


Strategic Human Resources Management in Türkiye: Strategic Human Resources Management in the Context of Thesis Studies

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 29/03/2024
Accepted: 14/05/2024
Published: 30/06/2024

Keywords: Strategy, Human Resource Management, Strategic Human Resource Management

Jel Codes: M10, M19

The aim of this study is to examine the postgraduate thesis studies conducted between 1999 and 2023 and to reveal how the strategic human resources accumulation in Türkiye is portrayed. The thesis centre of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) was used to determine the sample. The theses registered in the YÖK Thesis Centre database were scanned by selecting "thesis name" and typing "Strategic Human Resources Management" and 60 (sixty) theses were identified in the Department of Business Administration. Of these, 57 (fifty-seven) theses were reached and the study was conducted on the data of these 57 theses (38 master's and 19 doctoral). By analysing Özen's (2000) study, four main study titles were determined and the values obtained through them were taken as basis. The studies conducted on strategic human resources management in the context of thesis were evaluated methodologically and discussed in terms of philosophy of science and methodological context through three tables.

Türkiye'de Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi: Tez Çalışmaları Bağlamında Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi

Makale Bilgileri

ÖZ

Makale Geçmişi

Geliş: 29/03/2024
Kabul: 14/05/2024
Yayın: 30/06/2024

Anahtar Kelimeler: Strateji, İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi

Jel Kodları: M10, M19

Bu çalışmanın amacı; 1999-2023 yılları arasında yürütülmüş lisansüstü tez çalışmalarını inceleyerek Türkiye'deki stratejik insan kaynakları birikiminin nasıl tasvir edildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Örneklem belirlenirken Yüksek Öğretim Kurumunun (YÖK) tez merkezi kullanılmıştır. YÖK Tez Merkezi veri tabanında "tez adı" seçilerek kayıtlı olan tezler "Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi" yazılarak taranmış ve İşletme Anabilim Dalında 60 (altmış) adet tez belirlenmiştir. Bunlardan 57 (elli yedi) tanesine ulaşılmış olup, çalışma bu 57 tezin (38 yüksek lisans ve 19 doktora) verileri üzerinden gerçekleştirilmiştir. Özen'in (2000) çalışması incelenerek, dört ana çalışma başlığı belirlenmiş ve bunlar üzerinden ulaşılan değerler esas alınmıştır. Stratejik insan kaynakları yönetimi üzerine tez bağlamında yürütülen çalışmalar yönetsel açıdan değerlendirilerek, üç tablo üzerinden bilim felsefesi ve metodolojik bağlamda ele alınmıştır.

Atıf/Citation: Savaş, Y. ve Arıcıoğlu M. A. (2024). Strategic Human Resources Management in Türkiye: Strategic Human Resources Management in the Context of Thesis Studies, *Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6(1), 202-211.



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INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, the role of human resources has undergone a profound evolution with the effect of dynamism. Until the early 20th century, the human element was seen as one of the factors that make up the cost and was brought to the agenda only in administrative work, but it has changed over time and has become a strategic resource for organisations. As a matter of fact, human capital is considered to be an important resource that organisations can use to gain competitive advantage in the market in which they operate, since the employee has tacit knowledge (Alnamrouti et al., 2022: 5).

In organisations that want to gain competitive advantage in the shadow of change and rapid development, human resources are seen not only as a resource but also as a strategic partner (Akduman & Hatipoğlu, 2020: 28). Strategic human resources management, unlike traditional human resources practices, integrates the human capital partner and strategies with the overall business objectives by considering the organisation from an integrated perspective within the scope of its internal and external environment, in a way to evaluate the whole organisation (Mello, 2011). As such, it is "a management strategy that contributes to the improvement of an organisation's performance through the systematic integration of best human resource practices" (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019: 5782).

Strategic HRM provides a perspective on how critical people-related issues can be addressed and how strategic decisions can be made that have a major and long-term impact on the behaviour and success of the organisation.

It requires a comprehensive approach that affects every aspect of the organisation-employee life cycle, from talent acquisition and retention, to employee training and development, performance management, compensation and succession planning. It addresses broad organisational issues related to changes in structure and culture, organisational effectiveness and performance, matching resources to future needs, developing distinctive capabilities, knowledge management and managing change. It is concerned with both human capital requirements and the development of process capabilities, that is, the ability to do things effectively (Armstrong, 2006: 30).

The subject of strategic HRM has been examined in the literature in management science in a very broad framework. In this study, postgraduate theses were analysed in order to make sense of the broad framework. In this direction, it is aimed to provide an explanation about the status of the literature during the examination rather than expanding the literature.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Strategic human resources management is conceptually and originally based on the evolution of personnel management into human resources management over time (Yılmaz, 2023: 114; Şendoğdu, 2021: 49). Although it initially appeared as a very simple method in traditional HRM, it was later started to be considered as a functional process (Mert et al., 2020: 5201). At this point, it achieves functionality by incorporating traditional human resources activities into the strategic dimension and plans of the organisation (Bratton & Gold, 2012: 82).

Strategic human resource management is used to manage the skills, capacity and knowledge of employees efficiently and effectively in order to achieve strategic goals in organisations (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019: 2). As a matter of fact, strategic HRM provides integration between the general strategic objectives of the organisation and human resources strategies and practices. It focuses on actions that differentiate the organisation from its competitors (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). It creates a bridge between organisational performance and human resources structure and bases human resources management functions on the performance of the organisation and provides competitive advantage (Becker and Huselid, 2006: 899). The role of strategic human resource capital is an important element in the sustainability of competitive advantage. By providing competitive advantage to organisations, it ensures that human resources are used to add value to the organisation and thus enables the organisation to achieve its goals, purpose and vision (Sarker & Rahman, 2018: 101-102). In addition, the reciprocal and value-creating relationship between competition and strategic human resources positively affects the flexibility and adaptability of organisations. It is a factor in achieving long-term success.

Long-term success and sustainable competitive advantage depend on the development and implementation of the concept, taking into account the impact of digitalisation processes on human resource capital (Irtysheva et al., 2020). Digitalisation optimises strategic human resources implementation processes, improves the elements of the concept (Berdnikova et al., 2020). It positively affects process control and saves organisations time.

Strategic human resource management supports the sustainability of competition as a management approach that covers HR strategies designed to improve organisational performance and measures the impact of these strategies on organisational performance (Boxall et al., 2007). Its main purpose is to build strategic talent by enabling the organisation to acquire the talented, committed and highly motivated employees it needs to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Collins, 2021: 331-332). It is to develop the talents, knowledge and creativity of employees by vertically and horizontally integrating them with the goals and strategies of the organisation, and in parallel, to meet the needs and demands of employees (Çetin, 2013: 243). It is to ensure that various human resources functions such as recruitment, training, development, performance management, employee motivation and communication, and rewarding are managed in a complementary manner to support the processes and individuals within the organisation and the objectives of the business strategy (Al-Khaled & Fenn, 2020: 55; Okechukwu et al., 2016: 24). Thus, strategic HRM provides a link between business requirements and a firm's activity (Fındıklı et al., 2015: 378-379). It uses its human resources effectively and in a planned manner in order for the organisation to achieve its goals (Demirel & Şendoğdu, 2023: 36). It unites and directs its employees in line with business strategies (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020: 25) and enables the organisation to gain competitive advantage (Cania, 2014: 379; Alnamrouti et al., 2022: 6).

Strategic human resource management focuses on understanding that organisations can be more successful when addressed through human resource practices and policies that provide the company with the right number of people with the right attitudes, the required skills and the required degree of motivation (Al-Khaled and Fenn, 2020: 55). When implemented in an organisation, it enables the organisation to have an inimitable competitive advantage (Björkman & Xiucheng, 2002; as cited in Hamadamin & Atan, 2019: 2). It has a long-term focus (Martell & Carroll, 1995: 352) and is used in conjunction with other internal and external resources. It is closely related to many other fields, including personnel management, organisational and employee psychology, industrial relations and human resource management. Strategic HRM is distinctly differentiated from these related fields due to its connection with the field of strategic management (Jackson et al., 2014).

Strategic human resource management is concerned with both the requirements of human capital and the development of process capabilities (Armstrong, 2006: 30). While this holistic element is considered a critical and valuable asset for every organisation, not all organisations may be aware of this important strategy. It is considered to be unique for each organisation and difficult to copy or substitute (Alnamrouti et al., 2022: 6).

2. METHOD

The aim of the study is to analyse the postgraduate thesis studies in terms of methodology and to reveal how the strategic human resources perspective and accumulation in Türkiye is portrayed according to the results they have reached within the framework of the methodology used by these studies.

Regarding the postgraduate theses in the study, 24 research criteria developed by Özen (2000) consisting of research design, data collection and data analysis stages were used.

While determining the sample of the study, the National Thesis Centre database of the Higher Education Institution (YÖK) was used. On 10.03.2024, "Strategic Human Resources Management" was searched in the YÖK National Thesis Centre database and a total of 85 postgraduate thesis studies were reached in the period covering the years 1999-2023. When the postgraduate theses conducted between 1999-2023 were analysed according to "departments", it was concluded that a total of 60 theses were conducted in the "Department of Business Administration". 25 theses were conducted in different

departments such as Labour Economics and Industrial Relations (8 theses), Human Resources Management (3 theses), Banking (2 theses), Industrial Engineering (2 theses), Tourism Management (2 theses), Health Management (2 theses), Maritime Business Management, Recreation, Public Administration, Personnel Management, Industrial and Technology Management and Physical Education and Sports Sciences.

The distribution of theses according to their types is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of Theses on Strategic Human Resources Management by Type*

Thesis Type	N	%
PhD	20	33.33
Master's Degree	40	66.67

Among the 60 postgraduate theses conducted in the Department of Business Administration, 3 postgraduate theses, including a doctoral thesis in 2021, a master's thesis in 2004 and a master's thesis in 1999, could not be reached. Accordingly, the data in this study were evaluated over 57 theses.

2.1. Data Collection Tools and Processes

The criteria to be used in determining and analysing the research findings are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Criteria Used in the Review*

I. RESEARCH DESIGN	
1.	Methodological assumption of the research: Objectivist, Subjectivist
2.	The main purpose of the research: To describe (exploratory research), to explain (causal research - comparative, experimental), to describe and explain
3.	Mission of the research: Contribution to theory, Contribution to theory and guiding practice, Guiding practice
4.	Hypothesis testing: Yes (explicitly stated), yes (implicit), no
5.	Hypothesis development approach: Classical approach (from theory to empirical research), grounded approach (from empirical research to theory)
6.	The subject of the research: (Open-ended)
7.	The source of the research topic: Foreign literature or practice, Turkish literature or practice
8.	Assumption of intercultural permeability of managerial/organisational phenomena: Universal, relative, both universal and relative
9.	Level of analysis: Micro (individual, group), meso (organisation/s), macro (sector/s, society/s)
II. DATA COLLECTION	
10.	Sample Type: Probability sampling (random, systematic, stratified, clustering), non-probability sampling (convenience, quota, dimensional, judgemental, avalanche), full sample
11.	Nature of the example: (Open-ended; e.g., manager, employee....)
12.	Optimum sample size: Calculated, not calculated
13.	Data collection method: Questionnaire, interview, observation, secondary sources, mixed
14.	If it is a questionnaire, the source of the scale used: Foreign scale used verbatim, foreign scale adapted, original questions integrated with foreign scale, original scale developed
15.	Reliability and validity of the scale: Reliability/validity levels abroad are given, reliability/validity levels in Türkiye are given, reliability/validity levels both abroad and in Türkiye are given
16.	Social favourability effect: Controlled, uncontrolled
17.	Method of administration of the questionnaire: By post, by hand (unattended), by hand (attended)
18.	Interview method: Planned, semi-planned, unplanned
19.	Observation method: Unattended, attended
20.	Secondary data method: Literature review, documents, statistics
III. DATA ANALYSIS PHASE	
21.	Data analysis method: Quantitative, qualitative, quantitative and qualitative
22.	Quantitative analysis methods: Univariate (mean, frequency, percentage, ...), bivariate (correlation, chi-square, Phi, t-test, ...), multivariate (multiple regression, discriminant analysis, covariance analysis)
23.	Qualitative analysis methods: Classical methods (sequential convergence, descriptive method, analytical comparison, domain analysis, ideal type analysis), interpretivist methods (content analysis, discourse analysis, semiotics, conversation analysis)
24.	Use of statistical package programmes: Used, not used

Source: Özen, 2000: 13.

2.2. Data Analysis and Findings

Research Design

When the thesis studies are analysed in terms of methodological assumption according to the results in Table 4, it is seen that 95% of them adopt the "objectivist approach" and 56% of them aim to "explain". The fact that the objectivist approach is more preferred reveals the dominance of the positivist, empiricist approach in academic studies (Arıcıoğlu & Erdirençelebi, 2015). The methodological analysis of thesis studies is as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency Distributions According to Research Design Criteria

VARIABLE	CRITERIA	F	%
1. Methodological assumption	Objectivist	54	94.74
	Subjectivist	3	5.26
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
2. Purpose	Describe	8	14.04
	Explain	32	56.14
	Describe and explain	17	29.82
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
3. Mission	Contribution to theory	9	15.79
	Contribution to theory and guiding practice	48	84.21
	Guiding practice	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
4. Hypothesis Testing	None	4	7.02
	Yes (implicit)	7	12.28
	Yes (clearly stated)	46	80.70
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
5. Hypothesis development approach	Classical approach	57	100.0
	Grounded approach	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
6. Subject	Employee performance	7	12.28
	Organization performance	10	17.54
	Organisational commitment	5	8.77
	Employee motivation	4	7.02
	Innovation	4	7.02
	Competition	3	5.26
	SHRM applications	3	5.26
	Reorganization	2	3.51
	Organizational learning	2	3.51
	Others	17	29.82
<i>Total</i>	57	100.0	
7. Source of the Subject	Foreign literature or practice	54	94.74
	Turkish literature or practice	3	5.26
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
8. Assumption of intercultural permeability	Universal	2	3.51
	Relative	6	10.53
	Universal and relative	49	85.96
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
9. Level of analysis	Micro	19	33.33
	Meso	24	42.11
	Macro	13	22.81
	None	1	1.75
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0

It is seen that the rationale for the existence of the studies is mainly "contributing to the theory and guiding the practice" (84%). It was seen that in 81% of the theses analysed, hypotheses were explicitly stated for the purpose, in 11% they were explained implicitly and in 7% no hypothesis was formed at all. It was concluded that all of the hypotheses were developed with the classical approach. It was concluded that the subjects studied focused on employee performance and organisational performance under the influence of or in relation to strategic human resources practices, and examined the relationships with employee motivation, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational learning, talent management and career planning of employees. In addition, in the category described as other in Table 3, it was observed that organisational innovation, organisational attractiveness, kaizen, leadership, outsourcing, job analysis, institutionalisation, merit, managerial stress were also examined in relation to these issues. The fact that the subjects studied are in different fields from each other confirms that strategic human resource management requires a holistic perspective in organisations. It is clear that all of the studies (100%) are under the influence of foreign literature. The level of analysis is at meso level with 42%, 33% at micro level and 23% at macro level.

Data Collection

In order to analyse the research design, the information about the findings in the data collection phase is given in Table 5.

Table 4. Frequency Distributions According to Data Collection Phase Criteria

VARIABLE	CRITERIA	F	%
10. Type of sampling	Non-probability sampling	33	57.89
	Probability sampling	17	29.82
	Full sampling	4	7.02
	Not mentioned	3	5.26
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
11. Nature of the sample	Managers	24	42.11
	Employees	30	52.63
	Academics	1	1.75
	Teachers	1	1.75
	Articles-theses-books	1	1.75
<i>Total</i>	57	100.0	
12. Optimum sample size	Calculated	9	15.79
	Not calculated	48	84.21
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
13. Data collection method	Questionnaire	52	91.23
	Secondary	1	1.75
	Questionnaire-interview	3	5.26
	Interview	1	1.75
<i>Total</i>	57	100.0	
14. Sourced of the scale used	Original	15	26.32
	Foreign scale used verbatim	2	3.51
	Source unspecified	7	12.28
	Original questions with a foreign scale	4	7.02
	Foreign scale harmonised	29	50.87
<i>Total</i>	57	100.0	
15. Reliability and validity of the scale	Not given	12	21.05
	Measurements in Türkiye are given	42	73.68
	Measurements in Türkiye and abroad are given	3	5.26
	<i>Toplam</i>	57	100.0
16. Social favourability effect	Checked	-	-
	Unchecked	57	100.0
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0

17. Method of administration of the questionnaire	Online via e-mail	23	40.35
	By hand (participation)	6	10.53
	By hand (unattended)	9	15.79
	Not given	19	33.33
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
18. Interview method	Not given	50	87.72
	Planned	4	7.02
	Semi-planned	3	5.26
	Unplanned	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
19. Observation method	Not given	-	-
	Participation	-	-
	Unattended	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
20. Secondary data method	Literature	55	96.49
	Dokument	2	3.51
	Statistics	-	-
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0

In Table 5, firstly, it was seen that non-probability sampling was used in 58% of the studies and probability sampling was used in 30% of the studies. While it was seen that complete sampling was preferred in four theses with a rate of 7%, no information could be reached in three theses. In 16% of the theses analysed, the optimum sample size representing the main mass was calculated.

The questionnaires applied to be used in the analyses of the theses subject to the study were not found to be conducted on both managers and employees. However, since employee performance, organisational performance, motivation and commitment were examined in general, it was seen that 52% of the studies were conducted with employees and 42% with managers.

Although it was observed that mixed method was used in three of the studies, it was observed that the data were obtained by questionnaire (91%), which is one of the primary tools of quantitative studies. In half of the studies (51%) in which data collection method was preferred, foreign scales were adapted or Turkish studies that had previously used foreign scales were used. The fact that original scales were developed in 15 of the studies is promising in terms of contributing to the literature. In two different theses published in English, the foreign scale was applied exactly. When the validity and reliability of the applied scales were analysed, it was seen that in almost most of the studies (74%), the reliability and validity values in Türkiye were given. It is surprising that 12% of the studies, excluding the literature review and qualitative analyses, did not include validity and reliability values at all. In most of the studies, it was observed that the participants were reached by e-mail (40%) and face-to-face interviews were rarely conducted. In addition to questionnaires, literature review and document analysis in secondary sources were generally utilised more as data collection methods

Data Analysis

In the analysis phase where the design and data collection are made sense of, 91.23% of the studies showed that quantitative analysis and 1.75% of the studies showed that qualitative analysis was preferred. In addition, the fact that both analysis methods were used at a rate of 7% is noteworthy despite a low rate. It is seen that 57.41% of the studies in which quantitative analysis was preferred used bivariate analysis methods, 24% used univariate analysis methods and 19% used multivariate analysis methods. Theses that made literature review and qualitative analyses were not included in the evaluation in this section. The rate of using package programmes for data analysis is 8%. It was concluded that SPSS (70%) was preferred the most among the package programmes and Smart PLS (1.75%) was preferred the least.

Table 6. Frequency Distributions According to Data Analysis Phase Criteria

VARIABLES	CRITERIA	F	%
21. Data analysis method	Quantitative	52	91.23
	Qualitative	1	1.75
	Quantitative and qualitative	4	7.02
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0
22. Quantitative methods	Univariate analysis methods	13	24.07
	Bivariate analysis methods	31	57.41
	Multivariate analysis methods	10	18.52
	<i>Total</i>	54	100.0
23. Qualitative methods	Method of depiction	-	-
	Content analysis	3	60.0
	Analytical comparison	-	-
	Ideal type analysis	-	-
	Discourse analysis	2	40.0
	Semiotics	-	-
<i>Total</i>	5	100.0	
24. Use of statistical package programme	Used	50	87.72
	Unused	7	12.28
	<i>Total</i>	57	100.0

CONCLUSION

Strategic human resource management, which is accepted as a mental attitude that expresses a way of doing things (Armstrong, 2006: 35), has been examined on postgraduate theses (master's/doctoral) conducted in universities in Türkiye between 1999 and 2023

It is noteworthy that the studies are both descriptive and explanatory studies and it is understood that they aim to guide the practice. The rate of utilisation of foreign literature, practices and scales in the studies is high. This situation explains the inferences from theory to practice and the effectiveness of the results based on universal acceptance in foreign literature. In the data collection phase, it is seen that the development of original scales is very low, and the field is tried to be measured through known questionnaires. In the analysis process of the researches, the preference of qualitative studies in addition to the preference of quantitative methods contributes to the strengthening of the holistic perspective suggested by the qualitative method, albeit partially.

In terms of methodology, the fact that the same type of methods were generally preferred in the theses showed that researchers and researcher candidates should be open to innovations in terms of methodology. In the results obtained from the studies, it is emphasised that the human resources of the organisation are at a strategic level (Arıbaş, 2022). In the theses examined, it was seen that strategic human resources management was studied in relation to many different subjects. At this point, it becomes more important according to which results the field in which the studies are carried out will be interpreted (Arıcıoğlu, 2021: 20). In the analysis results of the field studies and the research hypotheses at the starting point of the studies, the focus was on organisational performance instead of individual performance.

The limitation of the study is that only the postgraduate theses conducted in Türkiye between 1999 and 2023 were analysed. The study can be retrospectively developed to include the theses written on strategic human resources management. Not only Turkish theses, but also foreign theses in the

international literature can be included in the study and an examination can be made in terms of countries.

Etik Kurul Onayı

Etik onay gerektiren bir çalışma değildir.

Yazar Katkıları

Yazarlar tüm konularda eşit katkıda bulunmuşlardır

Finansman

Herhangi bir finansman desteği alınmamıştır.

Çıkar Çatışması

Çıkar çatışması sözkonusu değildir.

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