

Strategic human resource management and supply chain orientation in Asia: growth potential and research agenda

Since the first article that discussed strategic human resource management (SHRM) alignment with supply chain management (Schuler and MacMillan, 1984), there is a dearth of more scientific research in this area in the recent time. Although very few researchers are aiming to target the underpinning theories and challenges in this direction and they started integrating this with the sustainable performance and strategic orientation of the firm (O'Connor *et al.*, 2018; Ahuja *et al.*, 2019; Hong *et al.*, 2019; Wu *et al.*, 2019) and restricted to strategic supply chain from the perspective of a single business unit and excludes the network approach and only limited to few research topics (Wright *et al.*, 2018; Su *et al.*, 2018; Boon *et al.*, 2019). In past few years, contemporary dimensions of supply chain management and strategic human resource management including customer human resource, supplier-human resource management. Corporate culture, HRM policies and firm's orientation toward its employees contribute significantly in the formulation of supply chain management strategy of a firm (McAfee *et al.*, 2002). With the emergence as world leader, countries such as China in past few decades have undergone economic industrial change and upgrading. In this direction, benchmark practices can be attained and sustained by leveraging human resource factor across the supply chains (Gowen Iii and Tallon, 2003; Jacobs *et al.*, 2016; Rowley and Ulrich, 2016).

Hall *et al.* (2012) have suggested various area of research in the area of SHRM in context to supply chain orientation (SCO), considering the emergence of value chain concept as a strategic tool. The past researchers highlighted the significance of human resource management as cost drivers and sources. The special section covers various underpinning theories and research directions for the future researchers through variety of articles. The research contributions of the past are highlighted to understand the evolution of SHRM into SCO, particularly in the areas, namely, market-oriented philosophy (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990), combination of value chain, market orientation and inter-functional coordination (Narver and Slater, 1990) Particularly as the result of multidisciplinary and combination of the areas including value chain, market orientation, and customer value research reshaped the supply chain management thinking (Ellram and Murfield, 2019; Jääskeläinen and Heikkilä, 2019).

SCO has emerged as highly used approach for deploying these types of multidisciplinary coupling research in the recent times (Esper *et al.*, 2010; Aydinler *et al.*, 2019; Neutzling *et al.*, 2018). The research ideas presented through selected papers in this special section showcase several implications for the industries in South Asia, particularly for Chinese economy. Few implications include flexibility in operations, which help firms to reshape the approach of balancing performance with flexibility using SHRM for sustainable supply chains. Second imperative could be decision models for HR managers working for supply chain firms. Third important implication is the value creation at various levels to optimize the profits of the firm. Besides, the multidisciplinary contribution in the areas of supply chain management and organization theory, SHRM helps the future researchers to understand, optimize and leverage the firm level benefits. Owing to enhancement in the size and scope of the supply chain networks among firms, the role of SHRM research is not confined to a single firm. Every set of partner is now influence with the



SHRM decisions, and it affects the overall supply chain orientation of the ecosystem. The special section shall contribute to the research developments in the area and help the future researchers in this direction.

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