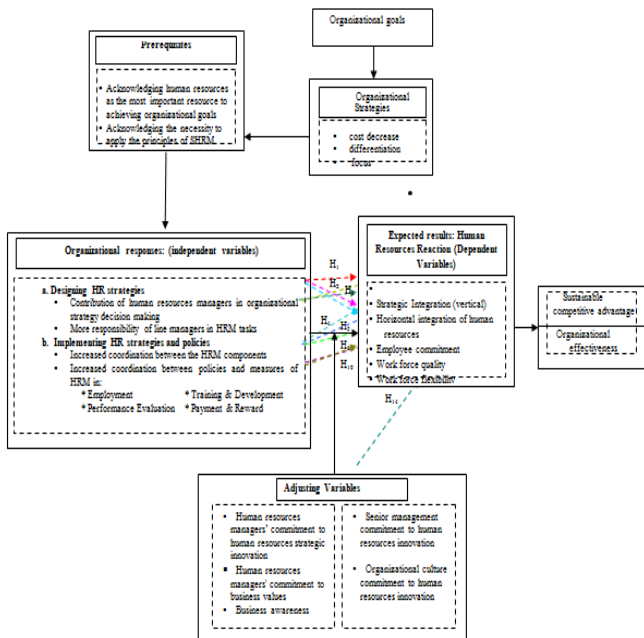


Figure 1. The Theoretical Framework of the study

**Hypotheses:**

1. There is a positive relationship between the participation of human resources management in organizational decision making and the strategic integration (vertical).
2. There is a positive relationship between line managers' responsibilities in HRM activities and the strategic integration (vertical).
3. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM system components and the horizontal integration.
4. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM policies and activities and the horizontal integration.
5. There is a positive relationship between the participation of human resources managers in organizational strategic decision making, and employee's commitment.
6. There is a positive relationship between the participation of human resources managers in organizational strategic decision making, and work force flexibility.
7. There is a positive relationship between the participation of human resources managers in organizational strategic decision making and work force quality.
8. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM system components and employee commitment.
9. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM system components and work force flexibility.
10. Increasing in coordination of HRM system components has a positive effect on work force quality.
11. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM policies and activities, and employee commitment.
12. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM policies and activities, and work force flexibility.
13. There is a positive relationship between the coordination of HRM policies and activities and work force quality.
14. The variables of: senior management commitment to human innovation, organizational culture commitment to human innovation, human resources managers commitment to strategic human resources innovation, human resources manager commitment to business values all have an adjusting effect on organizational responses in regard to the expected results.

**Research Method**

The present research is a field study aiming to discover the relationship between various characteristics that define the HRM status.

The sample consists of organizations, pioneer in using HRM principles and methods in the oil, steel, and petrochemical industry which have enhanced the development and transition of this profession in Iranian industries. The exploratory investigation unveils that the oil, steel, and petrochemical industries have been pioneer in HRM, because, by holding the largest number of skilled human resources; they are expected to have a strategic approach to HRM in order to overcome the current challenges of management. The selected organizations active in these three industries are presented in Table 2. The questionnaire was distributed on September 2009 and collected on March 2009. The respondents were senior managers, the strategic committee members, board of directors, middle managers, line managers, and personnel specialists.

Sample size was calculated through below formula:

$$n = \frac{N\rho(1-\rho)Z_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2}{d^2(N-1) + \rho(1-\rho)Z_{\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2}$$

$Z = 0/025 = 2$

$\rho = 0/5$

least sample volume required

total volume	$N = 1280$	} $n = 712$
accuracy	$d = \%25$	
assurance	$c = 0/95 \rightarrow Z_{\%25} = 2$	

Random cluster sampling method was applied to select the sample.

Data was drawn from 619 returned out of 712 distributed questionnaires.

In order to assure the questionnaire validity, face validity has been used such that after the questionnaire was developed, it was offered to 10 university professors (professional in HRM), 7 management PhD students, and 10 human resources specialists to obtain their suggestions and comments. 70 questions were designed which after applying the experts reviews and comments, they were decreased to 56 ones. The reliability of the research was scored 89%, using Cronbach's Alfa formula.

**Findings**

The data analysis results are presented in the following table (Table 4). Table 3 shows the present HRM status in Iranian companies. All averages are greater than 3 and the Standard Deviations are almost close to each other; which proves the reliability of the model. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the present status of HRM in Iranian pioneer industries is moving towards SHRM but this approach is neither complete nor general.

**Evaluating the hypothesis**

The Pierson Correlation hypothesis test shows that the main hypothesis and its 14 subsidiaries are all approved which is illustrated in Table 4.

At the level of  $P < 0.001$  there is a positive and meaningful relation

**The Fitness Test for the Theoretical Framework of the Study by LISREL software**

The fitness of the model designed for this study has been evaluated by the path analysis model and the LISREL software. Path analysis tests the hidden processes and their related significance in effectiveness by moving through various paths.

**Table 1. The most important researches on SHRM**

No.	Title	Results	Researchers	Year
1	The meaning of work, employment affairs, and SHRM	The strategic relation between human resources and organizational strategy	Itzhak & Meshoulam	2010
2	Human Resources Strategic Management: course development	In this research SHRM has been studied in seven formats based on its emersion.	Lengnick-Hall et al	2009
3	Practical comparative study of ten steel companies in Europe	The most important surveys that have studied steel companies in the 90's focus on three aspects: 1. change background 2. Implementation and change process 3. Strategies	Hertog et al.	2009
4	Human resources credit system: the strategic management approach to human resources based on ranking	The principles, policies, plans, measures of human resources have been generally investigated.	Arthur and Boyles	2007
5	The position of HRM in the governmental universities of Bangladesh	Investigating the tasks of HRM and solutions to their better execution	Roknuzzaman	2006
6	HRM and performance: neural network analysis	The effect of HRM in the performance of the organization and the usage of the Kohon plan to acknowledge HRM measures.	Stavrou et al.	2006
7	Beyond HRM in cooperation	Investigation of social capitals based on cooperation and increased organizational performance in the area of HRM	Davis	2006
8	HRM practices in Eritrea: challenges and futurism	HRM practices are controlled by local conditions and actions.	Ghebrejorgis and Karsten	2006
9	Romanian managers and HRM	After the period of Communist, HRM turned professional in the Romanian management but still faced challenges.	Constantin et al.	2006
10	Coordination of strategic HRM with environmental-individual compatibility	Refers to the vertical relation between SHRM with the strategy from the trade aspect, the horizontal relation between HRM tasks in the organization, and the application of three types of compatibility and harmony between environment-individual in the organization.	Werbel and Demaire	2005
11	HRM, corporate governance, organization performance and structure in Korea: A comparative analysis between Japan, Korea, and America	First, Korean companies followed the Japanese HRM system but after the crisis they complied with the American system.	Cho	2005
12	HRM and performance in the hotel industry of Barbados	The effects of HRM on the hotel industry have been investigated and it has been shown that applying better measures results into better compatibility.	Alleyne et al.	2005
13	Organizational Learning in the Indian organizations: a SHRM Perspective	There is a positive relationship between organizational learning and SHRM and sustainable competitive advantage.	Khandekarand Sharma	2005
14	The relation between HRM and organizational performance, a contingency approach	The relation between the production market strategy and SHRM affects the organizational performance and follows a contingency approach.	Change and Huang	2005
15	The fundamental role of strategy in teaching SHRM	Strategy is considered a significant indicator in SHRM.	Chadwick	2005
16	SHRM and performance information across borders	Performance information is considered a SHRM measure.	Pakarinen	2004
17	SHRM and a resource-based approach: Evidence from production industries of Britannia	Emphasized the integration of HRM with the organization's strategy and discusses the relationship between SHRM and staff affairs.	Karami et al.	2004
18	The relationship between the orientation of human resources and the organizational performance	Investigates the relationship between HRM and the performance of Greek organizations with a universal approach. HRM has a significant effect on growth and innovation indicators.	Panayotooubu and Papalexandris	2004
19	A business process-approach to HRM	HRM has been studies from the business perspective. Formal system engineering approach bases on modeling HRM from the business process perspective has been investigated.	Cakar et al	2003
20	SHRM: Empowerments and limitations in national health service	Investigates the inhibiting factors of HRM in the British government.	Truss	2003
21	HRM in Indonesia	The role of HRM in forming the future of organizations, description of HRM in Indonesia considering the environmental backgrounds.	Benningon and Habir	2003
22	A Model for SHRM Integration	The factors effecting the integration of SHRM have been evaluated. In this model the need for applying SHRM, organizational responsiveness, the expected results, and the moderating factors have been investigated.	Sheehan	2003

23	Studying Strategic Human Resources issued in the Asian environment	By applying a quantitative method, SHRM has been investigated in five areas.	Khatri and Budhwar	2002
24	The effect of cultural and HRM measures on Organizational Performance	The effect of culture and HRM performance on the organization's performance has been investigated.	Chew and Sharma	2002
25	SHRM in Herman Miler's Corporation	The SHRM in this company includes: 1. Empowering the staff 2. Creating employee commitment 3. Improving the professional capability	Mccowan et al.	1999
26	SHRM in Losent	The main considerations include: 1. Human resources operational excellence 2. Performance management and compensation service 3. Introducing an operating style and culture in the organization	Artis and et al	1999
27	SHRM in Praxir	The infrastructures of HRM include: 1. Developing performance management competency and 2. System performance based on teamwork	Harris et al.	1999
28	SHRM in Quantum	The infrastructure of human resources systems include: values, mission, and the vision of production development base on teamwork, structured negotiation processes based on behavior, and comprehensive performance management.	Barber et al.	1999
29	SHRM in Praxir	The infrastructures of HRM include: 1. Developing performance management competency 2. System performance based on teamwork; which has been evaluated at four levels: corporate, business unit, multitask teams in business units, project teams based on special creativity	Harris et al.	1999
30	SHRM in Sireza	HRM infrastructure include: 1. Planning and development with organizational goals and mission 2. Training staff and development via the Sireza university 3. Performance management and stimulating compensation service system 4. employing validating system	Kirn et al.	1999
31	SHRM in five corporations	Fundamentals of added value of human resources and employers and its role to producing competitive advantage for the organization, performance advancement, and acknowledging employees as human resources of the organization are discussed.	Becker and Huseild	1999
32	SHRM, market orientation, and organizational performance	The direct relationship between market orientation and performance and the relation between SHRM and performance and the role of market orientation as a moderator	Harris and ogbonna	1999
33	SHRM in Australia: Human Costs	Considering the relationship between HRM with strategic planning and changing the culture to focus on human resources hardware, towards paying more attention to the software of human resources	Kaye	1999
34	The Relationship between business and SHRM and its effects	Merging business and HRM strategies from the contingency theory perspective	Huang	1999
35	Investigating the Effects of HRM measures and strategic decisions relation	Integrating human resources tasks with strategic decision making and evaluating the effects of this integration.	Bennett et al.	1998
36	How to become a business partner: the role of human resources in obtaining competitive advantage	Refers to the VRIO framework in regard to sustainable competitive advantage.	Barney and Wright	1998
37	Strategy, key competencies, participation of human resources in effectiveness and performance	High participation of human resources in the organizational strategy is a key to human resources effectiveness and competency.	Wright et al.	1998
38	HRM: A multi-analytical Analysis	The relationship between human resources and organizational strategy, the effect of establishing SHRM on organizational effectiveness	Kamoche	1991
39	Optimizing the Size (appropriateness): The challenge for SHRM in the 90's	Appropriateness needs a strategic plan which has both advantages and disadvantages.	Zeffane and Mayo	1990

**Table 2. The selected organization from the pioneer industries studied**

No.	Organization Name	Total No. of Subjects	No. of questionnaires distributed based on the randomly stratified method	Percentage of total population size	Returned questionnaires
1	Tehran Oil Company, Human Resources Planning, Researched, and Study Section	30	17	23%	15
2	Central Iran Oil Company	27	15	21%	13
3	Ministry of Petroleum/NIOC,	25	14	2%	11



	Deputy of human resources development and management				
4	Iranian Offshore Oil Company/Employee Affairs and Human Resources Planning	42	23	32%	20
5	National Iranian Drilling Company / Human Resources Management	22	12	17%	10
6	National Iranian Gas Co. / Director of Human Resources Development	20	11	16%	9
7	National Oil Terminals Co. / Human Resources Manager	33	19	26%	14
8	National Oil Products Distribution Co. / Managing Director of Administrative Planning	27	14	2%	13
9	NIOC South / Administrative Management	22	12	17%	9
10	Central Iranian Oil Co. / Human Resources Management	25	14	2%	11
11	National Petrochemical Industry Co. / Human Resources Development	27	15	21%	14
12	Tehran Oil Companies / Human Resource Management	30	16	23%	13
13	Petrochemical Commercial Co. / Personnel Affairs	31	17	24%	14
14	Abadan Oil Refining Co. / Personnel Affairs	29	16	22%	13
15	Kermanshah Oil Refining Co.	27	15	21%	12
16	Tehran Oil Refining Co.	42	23	32%	20
17	Isfahan Oil Refining Co.	33	19	26%	15
18	Shiraz Oil Refining Co.	35	20	27%	20
19	Tabriz Oil Refining Co.	32	18	25%	16
20	Isfahan Steel Co. / Vice President of Human Resources and Social Affairs	35	20	27%	18
21	Mobarakeh Steel Complex	38	21	29%	15
22	Khoozestan Steel	35	20	27%	20
23	Abadan Petrochemical	29	16	23%	27
24	Imam Port Petrochemical	25	14	24%	13
25	Isfahan Petrochemical	24	14	19%	13
26	Pars Petrochemical	30	16	23%	15
27	Technical and Repair Services of South Pars	40	23	31%	20
28	Administrative of South Zagros Oil & Gas Company	32	18	25%	17
29	Gheshm (Sorkhoon)	22	12	17%	11
30	Bandar Abbass Oil Refining Co.	25	14	2%	10
31	Aria Sasol	20	11	16%	10
32	Aghajari Oil & Gas Co.	27	15	21%	14
33	Tabriz Petrochemical	25	14	2%	12
34	Iranian Chemical Industry	29	16	23%	12
35	National Oil Refining and Distribution of Isfahan Province	37	21	29%	18
36	Gachsaran Oil & Gas	27	15	21%	13
37	Miankooh Gas	20	11	16%	7
38	Iranian Oil Terminals	22	12	17%	10
39	KohGilooyeh & Boyer Ahmad	20	11	16%	7
40	Yazd Steel	25	14	2%	11
41	Zone 2 Iranian Gas Operations	35	20	27%	16
42	Khark petrochemical	21	11	16%	11
43	Parsian Gas Refining Co.	25	14	2%	12
44	Zone 6 Gas	26	14	2%	12
45	Tehran Petrochemical Co.	27	15	21%	12
	TOTAL	1280	712	%100	619

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the variables**

Main variables	Secondary variables	Count	Least	Most	Average	Standard Deviation
Necessities	Acknowledging human resources	619	1	7	3/13	1/20
	Acknowledging the importance of applying management principles	619	1	7	3/11	1/20
Strategy planning	Participation of human resources managers in decision making	619	1	7	3/06	1/01
	Improving line management responsibility	619	1	7	3/38	1/15
Strategy execution	Increased coordination between system components	619	1	7	3/61	1/33
	Increased coordination between policies	619	1	7	3/55	1/25
Adjusting Variables	Senior management's commitment to human resources innovation	619	1	7	3/20	1/19
	Organizational culture's commitment to human resources innovation	619	1	7	3/52	1/20
	Human resources managers' commitment to strategic human resources innovation	619	1	7	3/48	1/29
	Human resources managers' commitment to business values	619	1	7	3/43	1/28
	Business acumen	619	1	7	3/58	1/30
Expected results	Strategic integration (vertical)	619	1	7	3/57	1/18
	Horizontal integration	619	1	7	3/72	1/34
	Employee commitment	619	1	7	3/65	1/38
	Work force quality	619	1	7	3/43	1/20
	Flexibility	619	1	7	3/59	1/18
Competitive advantage and effectiveness	Competitive advantage	619	1	7	3/18	1/31
	Effectiveness	619	1	7	3/35	1/41

**Table 4. Summary of the Pierson correlation test results**

Hypotheses No.	Independent Variable	Correlation coefficient	Meaningful level	Count	dependent Variable
1	Vertical Integration	0.608	0.0001	619	Increased management participation
2	Vertical Integration	0.626	0.0001	619	Increased responsibility
3	Component coordination	0.757	0.0001	619	Horizontal integration
4	Policy coordination	0.788	0.0001	619	Horizontal integration
5	Management Commitment	0.750	0.0001	619	Management participation
	Organizational Culture Commitment	0.714			
	Human Resources Commitment	0.662			
	Commitment to Values	0.618			
6	Management Participation	0.611	0.0001	619	Flexibility
7	Management Participation	0.686	0.0001	619	Quality
8	Component Coordination	0.719	0.0001	619	Commitment
9	Component Coordination	0.665	0.0001	619	Flexibility
10	Component Coordination	0.665	0.0001	619	Quality
11	Policy coordination	0.778	0.0001	619	Commitment
12	Policy coordination	0.704	0.0001	619	Flexibility
13	Policy coordination	0.709	0.0001	619	Quality
14	Adjusting Variables	0.298	0.0001	619	Human resources reaction

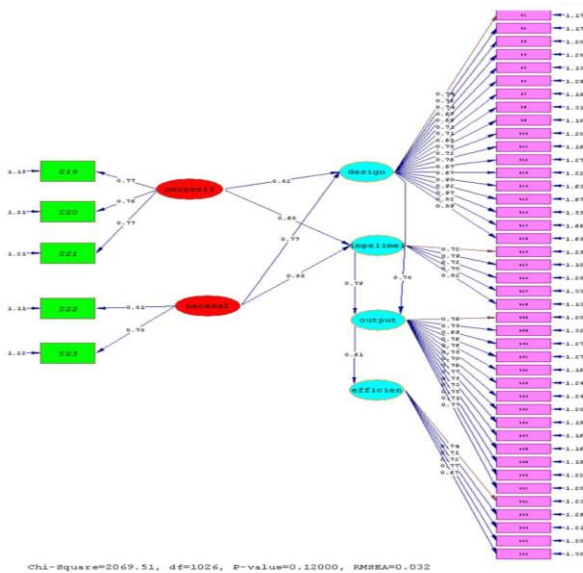
This test clarifies whether the defined model is applicable or not? And also shows the necessity to redesign a model to match the actual data and the direct and indirect effects. (In this model, *necessary* indicates the necessities, *design* is the design, *implement* is related to the execution section, *output* refers to the dependent variables, and *efficiency* refers to the effectiveness and competitive advantage.)

The fitness conditions are as follows:

1. The chi-square of the model is low
2. The chi-square to degree of freedom (DF) ratio is equal less than 3.  $\chi^2/df/3$
3. Root mean square error (RMSEA) is smaller than 0.08
4. Goodness of the fit index (GFI) is greater than 90%. CFI/0.9
5. The adjusted goodness of the fit index (AGFI) is greater than 90%.
6. Its P-value is greater than 0.05
7. PGFI>0.5
8. PNFI>0.5

According to the fitness test, the chi-square is 2.017, GFI is 0.92, CFI is 0.88, RMSEA is 0.032, AGFI is 0.91, P-value is 0.12, PGFI is 0.84, and PNFI is 0.86. As a result, this shows that the fitness was very desirable (presented in Figure 2).

**Figure 2. The Fitting Model Test given by the LISREL software**



**Conclusion**

Recent research show that the approach to strategic HRM in the world pioneer organizations, lead to the appreciation of SHRM contribution in accomplishing organizational goals and gaining competitive advantage. Literature review on SHRM proves that the transition from traditional personnel management to the strategic approach to human resources is a complicated process which in each stage, various factors are involved.

Present paper aimed to investigate the status of SHRM in Iranian pioneer industries and for this reason, a conceptual model was applied. Findings support the suggested hypotheses; and prove that SHRM status in industries under investigation is in its half way and there is a need of grounding for its implementation. In order to eliminate the gap between the present and desired SHRM status, training, giving explanations to strategic executives and managers, bringing different views to agreement, highlighting HRM issues, reinforcing trust, establishing a payment and evaluation system, scientific evolution, enriching organizational culture ... can encourage the organization to apply SHRM at higher levels. Yet, it is worth mentioning that while pioneer industries are at such a state, one

can conclude that other industries are still at the stage of personnel management or the traditional HRM. Earlier studies (for instance Tayeb, Yeganeh, Namazi, ...), claiming that HRM’s position in Iran is still in the stage of personnel management but this study showed that some movements towards SHRM has been made. Weak research culture in the studied industries was one of the limitations of the study that by frequent visits and tolerance, this barrier was removed. Yet the essential problem of questionnaires may flaw the generalization of the study’s results, because only pioneer industries have been studied and other industries have been excluded from the research. Of course, it is suggested to future researchers to go further this study with the same subject on other organizations which will result to design a more generalized domestic SHRM model.

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