

Human Capital Management in the Wandering Context of Events – Challenges for the Managerial Staff

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PREFACE

This monograph is the result of cooperation between twenty researchers from eleven Polish universities who have made the effort to write a book on human capital management (HCM) in the wandering context.

The authors' interest in this topic was based on the conviction that actions focused on people employed in organizations are increasingly subject to unprecedented contextualization. One is dealing not only with a clear intensification of the impact of various contextual factors of the environment on the practice of human capital management in organizations (Pocztowski, 2019), but also with significant variability in terms of diversity and configuration of these factors (Farndale and Paauwe, 2018). This means that the context is perceived as a phenomenon of a dynamic nature (Zhang-Zhang, Rohlfers, and Varma, 2022), which is subject to transformation in shorter periods of time, sometimes even in less than a few days. HRM viewed through the VUCA lens (VUCA standing for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) has become the subject of interest (Jain, 2019). Moreover, the appearance of important events with a low degree of predictability as to their occurrence or predictable to some extent, although complicated, increases the sense of uncertainty in organizations, among their managerial staff and employees. For this reason, the context in which different stakeholders operate seems to be a wandering context of events that significantly dynamizes the adaptation processes in organizations, and requires the development of completely new, previously unknown solutions.

Over the past few years, we have been dealing with many contextual phenomena, conventionally called events in this monograph, whose scope and intensity do not remain insignificant for organizational practice and research. One can mention here, for example, processes occurring in the global economy, which result in the inclusion or disabling, or at least limiting the participation of national economies of individual countries and their enterprises in the global production and exchange process. Such events can occur even for political or economic reasons, including armed conflict, customs wars, introducing an international embargo, etc. (see Wijekoon et al., 2022). The factors associated with Industry 4.0 are also intensifying (Verma and Venkatesan, 2022). As a result, not only work processes, but also activities related to HCM in organizations are increasingly based on new technologies (Stor and Domaradzka, 2020; Piwowar-Sulej, 2020).

Other important contextual variables include an increase in expectations for raising ethical standards in organizations (Sharma, 2019), their social and ecological responsibility (Haromszeki, 2020), care for employees' well-being and the conditions in which work is performed (Molek-Winiarska, 2020). Against this background, the labor market is gaining particular importance. Its structure, and especially certain

supply shortages, has focused organizations on the intensification of activities in the field of shaping employee engagement and satisfaction, and building their own brand as an employer of choice (Khan, Bharadwaj, Khatoun, and Jamal, 2021; Wojtaszczyk, 2012). Hence, the variety of human resources in organizations, and the effective methods of managing this variety (Rakowska, 2022) have become a particular subject of interest.

However, the most wandering context of events seems to be the pandemic context, which for legislative reasons and protection and safety of work often requires adaptation to new requirements in just one day. This affects changes in employees' affective commitment to the organization and their job-related well-being (Mihalache and Mihalache, 2022), employee work engagement (Pass and Ridgway, 2022), work and employment relations (Gavin, Poorhosseinzadeh, and Arrowsmith, 2022) and the HRM activities that the organizations need to implement in response (Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry, 2022). These are only selected examples of wandering contexts of events that both international and domestic organizations are dealing with, and which significantly determine the practices of human capital management.

Against the background of the above, the main goal of the monograph was to present empirical research findings and conceptual developments in selected HRM problems in various contexts. It should be also clarified that in this study, the terms human capital management and human resource management are used interchangeably. As for these contexts, the journey undertaken in this monograph begins with organizational contexts, then virtual and digital, followed by that of the pandemic, and finally ends in a context strongly focused on people. This is due to the adopted structure, divided into four parts, where each part consists of three chapters.

Part I refers in its title to the contextual effects of the type of organizations on HCM practices. The three types of organizations in this context are: multinational companies, the armed forces and universities. The authors present their empirical research findings on such issues as employee training, employee development, and competency management.

Part II is dedicated to HCM practices in the context of work virtualization and digitalization. Here the research results concentrate on the virtualization of social relations, the digitalization of employee learning and development, and on the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence used in knowledge management.

Part III covers three types of HCM practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. One concerns the activities that shape employee job satisfaction. The second applies to managing staff development, while the third refers to the importance of the role and tasks of HR Business Partner in organizations. All the practices are described on the basis of research.

Part IV addresses the human side of business as a modern contextual factor for HCM practices. On the one hand, it is devoted to the empirical research findings regarding job security from the perspective of employees' interest, and the evaluation of the so-called Green HRM practices. On the other hand, it proposes a conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment.

With the exception of one theoretical chapter, all the others are structured in the same way, namely – an introduction is at the beginning of each them, followed by an explanation of the theoretical foundations for the main problem. In the following part, the authors describe the methodics applied in their empirical research, and then present the results of their research. Finally, a summary and final conclusions are formulated.

At this point, the concept of methodics used in this monograph should be explained. To do this, it is necessary to make a distinction between methodology and methodics. Namely, in most cases in which methodology as a word is used in English-language publications, whilst in Poland, where the authors of the monograph come from, the proper word would be methodics. In short, methodology is interpreted in Poland as a scientific discipline which comprises the study and analysis of scientific research methods, modes of analyses and evaluation of their cognitive value with connection to the principles associated with a branch of knowledge (e.g. within particular scientific disciplines). Methodics has much narrower meaning and refers to the set of means and activities undertaken to realize a concrete task or solve a particular problem (e.g. research conducted in a single project or presented in an article) (Stor, 2021, pp. 129-130). This is why in this monograph the authors use the term methodics, therefore in each chapter the empirical research methodics refers to particular research task and, hence, covers such elements as the research model, problem, questions, method, measures, types of data analyses and sample.

As the monograph is of a scientific and research nature, it is also dedicated to other researchers dealing with HRM issues as well as management students who would like to deepen their knowledge in this field and learn about the latest research. At the same time, the authors also hope that it may be interesting for management practitioners who are looking for inspiration to create effective solutions in their work with human capital.

Finally, on behalf of myself and other authors, we would like to wish our readers an interesting and stimulating read.

Marzena Stor