

## Current Issues in Strategic Human Resource Management

Güzin KIYIK KICIR<sup>1</sup> 

### Abstract

In our postmodern world, classical perspectives are replaced by different paradigms that question and transform. Based on this trend, strategic human resources management has replaced traditional human resources management. This strategic understanding is critical for businesses to survive in today's competitive conditions, to be flexible to environmental conditions, and to shape the future. Therefore, it is seen that academic studies and business practices that approach human resources management strategically are increasing rapidly. This research aims to analyze the strategic human resource management issue, which tries to accurately evaluate the added value that employees provide to the business in the context of the literature. The first of the research questions the ways in which the subject is addressed academically, while another question examines the current issues in strategic human resource management. Content analysis was carried out on the articles identified after searching the related research in the relevant databases. The results are important in terms of guiding new studies to be conducted in the field and drawing attention to alternative approaches in the field of practice.

**Keywords:** Strategic Human Resources Management, Sustainable Competition, Value Added, Content Analysis

## Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetiminde Güncel Konular

### Öz

İçinde yaşadığımız post modern dünyada klasik bakış açıları yerini sorgulayan, dönüştüren farklı paradigmalara bırakılmaktadır. Bu eğilimden hareketle geleneksel insan kaynakları yönetimi de yerini stratejik insan kaynakları yönetimine bırakmıştır. İşletmelerin günümüz rekabet şartlarında ayakta kalabilmesi, çevresel şartlara esneklik gösterebilmesi ve geleceğe yön verebilmesinde stratejik bu anlayış kritik konumda yer almaktadır. Dolayısıyla insan kaynakları yönetimine stratejik olarak yaklaşan akademik çalışmalar ve işletme uygulamalarının hızla arttığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada çalışanların işletmeye sağladığı katma değeri doğru değerlendirmeye çalışan stratejik insan kaynakları yönetimi konusunun literatür bağlamında analiz edilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Araştırma sorularından ilki akademik olarak konunun ele alınış biçimlerini sorgularken, diğer bir soruda da stratejik insan kaynakları yönetiminde konuşulan güncel konuları irdelemektedir. İlgili veri tabanlarında konu ile ilgili araştırmalar tarandıktan sonra tespit edilen makaleler üzerinden içerik analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonuçlar alanda yürütülecek yeni çalışmalara yön gösterme ve uygulama alanında alternatif yaklaşımlara dikkat çekme anlamında öneme sahiptir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Stratejik İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, Sürdürülebilir Rekabet, Katma Değer, İçerik Analizi

<sup>1</sup>Asst. Prof., Anadolu University, Management and Organization, Eskişehir/TÜRKİYE, gkiyik@anadolu.edu.tr

## **1. Introduction**

It is difficult for businesses to exist and survive in a world where technology changes at a dizzying pace, environmental conditions cannot be controlled, and new management approaches are added daily. Human resources are considered to be the most critical element for businesses aiming to achieve corporate success and competitiveness in these challenging conditions (Özşahin & Öztürk, 2024). For this reason, it has become essential for businesses to address human resource management in a strategic dimension in today's dynamic working environments (Alharty & Bin Marni, 2020, p. 2). Among the reasons that add a strategic dimension to traditional human resource management are globalization, increasing competition, changing technologies, an increase in the number of knowledge-based employees, and changes in the demographic structure of employees (Bal, 2011). The way to have advantageous competitive conditions under rapid changes is through human resources (Çobanoğlu, 2018, p. 833). Today, human resources departments have gone beyond being just a unit that provides support services and has risen to a strategic position that adopts the mission, vision, goals, and objectives of businesses to all employees and combines organizational goals with individual goals (Barutçgil, 2004). Because it is accepted that strategic thinking skills are critical in achieving the targeted strategies (Zamanzadeh et al., 2020, p. 319).

This study aims to investigate which topics have recently come to the fore in the domestic and international literature on strategic human resources management and also aims to follow the current trends on the subject. In a world where the need for qualified human resources is increasing day by day, human resources functions that approach the subject with strategic importance have reached a critical position. Therefore, strategic human resources management can be considered one of the crucial concepts for businesses in the future. The fact that no previous study has addressed the subject in this way and examined domestic and international databases together is considered important in terms of the article filling a gap in the literature. Another dimension that makes the article valuable is that it provides resources and conceptual inferences for future studies on this subject. In addition, questioning current trends within the businesses and human resources departments in practice increases the contributions that the research can offer to the business world.

Within the scope of this study, while mentioning the phenomenon of strategic human resources management in the conceptual framework, the research obtained as a result of the

searches made through databases is given in the findings section. At the end of the study, evaluations are made within the scope of the research, analyzed through themes and categories, and answers to the research questions are sought.

## **2. Strategic Human Resources Management**

The Industrial Revolution, which is accepted as the period when businesses first emerged professionally, is also accepted as the beginning of the concept of human resources in the management literature. The practices previously seen at the level of training employees through the master-apprentice relationship and some administrative activities have turned into more human-oriented activities due to the increasing number of employees with the establishment of factories. Especially after the First World War, human resources practices increased rapidly. Many activities, such as recruiting talented people, remunerating them, and providing the necessary training, were carried out by personnel departments (Öge, 2017). In the following period, the concept of personnel management was replaced by human resources management, emphasizing a more inclusive department for employees. Contrary to the view that personnel management and human resource management are the same, Kaufman (2007) emphasizes that human resource management has fundamental differences and an innovative impact. Strategic human resource management, which actively entered the literature and practice in the 1990s, is related to many issues, such as talent, performance, motivation, and career. The concept considers employees as a strategic element rather than a cost item and develops human resources strategies that integrate with business objectives. Thus, it becomes easier to achieve competitive advantage and sustainable success (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). In addition, this approach increases the employment of qualified employees, cost efficiency, and performance-oriented organizational culture (Coşkun & Kayar, 2011).

Strategic human resource management is different from traditional human resource management. The most necessary distinction is that strategic human resources have a long-term perspective. While traditional human resource management makes short-term plans, strategic human resources make short-, medium-, and long-term plans according to needs. While traditional departments are processors, change followers, and advocates, strategy-based human resources departments are fast, proactive, and mobilizing. In addition, strategic human resources do not only act in the context of employee-employer relations but also take into account relations with different stakeholders (Erdoğdu & Salepçioğlu, 2020).

The theoretical works of Wright and McMahan (1992), Jackson and Schuler (1995), and Kamoche (1996) can be listed among the scientists who were influential in the formation and prominence of the concept of strategic human resource management. The theories and approaches that form the basis of the concept include the behavioral approach, situational approach, resource dependency approach, agency theory, transaction cost theory, and theoretical theory (Schuler & Jackson, 1999, p.53).

One of the first definitions of strategic human resource management defines the concept as a planned human resource activity model that enables businesses to achieve their goals (Wright & McMahan, 1992, p. 298). Boxall and Purcell (2000 ) clarified the concept as a complex workforce management process in which senior managers try to achieve organizational performance goals with high strategic dedication and commitment. Becker and Huselid (2006) define it as a model that analyzes the relationship between an organization's human resource architecture and its performance. According to Dessler (2013, p.73), it is the general name of policies and practices that find and develop the employees businesses need to achieve their strategic goals. In summary, it is possible to define strategic human resource management as an approach that designs and realizes policies and practices that support access to the long-term goals of businesses (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

In strategic human resources management, employees with the necessary skills and motivation for the business are tried to be integrated into the strategic goals of the enterprises in line with human resources policies. In this context, human resources functions such as recruitment, training, compensation, and reward are integrated with management and complement each other (Al-Khaled & Fenn, 2020, p. 55). The main characteristics of strategic human resource management can be explained with the following items (Özçelik, 2006; Smilansky, 2002; Can, Kavuncubaşı & Yıldırım, 2012):

- Human resources managers should know the organization's mission, vision, values, and strategies.
- Human resources departments must keep abreast of all changes in the business environment and stakeholders.
- All managers in human resources departments should work in collaboration with each other.
- The primary responsibility for policies and decisions regarding employees should rest with the human resources department.

- Human resources managers should be involved in the strategic planning processes of organizations.

As can be understood from the articles, strategic human resource management is a phenomenon related to the concepts of adaptation and integration in general. While human resources policies are determined in line with business strategies, the process is also followed in the context of adapting department managers and employees working in the internal environment (Schuler, 1992, p.18; Jackson et al., 2018, p.42). In other words, in strategic human resources management, department managers are in a position that develops the business strategy and develops and transforms the business according to dynamic environmental conditions (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003, p.9).

### **3. Research Methodology**

In this study, the phenomenon of strategic human resource management is examined in the context of the literature, how studies have been conducted in the field, and what the current issues have been in the fore in the last ten years. For this purpose, Web of Science and DergiPark pages, which are accepted at the level of academic studies in the world and in Turkiye, were determined as databases for document search. The search criteria were based on the studies in the management category, available through open-access, in Turkish or English, and conducted between 2014 and 2024. This time period was determined so that the study could investigate current trends and see the general distributions in the literature. The article aims to track current trends in strategic human resources management and analyze which topics have come to the forefront recently. At the same time, it aims to build a bridge between the determined studies and the findings obtained, create awareness of new studies in the field and contribute to the professionals working on the application. Strategic human resources management has a very critical position in order to correctly manage qualified human resources, which are essential for today's and future businesses. The importance of the subject, the originality of the research design, and making conceptual inferences by comparing domestic and international are among the elements that make the research necessary. Since a literature review and document review were conducted to obtain the findings, analysis was carried out on secondary data. Content analysis was conducted on the general distribution of the information about the studies and the prominent categories and codes related to the content. The scope of the research consists of articles on strategic

human resource management identified in the identified databases in the determined period. The study has a sample limitation, focusing on research in selected databases.

#### **4. Findings**

The criteria taken into consideration while examining the databases were determined as; follows: studies should be conducted in the field of management, should be open-access publications, should be in Turkish or English and should have been published between 2014-2024. When the databases determined during the research period were examined, 452 articles were first identified in Web of Science and 110 articles in Dergipark. When the studies were filtered according to the criteria, 136 articles in Web of Science and 74 articles in DergiPark were included in the scope of the research. In the study, where a total of 210 articles were analyzed, 352 articles were excluded from the research. It is possible to see the distribution of the articles subject to analysis by year in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Research Years Web of Science*

	<b>Web of Science</b>	<b>DergiPark</b>
<b>2014</b>	0	4
<b>2015</b>	1	6
<b>2016</b>	1	8
<b>2017</b>	2	6
<b>2018</b>	3	5
<b>2019</b>	7	5
<b>2020</b>	15	11
<b>2021</b>	20	7
<b>2022</b>	31	7
<b>2023</b>	33	12
<b>2024</b>	22	4

Looking at the articles on strategic human resource management between 2014 and 2024, it is noteworthy that there has been a steady increase in Web of Science over the years. The only exception to this increase was seen in 2024. However, since the research considers the first six months of 2024 and the year had yet to end when the study was conducted, it is expected that 2024 will continue its upward trend. Regarding DergiPark, it is noteworthy that the distribution by years reached the highest figures in 2020 and 2023 and that there has been a fluctuating trend from 2014 to the present, first increasing and then decreasing.

Table 2 shows the distribution of research methods used in the articles in the analyzed databases.

**Table 2***Distribution of Research Methods*

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>	<b>Mixed</b>
<b>Web of Science</b>	32	96	8
<b>DergiPark</b>	18	56	0

When we look at the research methods, we see that qualitative methods are used more in Turkiye and abroad. Conceptual and theoretical studies are predominant in both databases. In addition, mixed approaches using both qualitative and quantitative research methods were also found in foreign articles, albeit in small numbers.

When we look at the use of expressions related to the subject in the articles' titles, Table 3 shows the frequency distributions of the prominent words.

**Table 3***Prominent Words in Article Titles*

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Employee</b>	<b>Human Management</b>	<b>Administrator</b>
<b>Web of Science</b>	20	5	12	4	15
<b>DergiPark</b>	55	67	10	5	70

When the table is examined, the most frequently encountered concepts related to strategic human resources management are the words strategy, manager, and management abroad. In contrast the words management, human resources, and strategy are used domestically. The phenomenon of strategic human resources management, which is more frequently identified in the titles in Turkiye, is used less frequently abroad. While the number of words such as human, employee, and human resource is high in Turkiye, the word "manager" is rare. Abroad, the use of these concepts is more balanced. Also, the word manager is among the most frequently used words.

When it comes to the article contents in the research findings, Table 4 shows the categories and codes consisting of the prominent concepts related to strategic human resource management.

**Table 4**

*Research Coding Schedule*

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Web of Science</b>	Leader and Manager	Servant Leadership Manager Roles Overconfident CEOs Leader's Networking Behavior in Crisis Boundary Work in Managers Project Leadership Heuristics of CEOs Managers' Struggle to Become Subjects
	Periodicity	Digital Transformation Pandemic Covid 19 Longitudinal Analysis
	Applications	Strategic Decision Making Sustainable Management Talent Management Diversity Management Career Empowerment Strategic Implementation Mix Building Trust-Based Relationships Passive Aggressive Management Emotion Management Employee Creativity Balancing Quality Batch Learning Motivation Strategies Technology Design Collaboration
<b>DergiPark</b>	Leader and Manager	Human Resource Managers' Perspective Servant Leadership Transformational Leadership Ethical Leadership
	Periodicity	Covid Before and After the Pandemic Digitalization Industry 4.0
	Applications	Internal Entrepreneurship Competition Strategies Training and Development Institutionalization Talent Management Participatory Management Staff Empowerment Career Planning Organizational Learning In-Service Training



When the coding chart of the research is examined, it is seen that three categories of strategic human resource management are prominent in domestic and foreign databases. These are manager and leader influence, periodicity, and practices. It is seen that managers are as prominent as leaders in foreign articles under the title of manager and leader influence, and the CEO phenomenon is also prominent in this category. Notably, the prominent codes in the journal park are leadership-oriented and the concepts of manager and CEO do not find much space.

Another category heading in the research is periodicity. In the studies conducted in the field of strategic human resources management in the last decade, studies in which the period effect is seen emphasize the pandemic and technological transformation processes both abroad and domestically. In studies where codes such as Covid and digital transformation stand out, how strategic human resources management is affected by these processes is questioned.

The last category of the study is the business practices identified in the field of strategic human resource management in the articles included in the scope of the research. The codes common to both foreign and domestic studies are talent management, career management and organizational learning. In addition, training programs offered to employees, participative management practices and the concept of employee empowerment stand out in Turkiye. Abroad, codes such as building trust-based relationships, supporting employee creativity, and emotion management emphasizing steps towards employees stand out. In addition, since the issue is addressed through multinational enterprises, expressions such as sustainability, competition strategies, strategic management, management of differences, and quality balancing were also encountered.

Concepts related to current issues recently heard in articles on strategic human resource management are given in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Current Concepts Featured in Articles*

<b>Web of Science</b>	<b>DergiPark</b>
Hierarchical Erosion	Organizational Innovation
Reverse Information Flow	Service Innovation
Impression Stabilization	Internal Entrepreneurship
Digital Managers	Organizational Alienation
Hybrid Teams	Generation Z
Ceo Decision Style	Despotic Leadership
Elite Workforce Differentiation	Creative Leadership
Emotion and Feeling Analysis	Innovation Indicators
Adaptation to Artificial Intelligence	Sustainable Competitive
Dynamic Capabilities	Advantage
Online Labor Markets	Intellectual Structure
Planetary Limitation	
Demographic Fault Lines	
Working Group Climates	
Mid-Level Manager Deviation	
Institutional Decomposition	
Ceo-employee Salary Inequality	
Racist Violence in the Workplace	
Gender Equal Opportunity Plans	

Looking at the table, it is possible to see the current concepts that stand out in articles in the field of strategic human resource management. While innovation, generations, and brand-new leadership types stand out in Türkiye, concepts such as hierarchical erosion, reverse information flow, and mid-level manager deviation related to organizational structure stand out abroad. As in the coding chart, in the table of current concepts, the codes of manager, leader and CEO are more prominent in foreign studies. Awareness of being responsible to the world and society and concepts such as planet limitation, salary inequality, racism, gender equality are among the current expressions that stand out abroad. In addition, it is seen that codes such as adaptation to artificial intelligence, digital managers, dynamic talents are used in the technological transformation process. Other current topics that stand out in domestic articles are the concepts of sustainable competitive advantage and intellectual structure. Finally, it is noteworthy that new generations are also addressed in domestic articles independently from foreign articles.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

In the first of the research questions, it is questioned how the issue of strategic human resource management is addressed in scientific research articles. Accordingly, when the studies in the determined databases and in the determined time interval are examined, it is seen that there is a continuous increase in the interest in the subject abroad, while there is a

periodic increase and decrease in Türkiye. It can be stated that both in Türkiye and abroad, qualitative studies that deal with the subject conceptually are predominant, while quantitative analysis methods are less preferred. Mixed analyses using both methods together were found only in foreign databases. It is noteworthy that while the words in the content of the concept of strategic human resource management are frequently used in studies in Türkiye, the words directly related to the subject are less frequently used in articles in foreign studies. It is seen that the main topics addressed are patterned according to the names of those responsible for management, periodical developments, and managerial practices of enterprises. As a result of the findings, it is predicted that a topic as topical as strategic human resource management has not reached a consistent interest and study intensity in Türkiye, while abroad, the topic has revealed an increasing number of studies, and this increase has been continuing for the last ten years and has the potential to continue in the near future. Therefore, both in Türkiye and abroad, strategic human resource management is considered as a phenomenon that has not yet been saturated and is not expected to decline. Focusing on quantitative measurements instead of theoretical studies and conceptual examinations is seen as supportive of reaching general conclusions about the concept. In this context, Garip (2023) emphasized the importance of quantitative research in research and its contribution to the field by emphasizing the power of generalization and representation of the sample. Employees and strategy can be added to the prominent categories of strategic human resources both in Türkiye and abroad. When the phenomenon of strategic management, which is based on the employee at its core, produces research in which the employee stands out in the articles and produces strategies that include human resources in the process for the future, it is considered likely that these researches will produce more successful results in theory and practice. Because the efforts, knowledge and skills of employees add value to the organization and provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Hau & Chow, 2005). Gupta (2020, p.2) supports this idea by expressing the importance of employee attributes in formulating and implementing key strategies.

Another important situation is that strategic human resources management in Türkiye focuses on the CEO and the leader rather than the manager. However, in this process, apart from the top management, human resources managers have great duties. Özçelik and Doğan (2021) emphasize the impact of the perspectives of business owners and senior management as well as line managers on human resource management on strategic human resource management. Therefore, the number of manager-oriented studies can be increased in Türkiye

as well as abroad. Güçlü (2003, p.70) emphasized the positive impact of advances in management levels and improvements in managerial skills on strategic human resource management through decisions and practical steps.

Since it has a people-oriented approach, servant leadership is a common leadership approach in articles related to strategic human resource management both in Türkiye and abroad. This approach, which aims to establish trust-based relationships with employees, also represents crucial steps towards human resources. Yeşilkuş et al. (2021) drew attention to trust, commitment and internal communication as the most critical elements in strategic human resource management and stated that managerial approaches that protect mutual trust should be preferred in order to harmonize strategies with employees.

The other research question of this study examines current issues in strategic human resource management. Analyzing the articles over the last ten years, it can be stated that foreign studies have a higher power to generate new concepts. While domestic articles focus on innovation, different types of leadership and generational concepts on current issues, foreign articles focus on innovative issues that focus on organizational structure, global principles, artificial intelligence, concepts related to the digital world, and the phenomenon of managers, leaders and CEOs. The studies on this subject indicate that organizational innovation is a very crucial factor affecting strategic human resource management (Demirtaş 2013; Özdevecioğlu et al. 2009; Laurseen & Foss 2003). Rasmussen and Ulrich (2015) emphasize that artificial intelligence and other technological developments will create new business opportunities when integrated into strategic human resource management practices.

In the future, artificial intelligence applications are likely to change and renew strategic human resources management processes. Standardization and objectivity can be achieved in human resources management activities through artificial intelligence technologies. Multidimensional and analytical thinking skills can be developed in the long-term decision-making process. Artificial intelligence technologies that minimize the risk of error, reduce discrimination and increase efficiency are also likely to change human resources functions in terms of operation. This renewing effect can be seen in many areas, from job analysis to interviews, selection processes to performance evaluation, learning processes to career management.

Current issues, especially technological transformation and changing world conditions may be among the essential topics in strategic human resources management.

How human resources will be positioned in unmanned enterprises, how human resources management will be carried out in new professions and business sectors in the new business areas of the future, and how managerial conditions will be designed in future generations after Generation Z may be among the current issues of strategic human resources management. For this, new ideas need to be supported. In this context, Ersan (2013) states that innovative ideas can be developed more easily and quickly thanks to educated employees in free and creative work environments, while Gürbüz (2011) emphasizes that the more employees are directed to think innovatively, the more successful the businesses and strategic human resources management can achieve.

As a result, it is predicted that the research on strategic human resource management will contribute more to the literature and the businesses in the field of application if it focuses more on quantitative methods, focuses more on line managers and employees rather than leaders, and captures technological transformations and global trends in current issues. This study, which is expected to provide resource support for future research, can also be revisited longitudinally in the future and can be taken as a reference to see the change at different times.

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