Changing HR Roles, HR Effectiveness and its impact on Organizational Effectiveness; A Study of Indian Healthcare Firms

Dr. Zuhaib Ahmad, Prof Israrul Haque, Mohd Shahfaraz Khan and Mr. Akbar Ali Khan

Abstract: Researches show that HRM is a bigger concern in India. In this regard changing HR role is being reported by many researchers. Human Resource [HR] is actively participating as a strategic business partner now as opposed to being merely a support function previously. As rightly noted, management of Human Resource [HR] practices is vital for strategic development of organizations. It has also been advocated that in order to align HR managers’ efforts with the overall contribution of their function, top management should evaluate HR’s effectiveness based on the role HR managers play. Thus, HR managers’ role and HR performance indicators i.e. HR effectiveness should produce a strategically focused workforce and drive superior strategy execution which will further enhance external Organizational effectiveness. Academically, some authors emphasize on the significance of HR roles and organizational effectiveness and financial performance in healthcare organizations. However, there have been very few researches reporting the changing role of Human Resource [HR] managers in the healthcare sector. Although it is a well believed notion that the role of HR managers has changed to add value to organizational effectiveness and achieve business goals. Therefore, this study tries to assess the impact of these changed HR roles and responsibilities on HR effectiveness and finally on financial performance of the healthcare firm. Ulrich’s [1997] original four roles model of HR roles is used in the context of Indian Healthcare Industry to capture this changed HR role and its impact on HR effectiveness and finally on financial performance of the company. The findings of this study also suggests that the role of the HR professionals has changed in number of ways. Furthermore, this study finds that this relationship is stronger when HR undertakes the Strategic HR role. The relationship between dependent and independent variables was measured using SEM in LISREL 8.80. The theory has been tested using survey data from 70 healthcare units. The results of empirical analyses support our claims partly.

Keywords: HR roles, HR Effectiveness, HRM, Strategic HR, Healthcare units, Hospital Administration, Organizational effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Country like India with its overgrown population faces many social challenges; one of the primary issues is providing quality and affordable healthcare to its own patients [26]. India rank 171st globally, in terms of public spending on healthcare and its doctor to patient ratio is 1:1,674, as compared to the World Health Organization’s average of 1:1,000. India has just 0.7 beds per 1,000 people, and 66 per cent of hospital beds are in urban areas whereas 69 per cent of the population resides in semi-urban and rural areas; therefore, the challenges to deliver affordable and quality healthcare are immense. Moreover, diverse health issues, inflating treatment costs, overburdening of hospitals and lack of a skilled and efficient healthcare workforce are some of the important issues of Indian healthcare sector. Within healthcare literature, both academics and policymakers have emphasized the importance of a skilled, knowledgeable and committed workforce for both the patient experience and healthcare outcomes [32]. All the above-mentioned factors make it significant to conduct a study which can measure HR effectiveness and the roles played by HR managers in these organizations. In India HR function has also undergone a significant change in the last two decades [15, 16, 17]. Due to this dynamic notion for the HR function, it has become an area of interest for researchers and practitioners around the globe. Consequently, HR manager’s role has also changed significantly and poses a dire need for deeper insight in this area to be thoroughly researched. [55] argued that if HR managers perform their roles well then it adds to HR effectiveness and become a source of competitive advantage for the firm. Based on this argument we try to find a link between HR roles and HR effectiveness. Therefore, two arguments are made in this paper. Firstly this study tries to capture the role change which has taken place in the past two decades in Indian healthcare Organizations. Secondly the study tries to explore a relationship between HR roles [HRR] and HR effectiveness [HRE] and organizational effectiveness [EOE] in Indian healthcare organizations. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First, we review the literature on Indian healthcare industry, further relevant theories focusing on changing HR roles and HR effectiveness were discussed, hypotheses were framed on the relationship between HR roles and effectiveness, and results were presented of an empirical analysis based on a sample from healthcare units. Discussion is presented in the final section.

2. Study Rationale

The evidence linking strategic HRM practices and organizational performance in healthcare is well established, e.g. West et al [58]. looked at staff appraisal, employee training and team working in acute hospitals in sixty one English hospital trusts and showed a strong association between these practices and overall patient mortality, though the study was not designed to determine whether this association was direct and causal or linked to some unmeasured variable. However there are few researches on HR roles and HR effectiveness in Indian Healthcare Industry. Only few examples were recorded, consequently opportunities to understand and develop the link between HR roles and HR effectiveness in Healthcare organizations are likely to be missed. Secondly, Indian healthcare sector is in great demand from around the world, India has become top destination for

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healthcare tourism this has created opportunities for HR issues to be associated with business strategies making effectiveness of the HR function more important than ever. HRM specialists and the HR departments are under severe pressure to bring about large-scale professionalized changes [48]. With this change the role of HR manager is also changing as Singh [44-45] revealed that HR role has gained currency in the last decade. As the significance of HR roles increased in India, there has been a spate of HR conferences and seminars on the role of HR. Although empirical studies on HRM in India relevant to the new environment have been conducted using a variety of methods and theories, However, these studies are few and far between [2, 47, 53]. Considering these gigantic changes sweeping the HR landscape in healthcare sector and paucity of research in this area makes it necessary to conduct such research and it would be a significant contribution to the field.

3. Research Objectives
In this study an attempt is made to capture HR role transformation and its effects on HR effectiveness. Secondly the conceptual model is proposed showing relationship between HR roles and HR effectiveness in Indian healthcare industry. In this regard an extensive literature review was made on all the study variables. The primary objective of the study is “To empirically examine the impact of HR managers’ changing role on HR effectiveness and organizational effectiveness in healthcare Organizations”.

4. Indian Healthcare Industry
Healthcare is now the world’s largest industry – with a value and cost three times greater than the banking sector. For at least four decades, annual growth in healthcare spending has exceeded GDP growth by an average of 2 percent in most developed countries. The healthcare market includes mainly five segments:

1) Hospitals [ Private and Public Sector]
2) Pharmaceutical companies
3) Diagnostics
4) Medical Equipment and Supply Industry
5) Medical Insurance.

India context is considered for two reasons. Firstly, in the past two decades the HR departments in Indian organizations are being properly structured and efficiently managed and a transformation has been observed. During 1970s, the HR departments in most Indian firms are administrative offices. However, Post 1990s the scenario got changed and with new reforms and international competition, Indian firms have been forced to explore new HR roles. With their administrative roles like to act as employee champions for making harmonious workplace environment, initiatives for enhancing employee commitment, and create organizational specific culture. They were also made to look after the needs of top management and play the role of strategic partners. In some organizations change management was assigned as explicit role of the HR department. Secondly, India is becoming as one of the most important emerging healthcare markets. India’s healthcare sector is expanding quickly and the country is becoming an important destination for patients from all over the world. Moreover, the Indian healthcare industry unlike any other sector is primarily a “people-oriented” sector. Therefore, the aim of this study was to develop a theoretical framework, which can investigate changing HR roles and the relation between these roles and human resource effectiveness in healthcare sector. This paper describes the concepts of HR roles, HR effectiveness and external organizational effectiveness in the context of Indian Healthcare Industry. This can improve the HRM systems in Indian healthcare sector and this research can help India to become the top healthcare tourism destination in the world.

5. Transformation of HR Roles: Indian Scenario
Late 1990s and early twenty-first century saw a rise in the number of research evidences highlighting the changing nature of HR function and evolving roles of HR managers [8, 18, 21, 43]. Although HR roles have been studied comprehensively by several researchers [9, 28, 54, 55], a number of researchers have specifically explored the transformations that have taken place in these HR roles in recent times [5, 7, 8, 14, 18, 21, 33, 42, 45]. This transformation is happening at every level and at every scale from in-home marketing boutiques to global multinationals. Furthermore, a number of studies have explored the changing roles of HR managers [10, 23]. Ulrich’s model strongly underlines the changing nature of HR activities and HR focuses in detail [18], thus his model has been applied widely by other researchers [10, 23]. Traditionally, even in developed countries HR managers were said to be hamstrung by ambiguous roles and low position power [38, 46]. Rubenowitz [1968] reported that most of the time, personnel managers were involved in procurement and pay related activities. But after 1990, the condition has changed drastically and over the last twenty years, liberal economic policies have precipitated changes in the nature of HR function [10]. After 1997 [Post liberalization era], Indian firms have to face hyper-competition. [16, 49, 56]. Implementation of economic reforms had direct implications for Indian HRM and Indian HR Managers had to implement tremendous structural changes in their organizations [49].

6. HR Effectiveness [HRE]
There are various other approaches as well for measuring HR effectiveness e.g. human relations approach focuses on the people and upholds the satisfaction of employees’ needs as the most important end or at the minimal one of the most important ends of the organization. Under this perspective, the effective organization is one that provides opportunities for the fullest development of the capabilities of its human resources. The political approach, as applied to the non-profit sector, uses criteria like responsiveness, accountability, representativeness, and adherence to democratic values all very difficult to conceptualize and measure. Additional new models are proposed and developed. These include the multiple constituency model, the interpretation systems model [58] and the contradiction model. HR effectiveness measure measures the efficiency of HR practices from the perspective of costs and in relation to benchmark able practices. It is also agreed that HRM should ideally work to enhance the firm’s competitive position by creating superior human capital skills, experience and knowledge that contribute to firm economic value. How well the HRM function achieves these goals determines overall HRM effectiveness. Huselid et al. [1997] define HRM effectiveness as ‘the delivery of high-quality technical and strategic HRM activities’.
7. External Organizational Effectiveness [EOE]
There is still no universalistic definition or accepted model for organizational effectiveness, since the best criteria remain elusive because the goals and objectives of organizations are multiple and difficult to identify [60]. However, there are two major perspectives. The first is an external approach which is focused on the goals of the organizations and its relationship to its environment. This is the system resource perspective. The second is an internal approach based on organizational processes which is focused on productivity and employee satisfaction. In the external approach, the most widely used effectiveness criterion for organizations is goal attainment or goal accomplishment. Goal-attainment approaches define organizational effectiveness as the accomplishment of a set of organizational goals and objectives. Multiple measures of organizational effectiveness are considered. The first measure of performance is ROA [return on assets]. This reflects goal-attainment, resource acquisition and one constituency – investors or shareholders. ROA is the most common measure of firm performance in management research []. Although some studies used RONW [return on net worth] or Market share [MSH] in measuring financial performance, all these measures are better to measure management capability related to profitability. As Kim recognize, ROA measures “the relative efficiency with which the firm produces its output and is particularly well suited to reflect the attainment of strategies in business operations.” Because of its widespread acceptance and its relative resistance to financial manipulation, this study employs ROA as a financial performance indicator suitable for the external dimension of effectiveness. Secondly, external effectiveness is also represented by the perspective of peer companies in the business environment, i.e. customers, suppliers and competitors. The Most Admired ranking developed by Business standard is a well-accepted method for measuring external performance based on peer review. This study will examine the four roles of HR, measures of HR effectiveness which are most related to organizational effectiveness.

8. HR roles, HR Effectiveness and External organizational effectiveness: The Link
In the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management, role theory has been used effectively for the development of job description, performance management and job design [28]. Katz and Kahn defined role behaviors as the recurring actions of an individual that interrelate with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome. According to role theory, employees’ roles can be used as the basis for specifying organizational expectations and performance requirements. Nadler [1970] made one of the first attempts of categorizing HR roles in USA. He identifies two primary roles of learning specialist: administrator role and the consultant role. Afterwards, Ulrich [1997] proposed typology on HR roles to be played that adds value to the HR function and ultimately to the firm. The role of the HR function has changed a lot of late. HR professionals have come to be seen as business partners. They are expected to contribute to the business strategy through their domain expertise. It is also advocated that when employees’ roles are more consistent with their effectiveness indicators, this led to greater behavioral guidance and further leads employees to expected behaviors and job performance [41]. If, however, employees’ roles are not aligned with their effectiveness indicators, then employees’ performance will fail to meet expected outcome may result in employees’ role conflict, dissatisfaction, and poor efficiency. Ulrich also argued that in order to create value, delivering results and to increase deliverables of the work and these deliverables guarantee HR effectiveness. In the light of above argument conceptual model and Hypothesis were framed. They are:

HSP: Strategic Partner Role [SP] has a direct positive relationship with HR effectiveness [HRE].

HAE: Administrative Expert Role [AE] has a direct positive relationship with HR effectiveness [HRE].

HEC: Employee Champion Role [EC] has a direct positive relationship with HR effectiveness [HRE].

HCA: Change Agent Role [CA] has a direct positive relationship with HR effectiveness [HRE].

HEF: HR effectiveness [HRE] has a direct positive relationship with Org effectiveness [EOE].

9. Conceptual Model of Research
A research model may have both independent and dependent variables. Endogenous constructs have antecedents specified within the model, whereas the causes of exogenous constructs are outside the model and not of interest [3]. The model specification of the study may be given as:

SP = f {HRE, EOE}
AE = f {HRE, EOE}
EC = f {HRE, EOE}
CA = f {HRE, EOE}
HRE = f {EOE}

SP= Strategic Partner Role [Exogenous/Independent variable].
AE= Administrative Expert Role [Exogenous/Independent variable].
EC= Employee Champion Role [Exogenous/Independent variable].
CA= Change Agent Role [Exogenous/Independent variable].
HRE=HR effectiveness [Endogenous/Dependent variable].
EOE=External Organizational effectiveness [Endogenous/Dependent variable].

In the context of deliverables, there are four key roles that HRM professionals must play to fulfill the duties of business partnering [10, 11, 12]. They are depicted in Exhibit 1.1. Ulrich proposed a conceptual model of HR managers’ roles that is based on two main dimensions: strategic focus or operational focus, and people or process orientation. From these two dimensions, four types of HR roles emerge. The first role, the strategic partner, focuses on aligning HR strategies and practices with business strategy. The second role, change agent, refers to helping the organization build a capacity for change. Employee champion is the third role and it implies that HR must be the employees’ voice and should concern itself with employees’ needs and issues.
10. Research Methodology
This research was conducted as a part of Post Doctoral Research on changing roles and HR effectiveness. A questionnaire was sent to the HR managers of the selected companies. Respondents were not requested to identify themselves and they were assured that their response would form part of cumulative data. The questionnaire was based on the items used in Conner and Ulrich scale of four roles and Tsui measures for HRE. In consultation with HR managers and a number of academician’s changes were made in the questionnaire to accommodate developments in recent years. The questionnaire was clearly divided into two sections. The first section was designed to measure HR roles [HRR] and the second section was designed to measure HR effectiveness [HRE] and External organizational effectiveness [EOE] is a composite measure of Return on Assets [ROA], Return on Net worth [RONW] and market share [MSH].

11. Sampling Technique and Procedure
- **Sampling Element:** Respondents of the study were senior HR managers [one from each Healthcare firm].
- **Sampling Unit:** Sampling unit for the study was Indian Healthcare sector.
- **Sampling Frame:** The sampling frame for the study was derived from the annual ranking of companies in India published in Business Standard 2018. All 150 healthcare companies were contacted. It may be pointed out that most of the respondents belong to relatively senior levels in the organizational hierarchy. Senior HR managers are suited for such studies since they are ‘knowledgeable informants’ regarding strategic issues [20, 27]. Further, the responding organizations are top ranked companies and thus, it is assumed that they have a well-organized HR department, as suggested by researchers [39, 43]. Top-ranking organizations span across a range of industries, thus giving a broader view and allowing for generalization of study findings. This is in keeping with suggestions of researchers [22 25 36, 37] who opined that use of multiple industries can help in extending the generalizability of the findings. The empirical survey data [n=70] were collected in year 2018 and stem from organizations operating in different branches of healthcare industry located in India. During the process of instrument development, face validity and content validity was ensured. Data was collected from the sample organizations primarily through mailing technique. In order to collect data from the respondents, a three-wave mail methodology was adopted. In order to collect data from the companies identified through the above-mentioned sampling frame, a census approach to sampling was used. All companies in the sampling frame [i.e. 250] were contacted. Descriptive statistics of the responses was generated through SPSS 17.0. Confirmatory Factor Analysis [CFA] was carried out to refine the scales and establish unidimensionality of the study constructs using Structural Equation Modeling [SEM] capabilities of LISREL. Presently, the utility of SEM has increased in management researches. Its analytical approach simultaneously combines factor analysis and linear regression models for theory testing. In this study the relationships between variables was measured using SEM through LISREL 8.80. For proceeding with SEM, Maximum Likelihood Estimation [MLE] method was used.

12. Measures

a) **HR roles**
The model of Ulrich [1997] is by far one of the most popular models in HRM literature. It is based on two dimensions, people/process and strategic/operational. for this reason, we refer to the model developed by Ulrich [1997] in order to highlight the following roles by which the HR managers can contribute to HR effectiveness. The roles are Strategic Partner [SP], Administrative Expert [AE], Employee Champion [EC], and Change Agent [CA] as independent variables.

b) **HR Effectiveness**
HR effectiveness [HRE] is taken as Dependent Variable. Many studies have measured the HR department’s effectiveness in different ways. Some researchers treat the effectiveness of the HR department as a one-dimensional construct and measure it in relation to HR subunit’s contribution to the successful implementation of business strategies. The effectiveness of the HR function was assessed with four items on five point Likert scale. This scale was adapted from Tsui [1990]. The coefficient alpha for this scale was .83.

c) **Organizational Effectiveness**
Financial performance was taken as dependent variable and measured by an average return on assets [ROA] from financial data, published by the business standard ranking of 1000 Indian companies. To reflect an external viewpoint of organizational effectiveness, the rankings by Business standard were used as criteria. The ability to assess the relationships comprehensively provides an approach to move from explanatory research to confirmatory analysis [Table III]. Several models specifying different patterns of relationships between the HR roles, HR effectiveness measures and external organizational effectiveness measures [ROA, RONW and MSH] were tested, to determine the best fitting model. This is defined as the degree to which the observed results...
are predicted by the model. The initial model includes all relationships from HR roles, HR effectiveness measures related to the different dimensions of organizational effectiveness. Alternative models are examined until the model with the best fit is derived.

**13. Data Analysis**

Structural Equation Modeling [SEM] entails two interrelated steps: first, the estimation of the measurement model, which refers to the relationships between latent and observed variables, secondly the estimation of the structural model, specifying linkages between different latent variables [13-3]. Measurement model estimates the unidimensionality, reliability and validity of each construct while structural model involves estimating the relation between independent [exogenous] and dependent [endogenous] variables. The testing of the structural model may be meaningless unless it is first established that the measurement model holds. If the chosen indicators for a construct do not measure that construct, the specified theory cannot be tested [3]. Thus, the measurement model for each construct was assessed before assessing the structural model. For estimating the measurement model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis [CFA] was performed. The scales were assessed for unidimensionality and reliability. Measurement items remaining after these analyses were subjected to different types of construct validity [i.e., convergent, discriminant validity]. Once the measurement model was validated, the researcher proceeded to the second step i.e. estimation of the structural relationships between latent variables of the conceptual research model. The standardized path coefficients of the structural model were estimated to test the research hypotheses.

**Exhibit 1.3. Showing relationships between HR roles, HR effectiveness and External Organizational effectiveness**

Based on the path values, it can be concluded that the strongest relationship of HR effectiveness is with non strategic role [i.e. EC] and there is a weak relationship with all other roles. HR effectiveness has a significant positive relationship with financial performance i.e. EOE.

**14. Findings:**

The measurement model was unidimensional as the Standard loadings for all constructs after performing CFA ranged between 0.46-0.99 [refer exhibit 2.2]. Item loading retention rules indicate that item loadings should be more than 0.3 and at least three items should load on each factor [6, 52]. Once the unidimensionality of the scales is established, an assessment of reliability is necessary before further validation analysis is performed [3, 31, 51]. Reliability of a measurement refers to the consistency of its items [Hair et al., 2006]. The most commonly used measure is Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha, A Cronbach’s α of 0.7 is a rule-of-thumb as an acceptable level of agreement, but many researchers require a cut-off of .8 for a good scale [34, 35]. The reliability test for all the constructs recorded excellent reliability with coefficient alphas of above 0.7. Convergent validity was assessed with the help of t value for all constructs. The t value for all constructs was above acceptable range i.e. above [1.96]. The structural model was estimated for all the constructs viz. HR Roles viz. Strategic Partner [SP], Administrative Expert [AE], Employee Champion [EC], and Change Agent [CA] as independent variables and HR effectiveness [HRE] and external organizational effectiveness [EOE] as Dependent Variables. The direct impact of each HR Role [e.g. SP, AE, EC and CA] was examined on HR effectiveness [HRE]. Standardized solutions of the structural models were used to verify the relationships included in the hypotheses. Based on the path coefficients, research hypotheses were tested. The path values, GFI and CFI scores between independent and dependent variables are given in table 1.1.

**Table 1: Showing GFI, CFI and Path values and Hypothesis Status relevant to the model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Path Value</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP-HRE</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE-HRE</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>Not Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC-HRE</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-HRE</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRE-EOE</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**15. Discussion**

An initial look at the responses suggested that all four HR roles are present and being performed by HR managers in the responding healthcare organizations. However there is a change of emphasis as to which role HR managers should play more. Results indicate that all four roles affect HR effectiveness. The research models hypothesized in the study assumed presence of strong positive relationship between all HR roles and HR effectiveness measures. The results of the structural models for all roles strongly support the assumed relationship. It was also found that HR effectiveness measures strongly affect organizational effectiveness. This finding is against many studies as Ramadevi [2016] states that technological nature of this industry and the high degree of education required to diagnose and treat illness, continuous improvement in training and development is a key to organizational success, HR effectiveness and national health. This whole scenario makes non strategic HR roles more...
significant in healthcare. In another research it has been suggested that the potential for the development of a strategic approach towards HR and HRM in healthcare is uncertain. Rationales for this include the historic skepticism associated with hospital management, the limited credibility of the HR function, its focus on a narrow operational contribution and its peripheral position in the organization. The findings regarding strategic roles corroborates with other researchers as suggested by Horgan and Muhlau, [2003] that strategic “bundle” of HRM practices, such as performance-oriented incentives, benefits, promotion, training, and career development, resulted in more successful implementation of corporate strategy. The emerging significance of strategic HRM calls for the strategic role of HR. The findings can be attributed to the fact that it is important to note that the conceptual research model developed for the study was adapted from existing studies primarily carried out in the Western context. Since the present study was carried out in the Indian context, the prevailing dynamics could be different from the Western market conditions. It can also be assumed that there may be the existence of other mediating variables in the relationships that need to be explored in future studies. This can also be attributed to the fact that many Indian companies undergoing transformation as they are in the process of transition of their HR departments and hence, nature of HR department might not have been crystallized well enough. Empirical results presented in this paper suggest that HR effectiveness has a positive relationship with strategic roles and negative or rather weak relationship for non strategic HR roles. The reason behind these findings lies in the fact that this study was conducted in Indian context with transforming HR departments and continuously changing HR roles in healthcare industry. This phenomenon was also reported in earlier studies as Pauwne [2006] also reported in the context of European countries when they were facing economic transformation, companies have to reorganize their resources, transform their structures, downsize their manpower and were experience tremendous change, the strategic contribution of HR increased substantially and HR effectiveness is usually associated with strategic role of HR. These findings also corroborate with another research performed by Schuler and Jackson [2001]. Several other authors are also increasingly emphasizing on strategic and change oriented roles [30]

However, this does not mean that Administrative or functional roles are now outdated. These roles still regarded as important HR departments [Pauwne, 1996]. As it was observed in a research on Dutch MNCs that HR managers are allowed to play more strategic and change oriented roles and they also got the credits to do so, if the basic HR processes were taken care of in a cost-effective way and carried out in a effective way. Many survey-based researches in UK and Netherlands confirm these findings and reaffirms that HR is still playing an important role of “service provider”. in companies [19].

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Conflict of Interest: Absent

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