

# Implementation of strategic human resource management practices: a review of the national scientific production and new research paths

SHRM national  
scientific  
production

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The strategic human resource management (SHRM) emerged in the middle of the 1980s and is currently seen as a relevant research and practical field in the area of business administration (Kaufman, 2015). Its academic relevance has been receiving international attention due to the importance of the strategic performance of human resource management (HRM) (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014). It is possible to define SHRM as a vertical connection between HRM practices and international strategy and horizontally as the congruence among the several human resource practices (Wright & McMahan, 1992).

**Design/methodology/approach** – Taking into consideration the emerging research gaps in the area, the necessity to bring to attention the implementation of policies and strategic practices of human resource management became prominent. Our study characterizes the national scenario regarding this specific research theme. For such, we developed a bibliometric review of national journals in the area of business administration with level Qualis B2 [1] or above, described the institutionalization of the research in Brazil and established a sociogram with research relationship networks in the country.

**Findings** – Between 1997 and 2017, only 19 articles on the implementation of SHRM were published in the 32 journals researched. The characterization of the studies indicates a predominance of qualitative articles, which adopt as methodological approach the case study, and most of them use interviews and content analysis as techniques of data collection and analysis, respectively. The use of such investigation tools is in line with the nature of the phenomenon studied. The scenario indicates that the implementation of SHRM is still a developing theme in Brazil.

**Research limitations/implications** – There is a lack of studies that combine the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches and focus on public organizations. Besides, the results indicate the need to diversify the methodological approaches used. Regarding the institutionalization of research in Brazil, it is possible to notice the growth of research groups investigating SHRM, even though their only focus does not rely on implementation. The academic production regarding the theme is regionally located in the state of São Paulo, even though academic production is also to be found in a decentralized way in the country, with rare networks.

**Practical implications** – This way, the main contribution of this article is the accomplishment of the first bibliometric review regarding the implementation of SHRM in Brazil, showing the scientific community that the theme still presents a gap to be explored in national studies and showing human resource professionals and the society that the transformational switch of human management to organizational outcomes – despite prolific in the academia – still has not been realized in practice.

**Social implications** – In the articles analyzed, the most common finding was that the effective implementation of SHRM and strategic practices of HR, such as the competency management, still deserves attention of the academia through the accomplishment of deeper qualitative studies that exhibit not only interfering factors but also the initiatives that must be adopted by the organization to favor the implementation process.

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**Originality/value** – The interventions occurred in an organization can or cannot stem from an articulated HR strategy. Some policies can be implemented without a previous explicit planning, and other planned strategies may never even be effectively implemented (Truss & Gratton, 1994). As reported by Kaufman (2015), some critical success factors to a large-scale organizational change – which is necessary for the effective adoption of strategic HR models – are the commitment of leaderships and a carefully planned and managed implementation. For such, it is necessary to manage programmed organizational changes properly and to act promptly on the cultural pressure perceived by all levels of the organization (Guest, 1987). Such premises are associated with the SHRM perspective proposed by Wright and Snell (1998), in which the authors claim that the main role of HR is to implement organizational strategies. Lengnick-Hall *et al.* (2009) present a research agenda that highlights the need to give more emphasis on issues related to the implementation of strategic human resource management, specifically regarding the vertical and horizontal alignment of HR systems.

**Keywords** Strategic human resource management, Implementation, Bibliometry

**Paper type** Literature review

## Introduction

The strategic human resource management (SHRM) emerged in the middle of the 1980s and is currently seen as a relevant research field and practice in business administration (Kaufman, 2015). Its academic relevance has been gaining a growing international emphasis, considering the importance of the strategic performance of human resource management (HRM) (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014).

It is possible to define SHRM as the vertical connection between HRM practices and the organizational strategy and horizontally as the congruence amongst the several procedures of human resource practices (Wright & McMahan, 1992). It can also be understood as the HRM integrated to the strategies of the organization, aligned with HRM policies that are consistent with the different HRM units and with the several hierarchical levels, being accepted and used by managers and employees (Schuler, 1992).

The combination of such concepts enables us to conclude that SHRM approaches – at the macro level – are the integration between the several HR functions among themselves and the strategic goals of the organization (Schuler, 1992; Wright & McMahan, 1992; Wright & Snell, 1991). Managing the contributions of collaborators and the strategic goals of the organization through initiatives that comply with environmental contingencies and coordinating horizontally the performance of each one of the subsystems of human source management is the goal of this new performance dynamics (Hendry & Pettigrew, 1990; Jackson, Schuler & Rivero, 1989; Wright & McMahan, 1992; Wright & Snell, 1991).

With this new performance approach of the human resource area, the scientific field of SHRM has diversified notably since seminal studies until the most recent developments identified. Furthermore, we observed more complex studies through the inclusion of new organizational variables, which are determinant to the better understanding of this search field according to Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade & Drake (2009). The authors identified the seven main themes regarding SHRM and described the main thematic fields explored in the studies carried out by them, besides pointing out the timeframe in which the changes occurred. Such information is summarized in Figure 1.

Among the themes, it is possible to emphasize “Achieving HR implementation and execution” because according to the authors, even after decades of developing the field, there is still a lot to know about the role of policy implementation and strategic practices of human source management and its relationship to organizational performance, considering that most studies were still not able to justify the importance of the personal unit to the accomplishment of strategic goals. This way, we emphasize the importance of understanding the policy implementation process and strategic practices of human resource, such as the aspects that enable an effective implementation of SHRM; otherwise, the HR field will continue to be seen only as an administrative field – playing a functional and supporting role.

In the early 1980s	<b>Explaining contingency perspectives and fit</b> Identification of ways to achieve a fit between HR activities and desired strategic outcomes
	<b>Shifting from a focus from managing people to creating strategic contributions</b> To ensure that employees have the ability and motivation to achieve the established organizational goals
	<b>Elaborating HR system components and structure</b> Identification of HR elements to be examined in detail and then blended into unique configurations of HR activities.
In the early 1990s	<b>Expanding the scope of SHRM</b> Emphasis on strategic contributions of HR in a determined competitive context, which expands the limit of the organization.
	<b>Achieving HR implementation and execution</b> Evaluation of the effective implementation of SHRM models as they become more complex.
	<b>Measuring outcomes of SHRM</b> Determination of valid and appropriate measures of SHRM activities as performance issues become more prominent.
Since 2000	<b>Evaluating methodological issues</b> Greater methodological emphasis, as the SHRM field matures, and consolidation of conceptual structures.

**Source(s):** Lengnick-Hall, M.L., Lengnick-Hall, C.A., Andrade, L.S., & Drake, B. (2009). *Strategic human resource management: the evolution of the field. Human Resource Management Review, Vol. 19, 64-85*

**Figure 1.**  
Seven themes across  
time in SHRM  
literature

In the Brazilian scientific context, some theoretical reviews carried out in the country – with a more generic approach – indicate the theme related to implementation of policies and practices of strategic human resource management as a promising source of research in Brazil (e.g. Armond, Côrtes, Santos, Demo, & Meneses, 2016). However, it was not possible to locate any previous bibliographic research emphasizing the implementation of SHRM.

In order to fill such gap, the purpose of our study is to identify and characterize the studies developed in the field of implementation of HR strategic practices between 1997 and 2017. This way, we intend to describe methodological, demographic and content patterns of the national scientific production between 1997 – the year in which the emergence of the first editions of the journals analyzed herein occurred – and 2017, when the study was finally concluded. Likewise, the other purpose of this review is to present the institutionalization of the research on the theme in Brazil and the relationship network among research institutions. Finally, the outcomes presented supported the proposition of a study agenda that indicates new research paths regarding the implementation of SHRM policies and practices.

#### *Strategic human resource management and its implementation*

The interventions occurred in an organization can or cannot stem from an articulated HR strategy. Some policies can be implemented without a previous explicit planning, and other planned strategies may never even be effectively implemented (Truss & Gratton, 1994). As reported by Kaufman (2015), some critical success factors to a large-scale organizational change – which is necessary for the effective adoption of strategic HR models – are the commitment of leaderships and a carefully planned and managed implementation. For such, it is necessary to manage programmed organizational changes properly and to act promptly on the cultural pressure perceived by all levels of the organization (Guest, 1987). Such premises are associated with the SHRM perspective proposed by Wright & Snell (1998), in which the authors claim that the main role of HR is to implement organizational strategies.

Lengnick-Hall *et al.* (2009) present a research agenda that highlights the need to give more emphasis on issues related to the implementation of strategic HRM, specifically regarding the

vertical and horizontal alignment of HR systems. The way through which organizations place HR policies and the need to measure the effective horizontal alignment of their adjustment initiatives are also mentioned as relevant issues. As reported by [Armond \*et al.\* \(2016\)](#), the most popular approaches related to the integration of the business strategy to HR policies stem from a rational perspective, from normative models that define how HR policies can be integrated to the reached development stage, as well as the strategic guidance adopted by the organization. In this context, SHRM aims to analyze how work relations are managed according to goal achievement because people and their interactions are essential to the accomplishment of organizational goals ([Legge, 2006](#)). Literature divides the SHRM study into three different theoretical perspectives as follows: universalist, contingency and configurational ([Delery & Doty, 1996](#)). In the first perspective, the improvement of the outcomes of an organization is associated with the implementation of a specific group of best practices for the HR strategic planning ([Huselid, 1995](#); [Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997](#)). Following this line of reasoning, some HR practices will always be considered better than others, and all organizations should adopt them. In order to escape from the prescription proposed by the universalist perspective, theorists that support the contingency approach ([Fombrun, Tichy & Devanna, 1984](#); [Schuler & Jackson, 1987](#)) claim that, in order to become successful, HR policies must be aligned with the other aspects of the organization, such as different strategic positions. Finally, in the configurational perspective ([Delery & Doty, 1996](#); [Miles & Snow, 1984](#); [Wright & McMahan, 1992](#)) there is a pattern of actions that provides superior outcomes whose ideal model would be the one presenting a higher level of horizontal alignment among HR subsystems. To identify and recognize each of the theoretical perspectives is important in order to contribute to the development of the theoretical framework regarding SHRM ([Delery & Doty, 1996](#)).

Accordingly, [Guest \(1987\)](#) defends the existence of four main objectives pertaining to HRM – integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality. Three of them are particularly relevant to the successful implementation of HRM according to the author. In order to achieve integration, it is necessary to establish coherence between HR and the strategic plans of the organization, the coherence of HR policies among themselves, besides the internalization of the importance of HR by managers, which would enable the implementation of strategic plans. In order to achieve commitment, it is necessary to pursue HR policies that emphasize compatible behavioral values in order to adjust the organizational culture. Finally, in order to achieve flexibility, the organization must avoid strict, hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, while providing organic structures that enable project management and stimulating the action of agents of change among managers. Another premise is the need for decentralization and control delegation through a careful design of job positions ([Guest, 1987](#)).

The effective implementation of HR practices can, therefore, improve significantly the operational and financial performance of an organization. Improvements in productivity, reduction of turnovers, growth in sales and higher profits are associated with the use of HR practices, such as performance-based remuneration ([Huselid, 1995](#)). Besides, the implementation of technical and strategic HR practices has already been empirically tested; the outcomes indicate that most companies are successful when implementing technical HR practices, such as security and clearing companies. However, in the companies in which practices considered strategic (e.g. employee empowerment, managerial involvement and development) were effectively implemented, the impact on the organizational outcomes was significantly higher ([Huselid \*et al.\*, 1997](#); [Costa, Demo, & Paschoal, 2017](#)).

It is also possible to identify a consonance between the previous models and the one by [Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg & Kalleberg \(2000\)](#), which establishes a relationship between the achievement of higher organizational results to the confluence of three interdependent

factors – ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity (O). The authors claim that the gathering of the three factors contribute to a better performance of collaborators and consequently better organizational results.

Even in successful organizations, the implementation of HRM practices frequently presents dissonances between what is intended and what is effectively implemented (Truss, 2001). However, when there is an agreement among HR professionals on the identification of intended HR practices, there is a higher chance of coherence between what is planned and what is effectively implemented. The reduction of such gap stems from a harmonization of the HR area perceived by other collaborators, which results in clearer development processes and practices. Studies on the theme are still scarce and tend to address the sense of responsibility to line managers (Piening, Baluch, & Ridder, 2014).

The tridimensional model by Gratton & Truss (2003) presented the following deciding elements to obtain an effective HR strategy: (1) alignment between HRM and definition of strategic goals; (2) alignment among individual HR policies and (3) implementation of HR practices. In this context, the implementation of HR represents the degree to which practices are carried out by the line managers and employees of an organization. There are also several social factors that influence the implementation of HR practices. The model of the social context of HR systems suggests that organizational values, beliefs, attitudes and political considerations exert a significant influence (Ferris *et al.*, 1998).

The role of line managers in implementing HR practices was the central piece of a model developed by Sikora and Ferris (2014), who identified some influencing factors related to the ability and willingness of line managers to implement HR practices in the organization – social interactions, organizational culture, organizational environment and political considerations. Such factors also influence other outcomes, such as employee turnover, job satisfaction and job performance. In this sense, before the several factors that can interfere in the process of implementation, studying such themes while taking into consideration the Brazilian reality is important in order to evaluate the contextual aspects of the country and their influence on SHRM issues.

### Method, procedure and research techniques

We adopted herein bibliometrics as methodological approach in order to present the way through which knowledge is screened, promoting the content analysis of research in business administration in Brazil. Bibliometrics is especially relevant to the analysis of scientific production of a country by presenting the development of a certain knowledge idea and identifying theoretical and empirical gaps (Araújo & Alvarenga, 2011), and quantifying the existing patterns in determined study areas (Pritchard, 1969; Tague-Sutcliffe, 1992).

We established, therefore, some criteria in order to parameterize the selection of journals and the bibliographic search in addition to the analytical dimensions that enable the classification of the articles of the sample. The selection of national journals was restricted to the ones classified by the CAPES system as B2, B1 or A2 according to the Qualis [2] (2016) evaluation cycle and pertaining to business administration areas. The superior quality of these journals reflects the academic relevance they have in this specific research field in Brazil. Thus, we seek to evaluate if the implementation issue is relevant in the national scientific scenario. Despite the connection between HRM and psychology, we decided to limit the search to business administration journals, on the one hand, because of the focus of implementation on the organizational context, and, on the other hand, because most psychological studies tend to focus on the individual per se.

Therefore, the 32 journals that compose the research database were as follows: *Brazilian Administration Review (BAR)*, *Brazilian Business Review (BBR)*, *Cadernos EBAPE.BR (FGV)*, *Organizações e Sociedade (online)*, *Revista de Administração Contemporânea (RAC)*,

*Revista de Administração de Empresas (RAE), Revista de Administração Pública (RAP), Revista de Administração (RAUSP), Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios, Revista de Administração e Contabilidade da Unisinos (BASE), Gestão & Produção (UFSCAR), Revista de Administração e Inovação (RAI), Revista de Administração Mackenzie (RAM), Revista de Administração da UFSM (REA), Revista Eletrônica de Administração (READ), Revista Eletrônica de Ciência Administrativa (RECADM), Revista de Gestão (REGE), Revista de Ciências da Administração, Revista Portuguesa e Brasileira de Gestão, Revista Economia & Gestão (E&G), Revista de Administração (FACES), Gestão & Planejamento, Gestão & Regionalidade, Organizações Rurais e Agroindustriais, Revista de Administração da Unimep, Revista Desenvolvimento em Questão, Revista do Serviço Público, Revista Eletrônica de Estratégia & Negócios, Revista Iberoamericana de Estratégia, Revista Organizações em Contexto, Revista Pretexto and Teoria e Prática em Administração.*

We used the search platforms provided by the journals, and we verified the presence of the following expressions – as well as their combination – in the title, abstract or keywords: *gestão estratégica de pessoas, implementação, administração de recursos humanos estratégica, implementação, gestão de pessoas, implementação, recursos humanos, implementação*, strategic human resources and implementation.

The chosen descriptors were used due to the recurrence observed in the keywords of the articles during the bibliographic search carried out when elaborating the theoretical framework of this study. We did not use a time filter because there were no other reviews containing the implementation of SHRM policies and practices as the main focus. This way, we conducted a search in every edition of the journals analyzed since their first publication in Brazil. After obtaining an initial sample of 25 articles, we carried out a more specific analysis, in which we read carefully the abstracts, the keywords and in some cases the entire article in order to eliminate articles that did not address implementation as the focus of the study.

After this selection procedure, we obtained 19 articles that could be categorized in the following analysis segments: identification and demography (journal, year, quantity, authors that publish the most and affiliation), methodology (type of study, number of organizations analyzed and economic sector), procedures and techniques (analysis and data collection techniques) and institutionalization of the scientific production (existence of research groups and networks among them) regarding the implementation of SHRM in Brazil.

Finally, on the Lattes platform, we looked for research groups that were involved with the theme through the search engine of the respective directory by searching the expression “implementation of strategic human resource management” [3]. There was no research group found under such expression. Due to the inexistence of research groups focused exclusively on implementation, we searched the expression “strategic human resource management” [4]. As result, we found 14 research groups, whose affinity to the specific theme of our study supports the analysis of their scientific production.

Next, we identified the institutional affiliation declared by the authors of the articles reviewed. Consequently, we used the software UCINET to establish eventual networks used in the elaboration of the articles. The identification of networks was accomplished in order to evaluate how much the theme appealed researchers and academia to an extent that could motivate the creation of study partnerships.

## Results and discussion

In this session we will present the outcomes related to the theme “Implementation of Strategic Human Resource Management” based on the analysis and identification of the characteristics of the 19 articles that represent the sample. Regarding the demography of the articles reviewed herein, from the 32 journals researched, we found only 11 results for the submitted search, as shown in [Table 1](#).



Journals	Qualis	Number of articles	Publication date(s)
Organização & Sociedade	A2	1	2008
Revista de Administração Contemporânea	A2	5	1997; 2000; 2001 2005; 2017
Revista de Administração de Empresas	A2	2	2005; 2008
Revista de Administração Pública	A2	1	1998
Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios	A2	1	2006
Revista de Administração Mackenzie	B1	3	2008; 2011; 2015
Revista de Administração da UFSM	B1	1	2013
Revista de Ciências da Administração	B1	2	2007; 2010
Gestão & Planejamento	B2	1	2005
Revista do Serviço Público	B2	1	2016
Revista Iberoamericana de Estratégia	B2	1	2012

**Source(s):** Elaborated by the authors based on data gathered from the journals' websites

**Table 1.**  
Journals and articles of  
the sample

Considering that our study encompasses 20 years of scientific production and that we analyzed the production of 32 journals, it is worth observing that the implementation of SHRM is still struggling for a space in the national academia. Such outcome reflects the lack of studies focused on this specific field of the Business Administration area, which is in line with the affirmations by *Lengnick-Hall et al. (2009)* and *Armond et al. (2016)*.

The data shown in *Table 2* also emphasize the number of articles found in the 11 national journals indicating that most part of the publications are accomplished by RAC, RAM, RAE and Revista de Ciências da Administração, whose Qualis classification ranges from A2 to B1. There are, therefore, 12 articles (64%) published by the aforementioned journals, which

Year of creation	Name	Institution
2002	Gestão de Pessoas e Gestão do Conhecimento nas Organizações	USP
2004	Gestão Estratégica de Pessoas	USP
2006	Núcleo de Pesquisa em Organizações, Pessoas, Trabalho e Ambiente	UNESC
2008	Gestão de pessoas	Uninove
2008	Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisa em Gestão de Negócios	UFMS
2008	Núcleo de Estudos em Recursos Humanos e Relações de Trabalho	PUC-MG
2009	Grupo de Pesquisas em Gestão de Pessoas e Clientes (GP2C)	UnB
2010	Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Administração	UFSCAR
2013	Gestão da Aprendizagem e Estratégias Organizacionais	Universidade Santa Cecília
2013	Grupo de estudos sobre Vínculos Organizacionais	UFU
2013	Núcleo de Estudo em Gestão e Trabalho	UFV
2014	Estudos observacionais no Processo de Ensino-Aprendizagem e Pesquisa em Administração	UNIFESP
2015	Grupo de Pesquisa em Gestão de Pessoas e Comportamento Organizacional	PUC-PR
2016	Centro de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento de Políticas Estratégicas de Gestão de Pessoas no Setor Público	UnB
2017	Projectum - Estudos Avançados para Metodologias em Gestão	UnB

**Source(s):** Adapted from the directory "Research Groups" available at the Plataforma Lattes website. Access Dec.2017

**Table 2.**  
Research groups

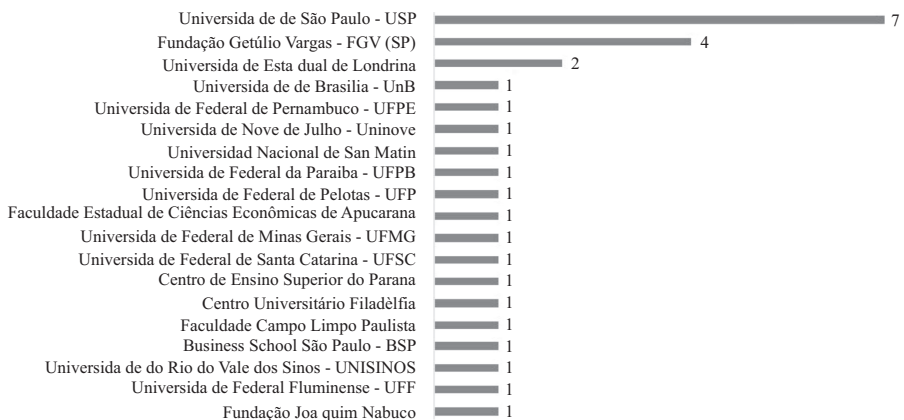
represent most of the studies that approach the theme during the selected date range. The journals with less publications on implementation of SHRM presented the same percentage of articles (5%), which corresponds to one article published in the selected date range.

It was also possible to determine the distribution of article production on the theme over the years since the emergence of each one of the journals until the year that data were collected for this study (2017). The production presented a reasonably homogenous pattern, except for the years 2005 and 2008, in which no frequency peaks were observed, and the years 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2009, in which no article was found. However, it was possible to observe at least one article published per year on the theme in Brazil, considering the 20-year range used herein.

A complementary analysis indicates the proportion of institutions involved in the publications. According to Figure 2, the most participative institution is USP (Universidade de São Paulo), which was present in seven (37%) publications on the theme, followed by FGV-SP, with four (21%) studies and UEL, with two (7%). It is worth highlighting, however, the local predominance of the studies on implementation of SHRM in the state of São Paulo.

Besides, according to Figure 2, one can observe that the theme was scientifically researched by several different institutions (Figure 3), even though the individual production is quantitatively scarce. Regarding the institutional origin of the authors, 19 educational institutions contributed to the production of the sample analyzed herein. From these, 16 participated in the production of only one article on the implementation of SHRM in organizations, whether individually or through establishing a relationship with authors from different institutions. It is possible to deduct that the study on the theme is more concentrated in a few institutions (three), while being still little explored by others.

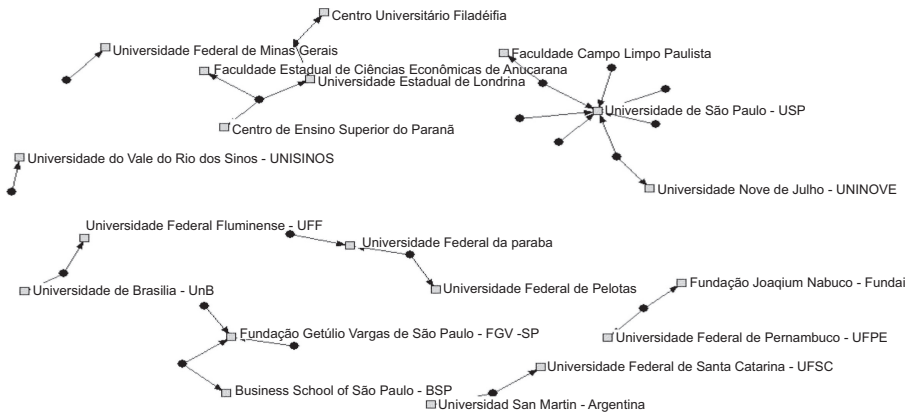
This way, in order to represent the national productivity on the theme in Brazil – in addition to the institutions involved in the publications – we identified some Brazilian research groups that focus on publications regarding the specific theme brought herein. In order to meet such goal, we used the directory of research groups provided by the website of Plataforma Lattes [5] regarding the “Implementation of SHRM practices and policies” [6]. The only result was the one related to “Strategic Personnel Management” [7], in which 15 certified and valid research groups were found all operating in the business administration field. In this sense, we could also obtain further information on these groups, such as the year of creation, the name and the institutional origin.



**Figure 2.**  
Proportional participation of institutions in the articles of the sample

Source(s): Authors (2019)





**Source(s):** Elaborated by the authors through UCINET

**Figure 3.**  
Network diagram  
regarding the  
relationship among  
research institutions

According to our search carried out in the directory, the first research group created focused on the theme “Gestão de Pessoas e Gestão do Conhecimento nas Organizações” and the second “Gestão Estratégica de Pessoas”; both created at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) in 2002 and 2004 respectively. In the upcoming years, the development of research groups started to intensify, especially over the last five years, showing a significant increase from 2013 onwards, which expanded the research on the theme due to the participation of other institutions.

It is possible to establish the existence of a relationship between the pioneer spirit of the Universidade de São Paulo during the creation of the first two research groups on SHRM and its prominence as the institution most involved in publications (Table 2), considering that four from the seven articles published by USP stem from these two research groups, which were created before other groups, and therefore gather more information on the subject.

Nevertheless, in order to understand the relationship between the other universities and the production in Brazil, in addition to the search on the Plataforma Lattes regarding research groups, we also took into consideration the creation of network of relationships based on research partnerships and the elaboration of scientific studies located during the bibliographic review. In order to fulfill such objective, we used the software UCINET to create Figure 3, in which we identify the relationship between each one of the institutional origins of the authors and the articles identified.

Regarding the institutionalization of the research, it is worth highlighting the increase of research groups in Brazil, which was intensified over the last five years, entailing the expansion of research possibilities regarding the implementation of SHRM. In relation to the institutional origin of the articles, the network indicates a centralization toward USP and the existence of a few decentralized subnetworks, which can be a barrier to the consolidation of the scientific field regarding the implementation of SHRM.

The analysis of Figure 3 highlights the predominance of articles originated from USP, which emphasizes USP as the university that publishes the most. It is also possible to notice the decentralized presence of other subnetworks that are not connected among themselves. Among the groups identified in the directory, it is possible to realize that not all articles analyzed in the study sample originated from research groups. In the study sample, there were some institutions – from which articles were published – that were not related to any research group. These outcomes indicate that the institutionalization is not accomplished solemnly through research groups; there are some authors that are no active members of any group.

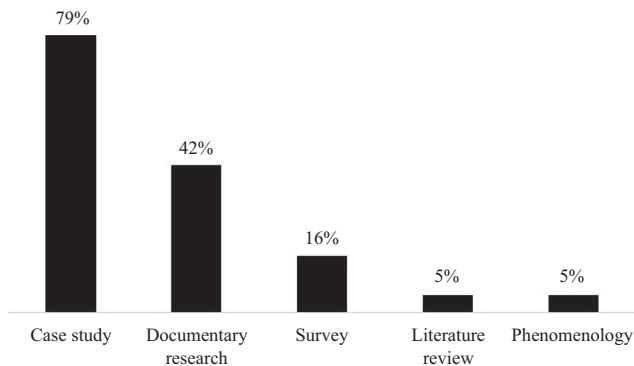
The results show a convergence regarding the gap pointed out by the authors; i.e. it is still a little-explored theme with great research potential. In this sense, the institutionalization of the theme in Brazil reflects a reasonable number of subnetworks, which demonstrates a decentralized study field and a possible spread of the theme throughout the national territory. However, the rare connections among institutions can indicate a difficulty in converting the themes, leading to barriers to the consolidation of SHRM as research field in Brazil.

When analyzing the methodological aspects of the articles reviewed herein, the publication of theoretical and empirical studies is the one that stands out (17 articles; 90% of the sample). The other outcomes are presented in [Figure 4](#).

We identified the use of case study (15 articles; 79% of the sample); documentary research (8 articles; 42% of the sample); survey (3 articles, 16% of the sample), one literature review (5%) and one article that adopted phenomenology (5% of the sample) as research methodology. Even though case study was the most used methodology, it is necessary to consider the triangulation as a research method, a practice commonly adopted in – but not restricted to – qualitative studies through the combination of different methodological approaches or different data collection techniques or data analysis (Tran, 2015). In our analysis, it was possible to observe the use of triangulation of qualitative methods in 10 articles (63% of the sample).

Hence, although the techniques are different in terms of proportion, it is possible to consider that, in many cases, they were used jointly. In our analysis, the case study and documentary research were the most used combined methods (7 articles); documentary research was used mostly in a complementary way. The survey was used as a complementary approach in two articles.

Literature evaluates the studies on the field of implementation of SHRM as still in its early stage ([Lengnick-Hall et al., 2009](#); [Jackson et al., 2014](#)). Due to the character of the phenomenon, the qualitative approach is the mostly used methodology, and the recurrent adoption of case studies is the mostly used method. According to [Delery & Doty \(1996\)](#), the theoretical advances in the field of SHRM lead to the adoption of a contingency and configurational perspective, in which the predictability of the phenomenon is attached to circumstances of each case. The predominance of case studies in our sample can, therefore, indicate the only way of conducting a field research in this specific area. Moreover, considering that the phenomenon is qualitative, i.e. depends not on the sensibility but on the interpretation of the researcher, it is more viable to observe and understand specific cases that are already known or at least closer to the reality studied ([Denzin & Lincoln, 2005](#)).



Source(s): Authors (2019)

Figure 4.  
Methodological approaches

According to the methodological typification in Table 3, the articles analyzed are predominantly qualitative (14 articles; 74% of the sample); three articles are quantitative (16% of the sample) and only one presents both quantitative and qualitative approaches (5% of the sample). Such finding highlights the need to deepen the subjective analysis on a theme still little explored in the national context. Regarding the economy sector, most of the studies focused on the private sphere – 12 private institutions (63% of the sample) were studied, while five (26%) approached the public sphere; it was not possible to find in the sample an article that analyzed neither the two sectors concomitantly nor the third sector, which presents certain specificities that deserve extra attention. Consequently, there is a lack of comparative studies on the implementation of SHRM practices in the three above-mentioned contexts.

The predominance of investigating private organizations reflects a tendency of accomplishing studies in this sector, considering that SHRM originated first in private organizations (Jackson *et al.*, 2014), only later in the public sector (Brown, 2004). However, it is known that currently most part of the difficulties resulting in the implementation deficit of strategic HR practices are caused by contextual factors, which are beyond the scope of the HR area (Ferris *et al.*, 1998; Legge, 2006; Côrtes & Meneses, 2017). Therefore, the production of studies in the public area also contributes to the investigation of the theme by exploring different – and potentially complementary – contexts in order to fill the eminent gap regarding implementation.

We identified that the institutions that mostly publish articles on the theme – USP, FGV-SP and Universidade Estadual de Londrina – focus the investigation on the private sector, and studies that approach the public sector are accomplished by the institutions Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (Fundaj), UFPE, UnB, UFF, UNISINOS and UFPB; we found the publication of one article per institution and we also identified a partnership between UnB and UFF in one study. Among other factors, the predominance of one or other sector of the economy can be attributed to the geographic location of the educational institutions and the existence of eventual partnerships with public or private organizations in the region.

Regarding the predominance of case studies, it is important to mention that most of the articles showed a single case study (47%) despite the occurrence of multiple case studies, in which three or more organizations were analyzed. It is worth to point out that two studies were considered theoretical, while one of the articles of the sample did not specify the number of organizations analyzed in the empirical investigation.

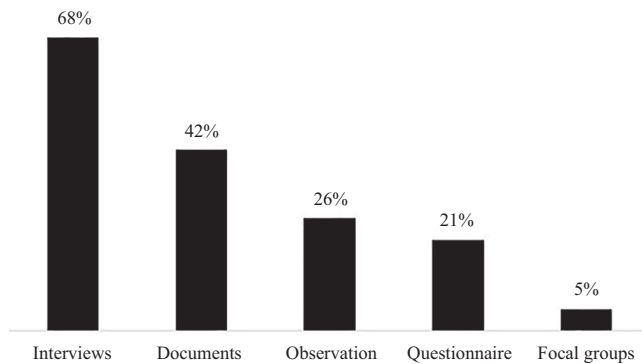
With regard to the procedures, we identified data collection and data analysis techniques related to theoretical and empirical studies. Interviewing was the most used data collection method (used in 13 articles; 68% of the sample), followed by documentary analysis in eight articles (42%) and observational research in five articles (26%). The other techniques and their percentages are presented in Figure 5.

Dimension	Categories	Quantity (%)
Type of study	Qualitative	74
	Quantitative	16
	Qualitative and quantitative	5
Economy sector	Private	63
	Public	26
	Public and private	–
Number of organizations	One	47
	Two	–
	Three	–
	More than three	37

Source(s): Authors (2019)

**Table 3.**  
Methodological  
typification

**Figure 5.**  
Data collection  
techniques

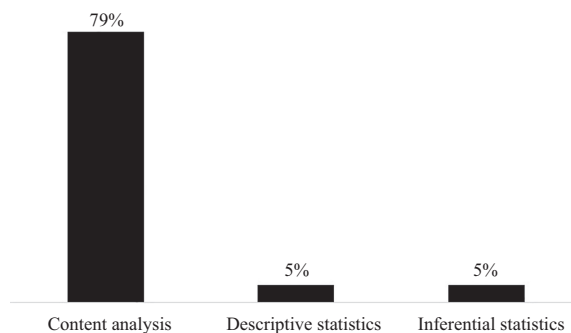


Source(s): Authors (2019)

In line with data collection, the mostly used analysis was the content analysis – present in 15 studies (79%) –, followed by descriptive statistics analysis in only one article (5%) and inferential statistical analysis, also in only one article (5%). It is worth emphasizing that two studies used both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The percentage of the mostly used analysis is presented in Figure 6.

From all studies that applied the content analysis technique, 13 (68%) obtained data through the accomplishment of interviews conducted with different organizational players, who were in different hierarchical positions and organizational units. It was also possible to observe that seven studies (37%) encompass different hierarchical levels, considering not only the shareholder composition but also more technical levels. There are still five studies (26%) that took into consideration the information obtained exclusively from higher hierarchical levels, such as the presidency of the organization or top-level management in order to provide a more historical and strategic view of the phenomenon. Regarding the organizational units identified herein, two studies (11%) collected information from the organization as a whole in order to analyze the perception of the organization regarding the human resource area or even still their own practices. Besides such perspective, three studies (16%) focus exclusively on one specific HR unit; one of them focuses on quality of working life (QWL) and the other on the implementation of competency management.

**Figure 6.**  
Data analysis  
techniques



Source(s): Authors (2019)

Finally, we emphasize the predominance of data collection through the interviewing technique and the subsequent content analysis, which confirms the tendency of theoretical and empirical studies of the SHRM area toward qualitative research, as pointed out by [Armond \*et al.\* \(2016\)](#) and [Meneses, Coelho, Ferreira, Paschoal & Silva \(2014\)](#). Regarding the methodological approach, we highlight the use of case study and documentary research with a predominance of interviewing and content analysis techniques as data collection and analysis methods respectively. Besides, most studies can be considered predominantly qualitative and focused on the private sector, considering the analysis of only one organization or more significant quantities (between 20 and 100).

Regarding the content of the 19 articles of the sample, it is important to emphasize that the implementation theme was approached in a particular way in each one of them, even though it is possible to observe a predominance of studies that evaluated the implementation of strategic practices of competency management (8). Such predominance is in line with the studies of [Armond \*et al.\* \(2016\)](#).

It is also noteworthy the occurrence of studies whose main purpose was the effective implementation of SHRM in private and in public organization, analyzing the effective adoption of practices, which occurred in three of them. There were other articles that chose to adopt a more critical perspective of the implementation phenomenon in order to evaluate a possible existence of a distance between acts and discourses in this process. There are also articles that explore the alignment between specific subsystems of HR and organizational strategy –more specifically the performance management and quality of working life.

Additional themes were also approached by at least one article, such as the role played by the leader in implementing SHRM ([Pires Giavina Bianchi, Quishida, & Foroni, 2017](#)), which is a critical success factor pointed out by [Kaufmann \(2015\)](#) in terms of adoption of strategic HR models; the importance of taking into account institutional factors and their influence on the implementation of SHRM; the contribution of strategic HR to organizational results ([Santos, Carpinetti & Gonçalves, 1997](#)), which is in line with the study of [Gratton & Truss \(2003\)](#) and the impacts of technology on the implementation of SHRM, which is also emphasized by [Lengnick Hall \*et al.\* \(2009\)](#) as one of the most promising elements of the SHRM field over the next years. The diversity observed in the articles is one more sign that the field study in Brazil still lacks consolidation and further development, considering there is no evidence of studies out of a specific theme, except for competency management. However, it is possible to state that the themes approached by the articles are in accordance with SHRM international literature.

Among the eight studies whose basis was the competency management, one of them proposes a model and evaluates its implementation in a private company. Despite emphasizing positive elements pointed out from managers' perspective, the study punctuates the need to monitor difficulties and outcomes achieved, besides the need to replicate such model in different companies ([Dutra, Hipólito, Monteiro, & Silva, 2000](#)). When conducting an investigation that takes into account the HR managers' perspective, a study accomplished by [Cardoso \(2006\)](#) adopted a new perspective of the phenomenon of competency management while evaluating the functioning of remuneration systems based on abilities and skills, emphasizing the positive effects of the existence of the strategic approach, stimulation of individual performance and stimulation of the improvement of professional competencies. The author highlights, however, the need to evaluate cultural factors of companies before determining the remuneration system to be adopted; such remark is also found in international literature ([Guest, 1987](#); [Ferris \*et al.\* 1998](#); [Kaufman, 2015](#)).

Also associating competency management to other HR subsystems, [Benetti, Girardi, Dalmau, Melo, & Parrino \(2007\)](#) evaluated the possibility to evaluate competency-based performance in a private company operating in the health sector in order to support the conception of career plans in the organization. They concluded that it was possible to make

such performance evaluation, even though the study did not monitor the implementation process. Pointed out by [Dutra et al. \(2000\)](#) as a premise to make a good evaluation of the implementation of competency management, the monitoring of the postimplementation period was the strategy adopted by [Munck, Munck & Souza \(2011\)](#) to evaluate the repercussions of the implementation process (10 years after the implementation) of a competency management program in a company operating in the telecommunications sector. For this purpose, it was necessary to establish a process of validity check that demonstrated operational problems of the models, difficulty to understand the concepts and obstacles related to the management, which led to a reduced credibility to guide other HR processes. Such findings are in line with [Truss \(2001\)](#), who believes that having clarity in the practices developed is the premise for a successful implementation. Furthermore, according to the authors, cultural and structural changes that support the model cannot be neglected; the results corroborate the priority defended by [Guest \(1987\)](#) and structural and cultural aspects related to implementation.

In a different study ([Appel & Bitencourt, 2008](#)), the emphasis was placed on the difficulties related to the Brazilian law – more specifically, on labor legislation and on the need that the institutionalization of competency management models in Brazil occurs with the support of a more adequate normative context. One of the seminal authors of SHRM ([Legge, 2006](#)) defends a similar idea and gives relevant importance to work relationships for the fulfillment of organizational goals. When the focus relies on small-sized companies, as that of the study by [Cassandre, Endrici & Vercesi \(2008\)](#), new challenges to implementation are perceived, such as structural fragmentations that compromise the implementation unit and the absence of strategic alignment. Consequently, in the analyzed case, implementation occurred only partially and focused on short-term commitments, which are different from the principles set out by SHRM experts ([Schuler, 1992](#); [Wright & McMahan, 1992](#); [Wright & Snell, 1991](#)).

When accomplishing an analysis based on case studies carried out in the public sector, [Silva, Mello & Torres \(2013\)](#) pointed out a few individual and institutional obstacles that can compromise the implementation of competency management. According to the authors, psychological factors, such as perceptions, reactions, values and beliefs of managers and collaborators interfere negatively with implementation; in the organizational sphere, culture and organizational environment present a negative interference, in addition to external factors related to the economic scenario. Taking into account the premise that the development of individual competencies contributes to the emergence of collective or institutional competencies, [Lima & Silva \(2015\)](#) accomplished a study at the Universidade Federal de Campina Grande in which the authors concluded that the absence of team unit limits the development of collective competencies due to the fragmentation of activities and the lack of integration among coordinators.

The outcomes of the studies indicate a predominance of the establishment of obstacles to implementations and difficulties still to be overcome. The successful cases presented refer to models that have not been tested yet and still depend on a systematic evaluation made over time. Such panorama seems to have influenced the accomplishment of studies, such as the one of [Lacombe & Tonelli \(2001\)](#), which classified more than a hundred Brazilian companies according to the functions of human resource areas as follows: the ones more related to an operational approach; the ones more related to strategic alliances and the ones that present a more competitive approach. However, the ambiguity found in the concepts that differentiate one from the other and the difficulty to evaluate in more detail each one of the practices related – due to the qualitative approach of the study – hampered testing the reliability of the answers obtained; i.e. to which extent are practices mere prescriptions made by the senior management, which are different from the practices effectively adopted? Such difficulty is also mentioned by [Lengnick-Hall et al. \(2009\)](#), who suggest the need to accomplish qualitative studies in order to better evaluate the implementation of SHRM. Such distance between



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discourse and practice tends to be mitigated when the HR unit operates in a strategic way. According to [Neves de Moura & Souza \(2016\)](#), the skills of HR professionals and cultural heritage of organizations also play an important role in the Brazilian public sector, which affects practices and results effectively obtained, regardless of the speech adopted.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, keeping in mind the gaps observed by [Lengnick-Hall \*et al.\* \(2009\)](#), our study analyzed the research on the theme implementation of policies and practices of SHRM in organizations. The results are in accordance with international studies and highlight the fact that it is still a little-explored theme, with great research potential. In this sense, regarding the local predominance of the state of São Paulo, the institutionalization of the theme in Brazil indicates a regional decentralization of research, which could possibly spread across the country as long as the connections among institutions are intensified. Otherwise, there might be some difficulty in converting the themes, which will hinder the consolidation of SHRM as a research field in Brazil.

Such tendency can already be observed when analyzing the content of the articles analyzed herein because even though there is a predominance of implementation of competency management, most part of them explores the implementation of SHRM with different approaches, in companies of different sizes and operating in diverse economy sectors. However, it is worth mentioning that in the articles analyzed, the most common finding that the effective implementation of SHRM and strategic practices of HR, such as the competency management, still deserves attention of the academia through the accomplishment of deeper qualitative studies that exhibit not only interfering factors but also the initiatives that must be adopted by the organization to favor the implementation process.

This way, the main contribution of this article is the accomplishment of the first bibliometric review regarding the implementation of SHRM in Brazil, showing the scientific community that the theme still presents a gap to be explored in national studies and showing human resource professionals and the society that the transformational switch of human management to organizational outcomes – despite prolific in the academia – still has not been realized in practice.

Regarding the limitations of the study, we affirm there is still literature on the theme in Brazil, considering that we decided to investigate only the journals with the highest evaluations by Capes; our sample did not encompass articles published in events, putting aside books, dissertations, theses and annals articles, which are considered by us as unfinished studies.

Nevertheless, we wish to boost the development of the research field related to the implementation of strategic human resource management in Brazil, promoting the debate on the theme in the academia and contributing to the improvement of researches accomplished in the country, raising awareness to this specific theme. Through the outcomes demonstrated herein, it was possible to indicate new research possibilities, challenges, and paths that will support the adoption of an agenda that can ensure an effective implementation of SHRM in Brazilian organizations.

## Notes

1. Qualis is a Brazilian system for the evaluation of journals. The strata are divided into 8 levels in descending order of quality: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, and C.
2. Qualis is a Brazilian system for the evaluation of journals. The strata are divided into 8 levels in descending order of quality: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, and C.
3. Equivalent in English.

4. Equivalent in English.
5. Lattes Platform: a database maintained by the Brazilian government.
6. Equivalent in English.
7. Equivalent in English.

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