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**STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE
INTEGRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY IN VUCA
TIMES**

Gizzatta Cook

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STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE INTEGRATION
AND ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY IN VUCA TIMES

by

Gizzatta Iana Cook

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Business and Economic Development
and the School of Leadership
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The failure rate of business strategy implementation hovers around 50% due to a lack of organizational ambidexterity in the realities associated with a four-dimensional paradigm referred to as a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Chattopadhyay et al., 2017). Anwar and Abdullah (2021) state that organizational success depends highly on how well organizational leaders manage and administer their human resource management practices. Today's successful organizations must adapt to societal changes to survive and thrive (Chattopadhyay et al., 2017).

Surviving and thriving beyond today's organizational constraints also involves a business's ability to demonstrate organizational ambidexterity. Organizational ambidexterity is the joint pursuit of efficiency in performing current operations while simultaneously pursuing new opportunities for the future (Chen et al., 2021; Vittori et al., 2022). This quantitative research study explored human resource professionals' perceptions of the integration of strategic human resource management practices and the level of organizational ambidexterity in a VUCA business operational environment.

The results and findings from this research support human resource management professionals embodying strategic competencies. Findings show a significant relationship between strategic human resource management integration practices and organizational ambidexterity. Findings implore the call for human resource management professionals to champion organizational change awareness and initiatives in the ever-changing VUCA business operations environment. The VUCA phenomenon is the new normal and here to stay (Ahuja & Jain, 2016); hence future research may consider exploring the perspectives

of both organizational leadership and human resource management leadership within the same study.

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But by the grace of God. He knew this path long before I began the journey. All that I am, is by His grace and His mercy!

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DEDICATION

To the two and a half men who forever and always support me the most, Donovan, Dillon, and Drew. Mom finally finished her paper. Love you infinity to the infinity power!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHRO	Chief Human Resources Officer
CLO	Chief Learning Officer
HR	Human Resources
HRBP	Human Resources Business Partner
HRM	Human Resource Management
IRB	Institutional Review Board
RO	Research Objective
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Organizations face a multitude of challenges sparked by unique and varying degrees of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Wicaksana et al., 2022; Zhang-Zhang et al., 2022). From a global pandemic to devastating hurricanes, the past two years have proven turbulent for the business environment. These and other tumultuous events have had severe economic consequences across the globe, which led to dramatic changes in how companies conducted business and how consumers reacted (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Unpredictable and disruptive events rendered many companies unable to continue operations (Renjen, 2021). Donthu and Gustafsson (2020) contend that notable change and disruption happened in the past and continue to occur today. Renjen (2021) asserts that navigating these challenges will not guarantee a promising future or any future at all.

Many S&P 500 businesses are likely to go out of business in 15 years or less (Giones et al., 2019), and half of the companies on the list today will likely be replaced in the next decade (Anthony et al., 2018). Consumers have witnessed large, once prominent organizations (e.g., Kodak, Nokia, Blockbuster, Research in Motion) go out of business due to an inability to effectively respond to change (Giones et al., 2019). Valuable commodities and services today could be devalued in an instant. Changes in consumer behavior, customer demands, advances in science, the arrival of domestic and international competitors, new regulations, price changes, demographic shifts, and other variables remain a constant threat to businesses (Bawany, 2016; Du & Chen, 2018; George, 2017; Jain, 2019).

The business environment continues to change quickly due to changes in regulatory framework or impacts of political or economic changes in domestic and global contexts (Dechezleprêtre & Sato, 2017). Today's successful organizations must adapt to societal changes to survive and thrive (Chattopadhyay et al., 2017). Stokes et al. (2019) assert that surviving and thriving beyond these constraints also involves a business's ability to demonstrate organizational ambidexterity. Organizational ambidexterity is the joint pursuit of efficiency in performing current operations while simultaneously pursuing new opportunities for the future (Chen et al., 2021; Popadiuk et al., 2018; Posch & Garaus, 2020; Vittori et al., 2022).

Organizational leaders face requirements to respond to a four-dimensional paradigm known as VUCA (Chattopadhyay et al., 2017). VUCA is an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in decision-making responsibilities (Baran & Woznyj, 2021; Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021; Du & Chen, 2018; Giles, 2018; Hamid, 2019; Minciu et al., 2020). Volatile describes quick change, but not in predictable or repeatable ways (Chadha, 2017; Jain, 2019). Uncertainty describes disruptive changes occurring frequently, and the past no longer accurately predicts the future (Kail, 2010; Minciu et al., 2020). The term complex refers to the numerous and difficult-to-understand forces at work in an environment and the mitigating factors involved in a problem (Hamid, 2019; Jain, 2019). Ambiguous describes the causes behind the unclear factors and potential misreads, mixed meanings of conditions, and cause and effect confusion (Gandhi, 2017; Kail, 2011). VUCA correctly describes current realities in today's business operations (Baran & Woznyj, 2021; Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021; Gandhi, 2017; Minciu et al., 2020). Examples include the COVID-19 global pandemic, Brexit, political

turbulence, threats from terrorists and cybercriminals, and climate change. As asserted by Harvard Business School Professor Bill George (2017), VUCA also hinders organizational leaders' foresight in topics of vital importance to employees and stakeholders, including health care policy, financial transactions, national security, and global trade.

Organizational leaders and employees experience disruptions related to trade expansion, the digital revolution, and economic swings, which cause ongoing uncertainty in the workplace (Van Brimmer, 2016). About 10,000 Baby Boomers retire daily in the United States (Auerbach et al., 2017), and on average, millennials change jobs every 2.8 years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). According to Tucker (2018), disruption in the workforce of this magnitude continues to increase steadily. Disruptions of this magnitude are characterized as crises. Boxall (1998) asserts that times of crisis create organizational successes and failures. Bonn and Rundle-Thiele (2007) define a crisis as "a major, unpredictable event that is likely to interfere with normal business operations and has the potential to threaten organizational survival" (p. 616). Boxall (1998) further contends that organizations that diminish the importance of making strategic adjustments succumb to failure or acquisition.

Throughout the past decades, the business landscape around the world experienced volatile markets and economic downturns, making it difficult to strategically plan for organizational success (Huston & Young, 2012). Today organizations and employees grapple with managing situations beyond their control. Human resources (HR) is critical to organizational functionality and success.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) membership totals approximately 300,000 members, representing over 100 million employees in the workforce (Taylor, 2018). Manos Avramidis, CEO of the American Management Association, contends, "No function is better suited to impact business outcomes... without the right people, it is challenging, if not impossible, to achieve desired business results" (Moss, 2018, p. 41). Johnny Taylor (2018), CEO of SHRM, asserts that people comprise the competitive edge in organizations. Human resource leaders must be agile and prepared to respond quickly to the need for essential capital, human capital.

Human capital can have a make-or-break effect on a company's business performance (Young & Hexter, 2011). According to a 2003 study, human capital expenses average 36% of revenues (Vickers, 2003). Organizations traditionally allocate money spent on human resources as an operating expense (Chopra, 2017). As a percentage of operating costs, salaries vary by industry, with the median average from 18% in retail to 52% in health care services. Human capital operating costs average 50% in educational services (Young & Hexter, 2011) and 40-60% in for-profit businesses (Fuchs, 2020), easily representing the number one operating expense category for most businesses. However, according to Young and Hexter (2011), companies seldom include human capital issues when systematically identifying, assessing, prioritizing, and managing risks at the corporate level. Furthermore, Chopra (2017) contends these expenses account more accurately as capital expenditures—the funds organizations report on balance sheets as investments rather than on income statements as expenditures.

Organizational success relies on the ability to create agile, competitive companies. Human capital's measurable impact on business outcomes renders it vital for quantifying

both opportunity and risk. A headline from the 2nd Annual Strategic Human Resources Conference (Stewart, 2016) contends, "Today's complex problems require complex solutions" (p. 1). These problems include technological disruption, globalization, and uncertainty. Conference participants also characterized these complex problems as "wicked" (p. 1). HR performs an essential role in helping solve individual and complex issues. The 2016 SHRM conference focused on the need for other business units to utilize human resources as a strategic partner, not only a service provider. According to Schramm (2016), few are better positioned than human resources professionals to assess the current economy and its future.

Feffer (2017) presents numerous references regarding the potential for organizations to transform human resources from a clerical operational function into a strategic resource. One fundamental hurdle of human resources involves its inability to quantify its impact. Human resources must understand and speak the language of business strategy and connect it to human resource strategy. The human resources department should become an organization's visible and recognized authority on strategic planning processes and serve as the go-to experts to overcome obstacles that prevent operational success (Simpkins, 2008). Charan (2018) advocates for the reinvention of the human resources role so that the Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) can work alongside the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to manage human capital with the same emphasis and attention as financial capital. Organization executives must address the challenge of linking the business strategy to the human resources strategy (Feffer, 2017). Human resources leaders should build a cross-

organizational alliance and create a shared vision for improved organizational success (Van Brimmer, 2016).

Background of the Study

The human resource management function consistently faces obstacles in justifying its position in organizations. According to Van Brimmer (2016), the conventional wisdom about the work and the role of human resources departments is obsolete. Human resources should operate as a multifunctional partner with other strategic business units. The traditional administrative focus of Human Resource Management (HRM) relates to the operational tasks of an organization (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). The human resources function requires a constant learning mode to avoid obsolescence.

The role of human resources within organizations has evolved significantly since its early inception as an administrative support function (Rowden, 1999). At the dawn of the profession, most of the workforce centered around manufacturing industry work, focusing on basic protections for employee welfare and wages. Frederick Taylor revolutionized skilled labor concepts by introducing scientific management focused on workforce productivity (Koumparoulis & Solomaos, 2012). English psychologist Charles Samuel Meyers studied the integration of military soldiers post World War One. His studies co-founded the National Institution of Industrial Psychology in 1921 and created the industrial and labor relations discipline.

Significant contributions include Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Effect analysis and Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs research studies (Ouchi, 1990). These theoretical contributions provide the foundation for scientific human resource management and the

1948 founding of the American Society for Personnel Administration, known today as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Personnel management focuses predominately on training for workers, wage uniformity, and workplace productivity. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the conceptual foundations of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) emerged, led by Devanna et al. (1982), Dyer (1983), and Walker (1988). During this time, theories and strategies surfaced explaining motivation, change management, and team building in the workplace, and the colloquial name of the field became Human Resource Management (HRM).

Although human resources remains a widely used term, specific subsections appear defined by functional roles, including Human Resources Business Partners (HRBP), Human Capital Specialists, or Chief Learning Officers (CLO). MacDuffie (1995) projects the application of HRM through the HRM bundles theory and empirically demonstrates that systems of HRM practices interact in complex ways. Most human resource departments focus on transactional personnel administration by hiring the right employee, administering benefits, developing employee training, and managing performance. As explained by Van Brimmer (2016), "Human resources needs to become much more multifunctional, and by extension, a visible agent for change" (p. 30).

Human Resource Development (HRD) focuses on enhancing and improving organizations by creating an improved future state (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Swanson and Holton (2009) provide examples of HRD as everything from helping individuals learn new content to assisting organizational systems in determining an organization's strategic direction. Practitioners and academics use strategic thinking, strategic planning,

and strategic management interchangeably (Bonn, 2001; Goldman et al., 2015; Liedtka, 1998) and as nouns and verbs (van Donk & Esser, 1992). Another difference to note is terms human resource, human resources, human resource management, human capital management, and human capital development tend to be semantical. The overarching crux is the employees of an organization or function relating to the employees of an organization. The following sections identify the critical necessity to understand the human resource dynamic.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, organizations would strategically use the human resource function to remain ambidextrous and sustain competitive advantage in the marketplace, more so in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) times (Knezovic, 2018). Goldman et al. (2017) state that using a strategic approach in business acumen establishes an organizational strategy and achieves profitability and sustainability.

In reality, decision-makers tend to focus more on the traditional transactional and administrative procedures of human resources (Knezovic, 2018). A 2016 SHRM survey reports that less than a third of organizational leadership executives view human resources as a strategic business function (Waters, 2017). Still, the strategic direction is often absent or considerably lacking in executive organizational leadership.

Consequently, the failure rate of business strategy implementation hovers between the 50th and 60th percentile due to a lack of strategic foresight and integration in the realities associated with a VUCA environment (Carucci, 2017; Kraaijenbrink, 2019). Anwar and Abdullah (2021) state that organizational success highly depends on how well a company manages and administers its human resource management practices.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the strategic human resource management practice integration and organizational ambidexterity within the VUCA environment and determines if there is a relationship between the two factors. As Jain (2019) identified, the VUCA phenomenon commands a large portion of academic and practitioner literature, but only an intermediate segment focuses on human resource management implications.

Research Objectives

Four research objectives guide this study. This study examines the impact of integrating strategic human resource practices and organizational ambidexterity in VUCA times. The research objectives of this study are as follows:

RO1 – Describe study participants, including organization size, human resource organization affiliation, job function, and years of experience.

RO2 – Describe the level of strategic human resource management practice integration perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

RO3 – Describe the level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

RO4 – Determine the relationship between the level of strategic human resource management practice integration and level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

Significance of the Study

This research provides insights into VUCA-related impacts on strategic human resources practices integration on the level of organizational ambidexterity. This research could add to an underrepresented topic of integration of strategic human resource

practices, which Castro et al. (2020) note as struggling for a space in academic literature. Human resource leaders could use this information to help employees thrive through change. Organization leaders could also utilize results to allocate resources more appropriately to achieve strategic initiatives and prepare employees for resiliency and flexibility in society's continuing VUCA times.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a construct that lays the foundation for inquiry through constructs or variables and their presumed relationship (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A conceptual framework is an interpretive map that defines variables for a study and maps the relationship between variables. A conceptual framework is a written or visual representation of an expected relationship between variables (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). Variables are the characteristics the researcher wants to study. The conceptual framework lies within a broader framework referred to as a theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The latter draws support from time-tested theories that embody researchers' findings on why and how a particular phenomenon occurs.

Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework for this research study. Figure 1 illustrates the VUCA environment in which organizations and human resource professionals operate. The conceptual framework identifies the two variables the research study focuses on (a) integration of strategic human resource management practices and (b) organizational ambidexterity. The two-way arrow in Figure 1 implies that the two variables are impacted by each other. The dotted arrow suggests the identified variables could offer insight into another variable, improved business outcomes. The conceptual framework also includes the theoretical framework utilized in the research study. The

three theories supporting the dynamics of the research study are human capital theory, organizational change theory, and competitive advantage theory.

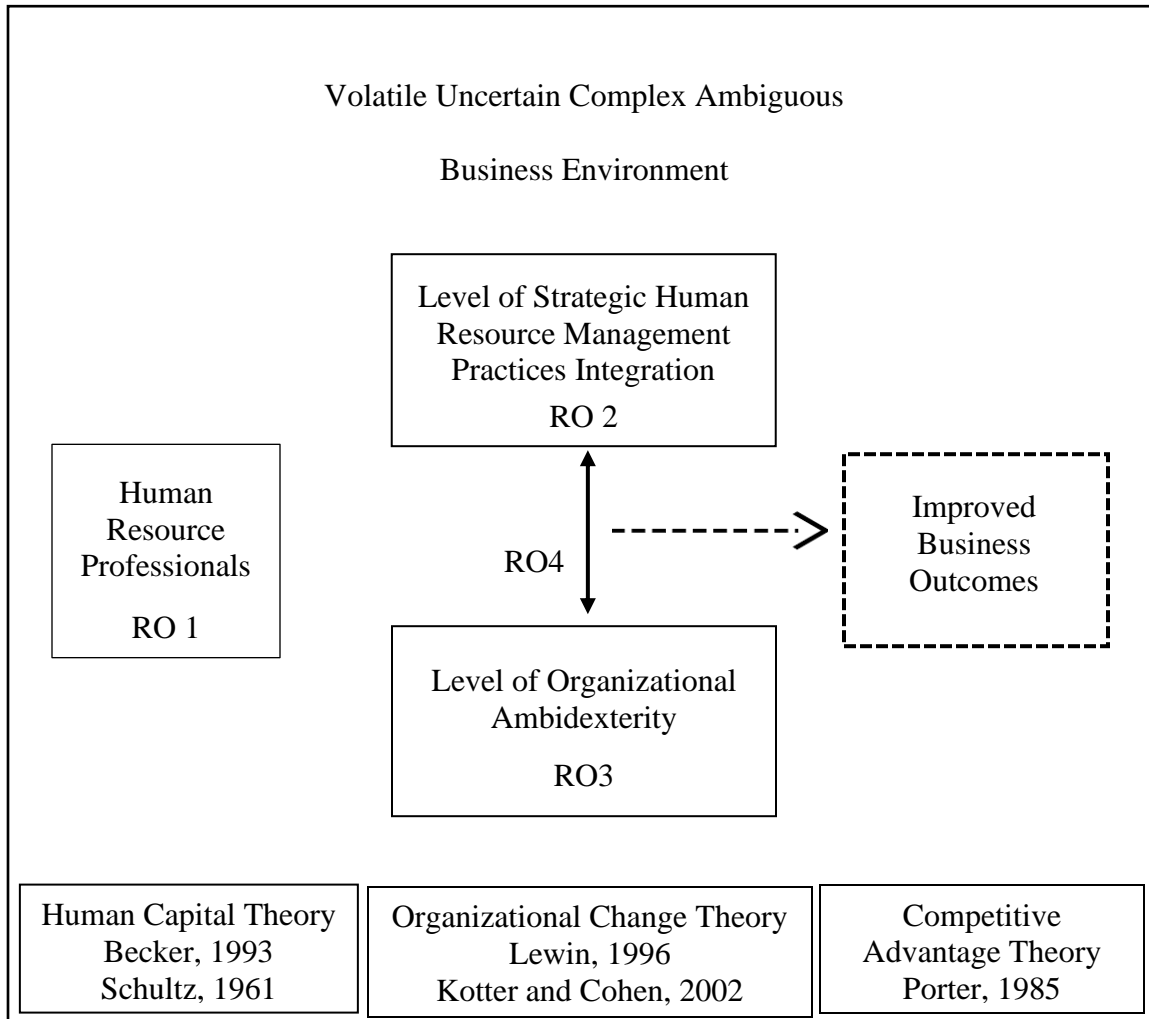


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory dates to the industrial age of the late 1950s (Mincer, 1958). The theory gained the most significant popularity in the Chicago School of Economics. The main provisions manifest in the works of Schultz (1961, 1971), Becker (1964, 1993), and the central methodological setting. The purpose was to explain economic processes based on maximizing the benefits of individuals (Shkoda, 2021). The early implications

of the human capital theory identify knowledge as human capital manifested as an investment accumulated within individual economic agents (Cañibano & Potts, 2019).

Thymi et al. (2022) regard people and their talents as human capital. Organizational change theory also serves as a foundation for this research study.

Organizational Change Theory

The second theory associated with this research is organizational change theory. Organizational change is a sought-after mechanism used to address organizational problems that need fixing or changing. The idea that organizations are systems has deep roots in organizational development (Beer, 2021). The concept of organizational change theories and approaches spans many decades. Alase (2017) stated that early theories follow a simple and straightforward idea of organizational change, such as Lewin's (1947) theory of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Kurt Lewin is regarded as the father of modern social psychology - the scientific study of human interaction. Lewin's three-step model encapsulates the most prominent approach to organizational change. Organizational change requires a new vision of organizing, managing, and leading executed as early and comprehensively as possible (Beer, 2021). Another theory to uphold the ideas of this research is the competitive advantage theory.

Competitive Advantage Theory

The final theory utilized by this research study is the competitive advantage theory. Competitive advantage is the leverage a business has over its competitors. Harvard University professor Michael Porter formulated the concept of competitive advantage (Besma, 2014). Porter's work focused on industry structure and competitive

positioning. Porter (2005) asserts that a distinct competitive advantage derives from a strong business strategy that optimizes problem-solving and creates value.

Delimitations

A delimitation is a factor set by the researcher that narrows the scope and defines the study's boundaries (Roberts, 2010). Roberts also states that delimitations justify rejecting a particular course of action during the research process. The researcher acknowledges two delimitations related to the study participants. This research study only includes human resource professionals who have membership in a state chapter of a national human resources professional organization. This delimits the study by excluding perceptions of human resource professionals that do not have membership in this group. A second population-related delimitation is an exclusion of human resource practitioners outside the geographic area. This delimits the study by excluding a broader number of human resource professionals from various geographic locations.

Assumptions

Assumptions are elements of research that are accepted as true or taken for granted (Roberts, 2010). This research assumes that strategic human resource management practices and organizational ambidexterity will remain relevant in business operations. Secondly, the study assumes respondents answer the survey instrument truthfully and accurately recall the information requested. Lastly, the research study assumes the survey instrument used for data collection is valid and reliable for collecting data necessary for answering the research objectives.

Definition of Key Terms

The definitions listed below provide clarity and interpretation of terms and concepts used throughout the study.

1. *Agility*. An organization's capability to anticipate and respond to uncertainty in the work environment to its advantage (Talerngsri, 2014).
2. *Ambidexterity*. "The combination or a set of two discrete capabilities" (Alpkan & Gemici, 2016, p. 786).
3. *Competitive Advantage*. The ability to harness a set of attributes through distinctive organizational structure to excel beyond and outperform the competition (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019).
4. *Human Capital*. "The knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being" (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2001, p.18).
5. *Human Resource Development*. A process for developing and unleashing expertise to improve individual, team, work processes, and organizational system performance (Swanson, 2022).
6. *Human Resources*. As an umbrella and its various sub-functions, the functional area includes staffing, compensation, benefits, employee relations, training and development, and so on (Young & Hexter, 2011).
7. *Organizational Ambidexterity*. The result of an organization's ability to simultaneously exploit existing competencies and explore new

opportunities to meet business needs and adapt to market changes (Chen et al., 2021; Sulphrey, 2019).

8. *Strategic Human Resource Management*. The pattern of planned Human Resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals (Wright & McMahan, 1992).
9. *VUCA*. Acronym that describes the dynamic, chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing business environment characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021).

Summary

This study examines the relationship between the level of strategic human resource management practice integration and the level of organizational ambidexterity to determine if a relationship exists to produce favorable business outcomes highlighted by agility and competitive advantage. Chapter One provides historical background on the individual variables and insight into recent literature that supports additional research. Academic literature and popular press emphasize a need for awareness of and focus on the dynamics of the current VUCA business operations environment.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Chapter Two discusses the theoretical background. Chapter Three details the research methodology and outlines the instrument and procedures for data collection. Chapter Four provides the data analysis techniques utilized for the study and outlines the constructs and impacts on outcomes. The last chapter discusses the results, implications, study limitations, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Today's businesses experience pressure from global competition, increasing dependence and burden on their human resources. Academics assert that focusing on the human resource function and its alignment with organizational strategy provides a competitive advantage (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). The term human resources encumbers two constructs. It refers to the people who work for a company or organization in one context. In another context, it represents “the department responsible for managing all matters related to employees, who collectively represent one of the most valuable resources in any business or organization” (HumanResourcesEDU, n.d.). Human Resource Management is a “contemporary umbrella term used to describe the management and development of employees in an organization” (HumanResourcesEDU, n.d.). One goal of human resources is strategically using a company's human capital. Hitka et al. (2019) identify human resources as an organization's most important component and an essential element of human capital. Human capital refers to knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, and experiences embodied in an individual used to contribute to organizational goals (Hitka et al., 2019; Roziq et al., 2021).

Strategic human resource management combines strategic management and human resource management (Boxall, 1998; Boxall & Purcell, 2000). Strategic human resource management emphasizes the strategic choices associated with work organization and labor use, resulting in some organizations managing resources more effectively than others. Ambidextrous organizations possess the human capital management proficiency to apply an adequate human capital management strategy that supports the human capital resources within the organization. Delery and Roumpi (2017) support the notion that

engagement in strategic human resource management practices leads to competitive advantage. Hitka et al. (2019) add an awareness that for organizations to maintain continuous competitive advantage, there must be a connection with the market, financial, information, and human resources.

Globalization dominates the business environment. Wicaksana et al. (2022) assert that "the world has gone digital, and there is no turning back" (p. 70). The human resource function requires strategic capabilities to respond quickly and intelligently to keep pace with the rate of change. Gandhi (2017) accentuated this critical skill by asserting that human resources must lead the path to change. Gandhi further described the change path as a cycle that starts complex, followed by a messy middle, then ends with the best results. The swift and fast-changing business environment is challenging to predict and plan for (Setili, 2018). According to Thymi et al. (2022), the speed of innovations and advancements currently occur at a revolutionary pace with no historical precedent. Kotter (2014) characterizes organizations as "struggling" compared to the accelerating rate of change. Human resource professionals and organizational leaders must be ready and adaptable in today's business operations environment. This environment is characterized by the phenomenon referred to as VUCA.

VUCA

VUCA significantly impacts the ability of an organization to remain relevant and competitive in the 21st century. VUCA refers to an acronym for complex environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity and whose activities involve intricate multivariate "systems of systems" composed of requirements, resource allocation, and acquisition systems (Moore, 2015). The United States Army War College

first introduced the notion of VUCA to describe the multilateral world at the end of the Cold War (Chadha, 2017; Mittal, 2014).

The end of the Cold War coincided with the rapid growth of the high-tech industry and marked the beginning of the digitalization and globalization era (Krawczyńska-Zaucha, 2019). Most literature credit the creation of the VUCA acronym in the 1990s. However, as cited in a 2019 U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center publication, military personnel coined the term VUCA in 1987 to define the strategic leadership environment of the times. Bennett and Lemoine (2014) and Krawczyńska-Zaucha (2019) assert that since its inception, VUCA has become the normative lens for decisions made by the U.S. military and a wide variety of business domains.

Bennett and Lemoine (2014) emphasize that the four components of the VUCA acronym have unique meanings, and "Though the words do have related meanings, it is the differences among them that are the most valuable for leaders to understand" (p. 32). The VUCA paradigm emphasizes strategic decision-making, readiness planning, risk management, and situational problem-solving (Chadha, 2017). Before solving issues contextualized as VUCA, one must first understand the fundamental connotations of each of the four principal terms in the VUCA phenomenon. In-depth understating combines a simultaneous focus on each element while being aware of the interaction among the elements. This understanding takes into consideration knowledge of the situation and predictability of actions related to the situation. Figure 2 provides a visual aide to assist in understanding the VUCA phenomenon. The first aspect of the model is volatility.

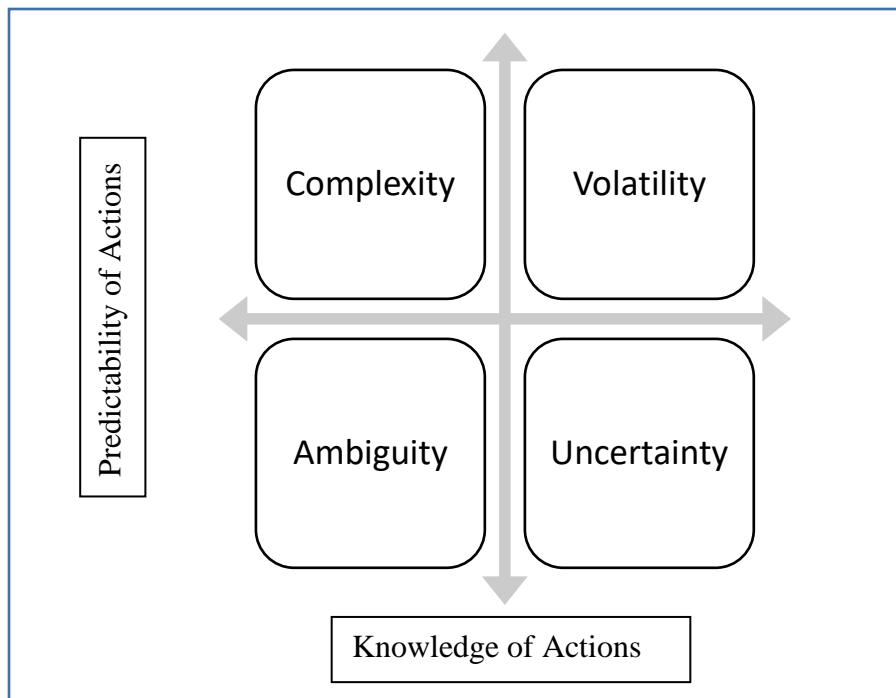


Figure 2. VUCA Situation Matrix

Volatility

The V in the VUCA acronym stands for volatility. Volatility is the rate of change in the environment (U.S. Army, 2010). According to Chadha (2017), volatility defines the nature, speed, volume, and magnitude of the unpredictable pattern of change. Chadha (2017) describes volatility as turbulence. Volatile, dynamic instability dominate today's business environment. The SARS-CoV-2, referred to as Coronavirus or COVID-19, global pandemic dramatically amplifies the concept of volatility. From initial discovery in late 2019 through 2021, COVID-19 sparked travel bans, educational institutions closing or transitioning to online virtual learning, tighter border controls, and the cancellation or delay of world sporting events (Koshemani, 2020).

Krawczyńska-Zaucha (2019) provides the following example of volatility:

Volatility of the VUCA world could best be compared to a hurricane – although scientists understand how it emerges and what conditions need to be met for it to continue in growing in size and magnitude, it is impossible to predict with complete certainty how powerful it will ultimately become or where it will gain the greatest impetus. (p. 223)

Volatility magnifies the constantly changing business environment and the need to evolve human resources strategy to respond to change. Ahuja and Jain (2016) predict the added importance of human resource functioning in a strategic business-enabling partner instead of solely an administrative, clerical function. The successful transition from administrative support to strategic partner will entail changing human resource professionals' competencies. Human resource professionals experience an increased requirement to understand business acumen to serve as a vital, robust partner that delivers people solutions. According to Ulrich et al. (2015), competent human resource professionals are challenged with managing the delivery of functional stability while facilitating innovation, agility, and adaptability. Organizations continually seek business experts who produce solutions adaptable to the current rate of change. Kail (2010) asserts that the volatile nature of the business environment may also create uncertainty.

Uncertainty

The second letter of the VUCA acronym represents uncertainty. Uncertainty describes the inability to know everything about a situation (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; U. S. Army, 2010). Chadha (2017) and Kail (2010) define uncertainty as the lack of predictability and clarity that hinders conceptualizing threats and challenges. Although U.S. Army (2010) asserts that uncertainty also relates to the difficulty of predicting the

nature and effect of change, Bennett and Lemoine (2014) warn against using uncertainty interchangeably with volatility. The authors distinguish that a volatile situation relates to likely change occurrences, but the changes may be quick and have various magnitudes. In contrast, an uncertain situation may not inherently contain any change (p. 314).

Krawczyńska-Zaucha (2019) explains uncertainty in the context of global terrorism – "Countries and organizations spend significant resources on fighting it, but nobody can predict the measures taken are sufficient enough to stop future acts" (p. 224).

According to Gandhi (2017), business leaders should actively and swiftly engage the topic of uncertainty. Moore (2015) identifies numerous challenges associated with uncertainty. Uncertainty causes multiple cognitive reactions. Setili (2018) asserts that uncertainty triggers more stressful thoughts than knowing that something ominous will accurately happen. The only thing for sure about the future is that it will not be anything like the past. Gandhi (2017) and Talerngsri (2014) also advise that business leaders consider all facets of VUCA and its dual ability as a threat and an opportunity. VUCA's only constant is rapid and unpredictable change (Wicaksana et al., 2022). Organization leaders who ignore the VUCA environment may steer their organization out of business.

Organizational leaders in the in-today's environment face dynamic and intense disruptive events (Rimita et al., 2019) that may impede long-term strategic planning and decision-making (Moore, 2015; Saleh & Watson, 2017). Current research examining the VUCA paradigm highlights the valuable connection between leader awareness and preparedness in the realm of dynamic and intense change by enhancing preparedness and understanding complexity management in a business environment of constant change.

Complexity

The C in VUCA stands for complexity. Many interconnected parts characterize a complex situation (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014; Saleh & Watson, 2017). U. S. Army (2010) describes complexity as the difficulty of understanding the interactions of multiple parts or factors and predicting the immediate and subsequent effects of changing one or more aspects in a highly interdependent system of systems. Complexity refers to the number of elements one considers when thinking through problems, issues, or situations to help create well-informed strategies, plans, and decisions (Moore, 2015). Complex scenarios require much effort to collect, digest, and understand relevant information; often, no implied unpredictable or unstable change exists (Briggs & Keogh, 1999). A few examples of complexity offered by Saleh and Watson (2017) include outsourcing or offshoring part of business operations and adding a new product range which necessitates expanding into and engaging with a new supply chain. The complexity of business operations that hinder, blur, and hide potential connectivity may also emerge as ambiguity.

Ambiguity

The last letter of VUCA addresses ambiguity. According to U. S. Army (2010), ambiguity describes a specific type of uncertainty that results from differences in interpretation when contextual clues remain insufficient to clarify meaning. Chadha (2017), and Bennett and Lemoine (2014), provide an extended description, adding that the characteristics of ambiguity include completely unclear causal relationships, the nonexistence of precedents, and facing unknown unknowns. An ambiguous situation proves challenging due to little or no historical precedent for determining outcomes.

Ambiguity leads to inefficiency and ranks as the leading cause of conflict within a business unit (Kail, 2011). The components of VUCA often appear in some organizations in some form or combination (Bennett & Lemonie, 2014). The dynamics of the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous business environment implore organizations to scrutinize operations strategy and sources of competitive advantage. According to Piwowar-Sulej (2021), human capital represents a neglected area of opportunity. The turbulent VUCA global economy requires awareness and attention to human capital's critical role in organizational productivity, efficiency, and performance.

Business Environment Application of VUCA. The term VUCA became mainstream shortly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Leaders in all sectors of society embraced the idea of VUCA to describe the nature of business operations (Forsythe et al., 2018). VUCA explains the challenges modern companies face to remain competitive (Hamid, 2019) and achieve organizational excellence (Saleh & Watson, 2017). The business world adopted the term VUCA to define the new normal of the global business world. Ahuja and Jain (2016) assert that the new normal in business is real and here to stay. The new normal consists of a chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing business environment, impacted by rapid growth, globalization of markets, balancing of the global economy, technology advancement, demographic trend changes, new customer needs, and business model disruption that have become the norm in the international business world (Chadha, 2017; Du & Chen, 2018; George, 2017; Hamid, 2019; Mittal, 2014). The new normal in the global business world is expected to impact operations long in the future (Du & Chen, 2018; Mittal, 2014). Bennett and Lemoine (2014) provide a detailed description of the VUCA paradigm (see Table 1).

Table 1

Distinctions Within the VUCA Framework

VUCA component	What it is	An example	How to effectively address it
Validity	Relatively unstable change; information is available, and the situation is understandable, but change is frequent and sometimes unpredictable.	Commodity pricing is often quite volatile; jet fuel costs, for instance, have been quite volatile in the 21st century	Agility is key to coping with volatility. Resources should be aggressively directed toward building slack and creating the potential for future flexibility.
Uncertainty	A lack of knowledge as to whether an event will have meaningful ramifications; cause and effect are understood, but it is unknown if an event will create significant change.	Anti-terrorism initiatives are generally plagued with uncertainty; we understand many causes of terrorism but not exactly when and how they could spur attacks.	Information is critical to reducing uncertainty. Firms should move beyond existing information sources to both gather new data and consider it from new perspectives.
Complexity	Many interconnected parts forming an elaborate network of information and procedures; often multiform and convoluted, but not necessarily involving change.	Moving into foreign markets is frequently complex; doing business in new countries often involves navigating a complex web of tariffs, laws, regulations, and logistics issues.	Restructuring internal company operations to match the external complexity is the most effective and efficient way to address it. Firms should attempt to 'match' their own operations and processes to mirror environmental complexities.
Ambiguity	A lack of knowledge as to 'the basic rules of the game'; cause and effect are not understood and there is no precedent for making predictions as to what to expect.	The transition from print to digital media has been very ambiguous; companies are still learning how customers will access and experience data and entertainment given new technologies.	Experimentation is necessary for reducing ambiguity. Only through intelligent experimentation can firm leaders determine what strategies are and are not beneficial in situations where the former rules of business no longer apply.

Note. From What a difference a word makes: Understanding threats to performance in a VUCA world by Bennett & Lemoine, 2014,

The VUCA reality creates an ongoing challenge for human capital management operations. These factors profoundly change how organizations do business and how business leaders lead in a VUCA environment. Organizations worldwide grapple with managing this change. Chadha (2017) provides alternatives to combatting VUCA with an acronym known as VUCA Prime. Prime is a method focused on Vision, Understanding, Courage, and Adaptability. Implementing and adapting to this approach constitutes a strategic challenge for the organization and human resource departments (Du & Chen, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017).

Both internal and external conditions affect business outcomes. Human resource professionals must consider the forces that will disrupt organizations and identify capabilities that will enable success in the VUCA world (Johansen & Voto, 2014). The context for the business operational model function in three modes: interconnected, interdependent, and non-linear. Decisions at the corporate level address the allocation of resources between the different parts of the organization and form the basis for all other strategic decisions (Bonn & Fisher, 2011).

Companies face increasingly challenging situations to create and sustain competitive advantage in VUCA times (Hamid, 2019). VUCA highlights the importance of strategic decision-making, readiness planning, risk management, and situational problem-solving. The likelihood of sustainable competitive advantage drops significantly for organizations that continue to operate within traditional practices. Human resources must embody the culture and methods required to optimize the possibility of sustainable competitive advantage in a VUCA environment (Bawany, 2016).

In a VUCA world, managing change is a continuous process. Organizations require the capabilities to adapt to this changing environment. Within the VUCA environment, collaboration accomplishes tasks rather than through individual effort human resources should facilitate the role of a change agent (Van Brimmer, 2016). The environment is changing precipitously, and any business that does not change as fast as the environment faces extinction (Giles, 2018). In their 2014 work, Johansen and Voto determined, "Human resources will be profoundly important in the VUCA world of the future" (p.6). One cannot be strategic in human resources unless one can thrive in a VUCA environment (Chadha, 2017). VUCA is a multi-faceted concept with a significant impact on business operations. The next section of the research paper reviews the broad dynamic of the current business environment regarding organizational ambidexterity.

Organizational Ambidexterity

The general concept of ambidexterity refers to the ability to use both hands with equal skill. The construct of this human characteristic is key to understanding ambidexterity in an organizational environment. Moreira et al. (2022) identify ambidextrous organizations by their ability to simultaneously implement incremental and revolutionary change. This analogy is often called exploitation and exploration (Alpkan & Gemici, 2016; Du & Chen, 2018; Moreira et al., 2022; Vittori et al., 2022). Characterizing the VUCA environment includes the structural elements that may impede the ability to adapt and respond (Moore, 2015). Organizations must simultaneously be effective in external adaptation and efficient in internal integration to combat this (Fernandez-Perez de la Lastra et al., 2017).

Organizations achieve ambidexterity when successfully engaging in concurrent exploiting existing competencies and exploring new ones (Aschenbrucker & Kretschmer, 2018; Moreira et al., 2022). Research supports the idea that having organizational ambidexterity leads to prolonged survival, better financial outcomes, and enhanced learning and innovation, increasing the chances of remaining successful. When handled strategically, the intricacies of organizational ambidexterity often yield sustained competitive advantage (a concept detailed later in the literature review) for organizations (Du & Chen, 2018, Fernandez-Perez de la Lastra et al., 2017). Balancing formal and decentralized control processes enables organizational ambidexterity (Aschenbrucker & Kretschmer, 2018; Moreira et al., 2022). Achieving ambidexterity entails complex processes made up of multiple strategic components. One of these strategic components is agility.

Agility

Agility addresses organizational questions of achieving and sustaining competitive advantage in their existing environment and adapting to possible turbulence (Du & Chen, 2018). According to Wicaksana et al. (2022), business agility refers to agility in organizational culture, leadership, and work tactics that benefits all stakeholders operating in an uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. An agile business anticipates and responds rapidly and efficiently to opportunities and threats by anticipating any uncertainty and leveraging it to its advantage (Talerngsri, 2014). Agility exemplifies factors identified in Kotter (2014) for organizations to maintain the accelerated rate of change in the VUCA environment.

In a recent study by Rimita et al. (2019), business executives identified becoming nimble, dynamic, and agile in decision-making as the leading VUCA preparation technique. However, many organizations' human resources systems impede efforts to create agile workforces (Talermsri, 2014). Human resource leaders must plan for different future scenarios, respond swiftly to drive business success, and enable enterprise agility through an agile human resources function. Agile organizations of the future may appear profoundly different (Talermsri, 2014). Agile, ambidextrous organizations need ambidextrous human capital to succeed in strategic implementation (Alpkan & Gemici, 2016). Organizations also need resilience to succeed.

Resilience

The VUCA environment also generates frequent unexpected events. As referred to in the introduction and volatility passages, a relevant and modern example of an unexpected event is the COVID-19 global pandemic. According to Végh et al. (2022), COVID-19 highlights the significance and vulnerabilities of the uncertainty of global business operations. The COVID-19 pandemic represents only one example of various unforeseen circumstances, including natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and technical malfunctions. Unexpected events may occur within or external to an organization. Other factors, including frequency, duration, and time and place of the event, impact these unexpected events' severity. Volatile and uncertain events expose an organization's resiliency (Duchek, 2020). The resilience compacity enables organizations to react adequately to unforeseen circumstances and capitalize on events that may threaten survival.

Although similar to agility, resilience differs from agility in multiple areas. The construct of agility refers to quickly recognizing opportunities, changing direction, and avoiding a collision. Being agile remains imperative in dealing with daily problems and changes. Another facet of this dynamic is measured by how an organization reacts when exposed to unexpected threats and crises. Success and failure reveal the adequacy and depth of organizational resilience when handling unexpected events.

Resilience enables an organization to adapt to change quickly. Duchek (2020) urges the deliberate focus and development of resilience and identifies it as an essential source of competitive advantage. Duchek (2020) also recognized the opportunity for future research on how organizations manage competitive advantages in the face of crisis.

Competitive Advantage

Competitiveness and competitive advantage drive organizations (Alomari, 2020). Chopra (2017) warns against ignoring human resource management in a competitive environment. Human resource management tensions threaten organizational competitive performance and viability (Sounding Board, 2021). Human resources are a source of organizational competitive advantage (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019; Khilji & Wang, 2006; Knezovic, 2018). Stavrou and Brewster (2005) identified the linkage of strategic human resource management to competitive advantage inherent to organizational performance. Emeagwal and Ogbonmwan (2018) contend that strategic human resource practices directly affect sustainable competitive advantage. Increasing the connection to this philosophy, Thymi et al. (2022) argue that human resources lead the determining factors that characterize organizational success in a competitive environment.

Although there is an abundance of literature citing the connectivity of strategic human resources and organizational success, specifically in the realm of organizational ambidexterity and competitive advantage, other viewpoints exist. Notably, Khan and Ahmed (2021) caution against drawing this conclusion without consideration of a balanced review of organizational and individual employee performance. The author mentions considerations of employee capability, motivation, demeanor, and behaviors to manage human asset administration practices. The viewpoints identified a mindful examination of human resource management practices associated with worker productivity when assessing organizational success and competitive advantage.

According to Porter (2005), author of the competitive advantage theory, businesses achieve a competitive advantage over competitors when they successfully create value for customers. The universal objective of any business is to achieve both high economic performance and high returns for shareholders (Chopra, 2017). The dynamics of the VUCA business environment create difficulties for organizations to create and sustain competitive advantage (Brockbank, 2019). Human Capital continues as the essential component leading to organizational competitive advantage. Strategic human resource management guides human capital management to reach organizational strategic goals (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). According to Li et al. (2021), studies have increasingly supported the theory that a strategic human resource management system positively impacts organizational competitive advantage.

Strategic Human Resource Management

According to Chopra (2017), the human resource management function has risen to a higher level in the organizational hierarchy. The concept of strategic human resource

management focuses on human resource management systems and practices that influence business performance (Schnell & Gerard, 2022). A central aspect of strategic human resource management is integrating the human resource function with strategic decision-making. Briggs and Keogh (1999) advised that developing a human resource strategy to support business operations requires human resource management planning to be recognized as an integral part of the business planning process. This concept has been steadfast since the early definition proposed by Wright and McMahan (1992), that strategic human resource management encompasses planned human resource initiatives to enable organizations to achieve goals. Although the concept of the strategic influence of the human resource function's contribution to organizational success gained traction in academia, Kabst (2005) noted the continued insufficient ability of human resource practitioners to connect to business outcomes empirically. Business leaders who lack acuity in relating human resource outcomes to successful organizational outcomes contribute to this disconnect (Ulrich et al., 2015).

Gu and Luo (2022) contend that a strategic human resource management system can positively impact employee motivation and improve organizational outcomes. However, a 2015 strategic human resources conference finding asserts that organizations fail to properly incorporate human resources with other organizational systems. Too often, human resource strategy develops independently of business strategy (Young & Hexter, 2011). According to Gartner (n. d.), an S&P 500 leading information technology (IT) research and advisory company with over 40 years of corporate insight and expertise, 70% of chief executive officers (CEO) expect the chief human resources officer (CHRO) to serve as critical players in organizational strategy. Yet only 55% say

the CHRO meets this expectation. One challenge that Ulrich et al. (2015) identify is the ability of human resource professionals to demonstrate individual competency and personal credibility in tandem with partnering with the business to create competitive and exemplary performing organizations. Ulrich et al. (2015) assert that credibility is attained when human resource professionals actively pursue collaborative relationships with organizational leaders. Filling this expanding role necessitates changes within the strategic human resources management integration function.

Human resource departments lack strategic integration with the overall business strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). According to Ahammad et al. (2019), limited academic research focuses on the influence of human resource strategy and practices on organizational ambidexterity. According to Moore (2015), strategic thinking involves asking strategic questions and using sensemaking and foresight to develop novel strategies. Peter Drucker (1954), the father of modern management, is credited with explaining the lagging strategic component of human resource management with the statement - the greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic. In his early work, Drucker (1954) addressed the need for management to anticipate future organizational needs. According to Becker (1993), widely known for his contributions to human capital theory, and Becker and Huselid (2006), strategy implementation is the mediating factor between human resources and organizational performance in building sustainable competitive advantage. These factors illustrate the interrelation of human capital theory and competitive advantage theory.

Upper-level management typically makes the strategic decisions that affect the organization's long-term direction (Bonn & Fisher, 2011). According to Creedy (2018), a

finding from Development Dimensions International's 2014-2015 Global Leadership Forecast, the best approach is "Never mind getting a seat—HR should be *setting* the table" (para. 3). Compared to those that do not, organizations that include human resources in the beginning or early in the process experience sound leadership bench strength (the leadership pipeline) and an increased likelihood of having a highly developed adaptable workforce (SHRM.org). This connection illustrates the narrative Ulrich et al. (2015) attests that human resources should be defined by the ability to deliver sustainable organizational outcomes.

Human resources requires anticipating strategic needs before it arises (2nd Annual Strategic Human Resources Conference New York City, April 2016). Another finding from the 2015 Strategic Human Resources Conference states the need for the human resources function to serve as a strategic partner in helping organizations solve complex business problems. Dr. Dale Moore (2015), Department of Navy, identified several concepts necessary for leaders to succeed in the VUCA environment.

In his 2015 research, Moore provided his definition of strategic thinking:

Strategic thinking is a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral phenomenon that is both high-level and tactically grounded and is fueled by individual and group analytical and dialogical activities to address needed knowledge, enable clarity of thought, and create strategic-to-tactical linkages and mental models to develop enabling strategies. (p. 7)

Economists predict meager rates of unemployment and slowing productivity, which may affect an organization's bottom line. The human resource function can play a strategic role in helping companies withstand these challenges (2015 Strategic Human

Resources Conference). Compared to human resource management, strategic human resource management evaluates human resources as the main asset of an organization (Emeagwal & Ogbonmwan, 2018; Thymi, 2022; Todericiu et al., 2014). Human capital's measurable impact on business results emphasizes it as a critical source of both opportunity and risk (Cunningham & Harney, 2012). According to Roziq et al. (2021), human resources (human capital) are essential in achieving organizational goals by aligning human capital investments and corporate organizational strategy.

Relevance

Mitsakis (2019), examined the strategic embeddedness of human resource Development in organizations. Mitsakis noted the limitations of more than ten popular strategic human resource development models to identify and convey the benefit of the strategic contribution of the human resource Development initiatives. Additionally, Mitsakis asserts that the models reviewed biasedly represent ideal business conditions and did not account for variation in the realistic, dynamic, complex, and continuously changing operational environments. Based on these factors, Mitsakis called for further research to examine the strategic integration of human resource Development practices on competitive advantage during economic times conceptualized by aspects of VUCA.

Rajeshwari (2022), states that the VUCA environment impacts every business sector.

In their 2016 work, Garaus et al. also identified a gap in the literature relative to connecting human resource management systems and organizational ambidexterity. Garaus et al. (2016) acknowledge the ambidextrous human resource management systems created by Ketkar and Sett (2009). Both scholarly works support the theory that organizational success is fueled by a distinct collaboration of ambidextrous human

resource practices that encompass exploration and exploitation to adapt to changes (VUCA) in the environment. Moreover, Garaus et al. (2016) add that only a limited number of research studies examine how human resource practices support organizations attaining ambidexterity.

Summary

This research study examines the relationship between the level of strategic human resource management practice integration and the level of organizational ambidexterity in the business VUCA environment of today. Chapter Two provides a detailed narrative of the three main pillars of the research study. As previously stated, academic literature and popular press emphasize a need for awareness of and focus on the dynamics of the current VUCA business operations environment. Roziq et al. (2021) report an upward trend in organizations recognizing the strategic role human resource management has in designing and implementing human resource policies, systems, and practices that will develop the organization's human capital and boost its performance in the turbulent global economy. Chapter Three provides a detailed narrative regarding the research design and methodology. This research study plans to employ in examining the practical implication of the dynamics mentioned above.

CHAPTER III - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A review of scholarly literature and popular press suggests a linkage between the alignment of strategic human resource functions and business strategy (Baran & Woznyj, 2021; Walia, 2021). Yet, Castro et al. (2020) state that the study of strategic human resource management implementation lacks prominence in academic literature. This quantitative study explores the relationship between the integration of strategic human resource management practices and organizational ambidexterity in today's business environment characterized by VUCA. When strategically leveraging human resources, business experiences can sustain competitive advantage, a component of organizational ambidexterity (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021).

Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology used for this research study, including the research objectives, population, sample, data collection procedures, survey instrument, and proposed analytical tools for examining the data. Chapter Three also presents information on the validity and reliability of the survey instrument and concludes with a summary.

Research Objectives

Research objectives describe what a study expects to achieve. Research objectives also narrow the study's focus to key variables that guide the research process (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). This research study seeks to determine if there is an alignment between the level of implementation of strategic integration of human resource management practices and the level of organizational ambidexterity in the current VUCA business environment that may lead to improved business outcomes. Four research objectives (ROs) guide this research initiative:

RO1 – Describe study participants, including organization size, human resource organization affiliation, job function, and years of experience.

RO2 – Describe the level of strategic human resource management practices integration perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

RO3 – Describe the level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource Professionals in VUCA times.

RO4 – Determine the relationship between level of strategic human resource management practice integration and level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

Research Design

The research design provides the strategy of investigation for a study. The design outlines the framework and serves as a data collection, measurement, and analysis guide. As noted by Roberts and Hyatt (2019), the three categories of research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research methods describe phenomena and concerns understanding human behavior (Stake, 2010), and quantitative research uses statistical analysis resulting in research findings (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Quantitative research also generates knowledge and creates understanding through data collection instruments like survey questionnaires (Roberts, 2010). Based on the nature of the research objectives, the researcher chose to utilize a quantitative research design method. Roberts and Hayat (2019) identify several quantitative research designs, including correctional, *ex-post facto*, case study, true experimental, and quasi-experimental. The researcher employed a descriptive, quasi-experimental research design to examine the cause and effect relationship between two variables, an independent variable and a

dependent variable, within a defined context for this study. According to Bloomfield and Fisher (2019), descriptive research gathers information about distinct characteristics of a sample or population without manipulating variables. The authors also define aspects of quasi-experimental research design as determining if two or more variables share a relationship and how to describe or predict that relationship.

This research design utilized a self-administered internet-based survey. According to Bourque and Fielder (2003), online surveys are ideal for participants who likely have internet access, are found in preexisting lists, and have email access to receive communications to request survey completion. Bourque and Fielder (2003) also recommend administering a preliminary three-level assessment before selecting this research design: (a) literacy of the population, (b) motivation of the targeted population, and (c) amenability of the research questions to data collection using a self-administered survey. Based on the target population of human resource professionals, the researcher anticipates no barriers to these factors.

The researcher purposely selected specific survey design features for the structure of the survey instrument. One feature is the forced-choice question format. This design requires participants to consider every response option. Smyth et al. (2006) recommend a forced-choice survey question form instead of a check-all question format for multiple-answer questions when administering an internet-based survey. Another feature is that the questions in the survey instrument follow a closed-ended question structure. According to Fink (2003), open-ended question responses tend to be challenging to compare and interpret, whereas closed-ended questions result in standardized data essential to statistical analysis. Third, the researcher utilized a unique collaboration of existing survey

instruments to gather data related to the study's variables. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) provide the rationale for creating a researcher-developed instrument or employing an established survey instrument. The next section of the research design logic elaborates on sourcing a "satisfactory" survey instrument designed to "adequately" measure the variables of this research study. The following section, population and sample, details how this research study design and plan meet the ideal context for a self-administered internet-based survey.

Population and Sample

A population refers to individuals within a defined boundary who possess the information needed to conduct a research survey (Marczyk et al., 2005). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) identify an entire population or census as the ideal participants in quantitative research. The population for this research study included individuals employed as human resource professionals. According to Statista (2022), a leading market and consumer data provider, in 2021, there were approximately 805,000 human resources workers in the United States. Statista (2022) also predicted that the number of human resources workers in the United States will increase to 840,000 by 2025. Although ideal, Roberts and Hyatt (2019) state that research endeavors rarely encompass a whole population for practical reasons. Therefore, researchers typically identify a subset of the population referred to as the sample.

Researchers identify selecting a subgroup of population members as a process referred to as sampling (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Sampling allows researchers to infer characteristics about the population based on a subgroup and the population (Shadish et al., 2002). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) advise choosing a particular sampling strategy based

on the research study's purpose and population. This research study employed a non-random, convenience, and purposive sampling methodology.

A non-random (also known as non-probability) sampling technique indicates that not all population members had an equal chance of participating in the study, and the participants were selected based on factors other than chance (Wolf et al., 2016). Fink (2003a) identifies multiple scenarios when non-probability sampling is appropriate, including surveys of a specific group, which coincides with the context of this research study. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling strategy that targets a readily available population, also known as the accessible population (Wolf et al., 2016). In purposive sampling, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Wolfe et al., 2016).

For this study, the sample population comprised human resource professionals geographically located in and members of a state chapter of a national human resource organization. The number of targeted participants in the accessible population totaled approximately 3,400 human resource professionals (T. Murray, personal communication, June 2, 2022). The researcher determined the proportionate sample size based on the size of the target population (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Based on a statistical power analysis with a sample size of 3,400 and a 95% confidence interval with a 5% error rate margin, the researcher needed 346 survey respondents to meet statistical relevance (Raosoft.com).

The sample excluded responses from human resource professionals outside the state targeted in the research study design. Participation also excluded human resource professionals employed by small-sized companies. Small-sized companies include

companies employing less than 20 persons. According to SHRM, human resource professionals in many small organizations are not often involved in organizational or functional strategic planning. Also, smaller organizations are less likely to have the resources to utilize strategic human resource initiatives. Special measures are taken to protect individuals who participate in research studies from any undue harm and safeguard the integrity of the academic research study process. The group responsible for these assurances is a university's Institutional Review Board (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

Institutional Review Board Approval

Research studies involving human participants require approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning research. Proof of IRB approval is attached in Appendix A. An IRB is a designated group of individuals that review research proposals involving human subjects (Roberts, 2010). An IRB review ensures proposed research meets federal and university standards and guidelines of informed consent (See Appendix B), confidentiality, and risk minimization to participants during data collection. Institutional Review Boards critique the integrity of the survey by reviewing several factors, including: (a) survey design, (b) risks and benefits, (c) equitable selection of subjects, (d) identification of subjects and confidentiality, (e) qualifications of surveyor, and (f) informed consent of survey participants (Fink, 2003). This research study followed specific guidelines from The University of Southern Mississippi's IRB. The researcher sought and received approval from the IRB prior to data collection. The following sections detail the survey instrument creation and plan for implementation.

Instrumentation

Surveys are commonly used in academic and business research to increase understanding of a proposed issue. Successful instrumentation is a result of a detailed process of gathering and obtaining questions that investigate the matter, creating a plan for preliminary analysis, determining questions of measurement, testing the questions for validity to the study, and actual developing of the instrumentation to employ (Blumberg et al., 2014).

The researcher combined two previously validated survey instruments - The Practice of Strategic Human Resource Management (Sajeevanie et al., 2020) and the Explorative and Exploitative Innovation Strategy Scale (He & Wong, 2004) to form the survey instrument employed in this study. The combination and creation of the referenced survey instruments provide a medium for collecting data from the participants for this research study. Both survey instruments were deemed valid and reliable instruments in their original implementation.

The first was Sajeevanie et al.'s 2020 Instrument to Measure the Practice of Strategic Human Resource Management. This survey measured the level of strategic integration of human resource management practices. The second instrument was He and Wong's 2004 Exploration vs. Exploitation: An Empirical Test of the Ambidexterity Hypothesis. This survey measured the level of organizational ambidexterity. In addition to the questions in these two surveys, the researcher requested that participants provide demographic information (job function, years of experience, organization size, and revenue status). The researcher combined the two data gathering sources into one survey instrument to assess the information needed to address the research objectives. The

combined survey included three sections: (a) level of implementation of strategic human resource management practices, (b) organizational ambidexterity, and (c) demographics. The following sections detail the individual tools utilized for this study's combined survey instrument.

Strategic Human Resource Management Practices

The researcher measured strategic human resource management practice integration levels using Sajeevanie et al.'s (2020) The Practice of Strategic Human Resource Management survey questionnaire. Sajeevanie granted written permission to use the survey questionnaire for this research study (Appendix C). The authors measure the practice of strategic human resource management using three dimensions: coherence, integration, and development. The questionnaire contains 27 questions relating to the dimensions, of which 12 target the integration dimension (Sajeevanie et al., 2020). Each survey dimension provides individual statistical construct analysis, allowing the researcher to segment the questions targeting the integration measure without modifying the instrument.

Sajeevanie et al. (2020) assert that human resource professionals become strategic partners when they define business strategy, ask questions that move strategy into action, and design HR practices that align with business strategy. The strategic human resource management practice integration survey questionnaire rated 12 scenarios, including the following six: (a) "HR professionals give advice and suggestions based on their expertise to top management to make strategic decisions," (b) "HR Professionals facilitate the top management in assessing the effectiveness of strategy," (c) "Head of HR department is a regular member of the strategic planning board/committee," (d) "HR representative at the

board has the business knowledge of Company's operations,” (e) “HR issues are an integral part of strategic business/corporate strategy along with other functional issues,” (f) “Employees are given the opportunities to contribute to the development of business/corporate strategies” (Sajeevanie et al., 2020, pp. 18-19). The questionnaire utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *very low extent* to 5 = *very high extent* to rate the questions related to strategic human resource management practice integration. Likert scaling, developed in the 1920s by social psychologist Rensis Likert, continues as a fixture of acceptable surveying techniques (Dillman, 2016).

The Sajeevanie et al. (2020) survey background provided insight into the instrument's validity and reliability. Validity tests how well a survey instrument measures the concept it intends to measure. Reliability refers to how well a survey instrument consistently and accurately measures the concept it intends to measure (Fink, 2003). A subsequent section of this chapter details both validity and reliability. According to Fink (2003), validity testing has multiple variations, including content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity. Sajeevanie et al. (2020) account for achieving content validity through "proper operationalization and conceptualization of the variable of the practice of strategic human resource management using related literature along with experts' judgment, including authors" (p. 5). Next, the authors provided details associated with the reliability of the study. Sajeevanie et al. (2020) report achieving stability, another term used for reliability, by conducting a pilot test-retest two weeks apart. The coefficient of the test-retest instrument was 0.861, indicating high external reliability.

Scoring of Strategic Human Resource Management Practice Integration. As outlined above, participants assessed 12 scenarios of the strategic human resource

management practice integration variable on a Likert scale of 1 = *very low extent* to 5 = *very high extent*. The scoring range falls between 12-60. This range is calculated based on the participant scoring all 12 scenarios at a very low extent, level 1, equaling 12, to the participant scoring all 12 scenarios at a very high extent, level 5, equaling 60. Following Sajeevanie et al.'s (2020) measurement reporting, the limits of strategic human resource management practice are shown in a continuum, see Figure 3. The range of values of the difference in levels is calculated as $(60-12)/5=9.6$. The next portion of the survey instrument seeks to attain human resource professional's perceptions of organizational ambidexterity.

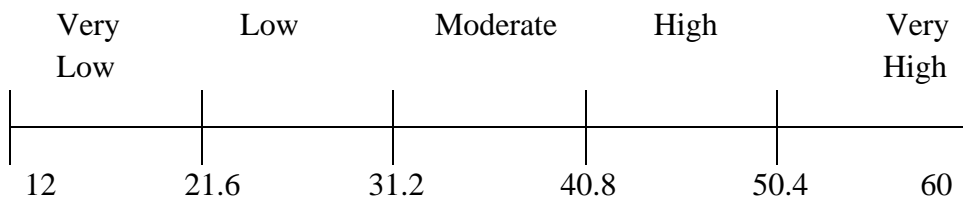


Figure 3. Levels of Strategic Human Resource Management Practice Integration Organizational Ambidexterity

This study measures organizational ambidexterity following He and Wong's (2004) approach. He and Wong (2004) differentiated organizational ambidexterity into two distinct elements, exploitation and exploration, rather than two ends of a one-dimensional scale. He and Wong's (2004) scale to measure organizational ambidexterity using an exploitation and exploration innovation strategy scale is widely recognized and established in existing research. A Google Scholar search of this instrument resulted in over 4,500 citations of He and Wong's 2004 article and survey instrument. The researcher received written permission from the author (Appendix D) to utilize the survey instrument.

He and Wong's (2004) survey instrument includes eight Likert-scale items divided equally between organizational focus on explorative and exploitative innovation strategies. The authors used a three-year timeframe as a qualifier to reference each strategy's importance. The questions ask, "To what extent were the following objectives important to your firm in the last three years?" (He & Wong, 2004). The answers were rated on a Likert scale of 1 = *not important* to 5 = *very important*. The four explorative objectives measured are (a) introduction of a new generation of products, (b) extending product range, (c) opening up new markets, and (d) entering new technology fields (He & Wong, 2004). The four exploitative objectives measured were (a) improving existing product quality, (b) improving production flexibility, (c) reducing production cost, and (d) improving yield or reducing material consumption (He & Wong, 2004).

The authors used factor analysis to reduce the eight items into two variables with Cronbach alphas of 0.752 for explorative innovation strategy and 0.807 for exploitative innovation strategy (He & Wong, 2004). The authors also performed confirmatory factor analysis, which successfully evaluated discriminant validity (a significant Chi-square difference between one-factor and two-factor models, $p = 0.000$). The calculation for the level of organizational ambidexterity consisted of multiple steps. First was the calculation of exploration scores by averaging individual responses. Second, exploitation scores were computed by again averaging individual participant responses. Last, the authors attained the level of organizational ambidexterity by multiplying the exploration and exploitation scores. The range and rating of organizational ambidexterity are discussed next.

Scoring of Organizational Ambidexterity. Following He and Wong's (2004) measurement methodology, organizational ambidexterity is computed over several steps.

As outlined above, participants assessed four scenarios of exploration and four scenarios of exploitation when averaged, then factored together to equal organizational ambidexterity. Each scenario is scored on a Likert scale of 1 = not important to 5 = very important. The scoring range for each subset falls between 4–20. This range is calculated based on the participant scoring each subset scenario at not important, level 1, equaling 4, to the participant scoring each subset scenario at very important, level 5, equaling 20. The subset product will be averaged by dividing by 4. Both subset averages will range from 1–5. Multiplying the two averages results in an organizational ambidexterity level within the range of 1–25. He and Wong (2004) do not identify ambidexterity categories on the low to high spectrum. Instead, ambidexterity is calculated and referred to in terms of importance. Therefore, the researcher created a table to detail the range for each level of importance (see Table 2). The demographics section of the survey is discussed next.

Table 2

Level of Organizational Ambidexterity by Range of Importance

Level	Rating	Range of Points
1	Not Important	1–5
2	Slightly Important	6–10
3	Moderately Important	11–15
4	Important	16–20
5	Very Important	21–25

Demographics

The research survey requests certain specific personal characteristics of participants (Appendix E, Q5–Q6). These characteristics include job function and years of experience. Survey participants will also provide organizational characteristics,

including the number of employees working in the company and revenue-generating status (Appendix E, Q1, Q7). The opening survey instrument question asks the number of employees working at the company. The question serves as the qualifier for eligibility to continue participation in the study. As mentioned earlier in the sampling section, employers with less than 20 employees historically do not have resources to allocate to strategic human resource initiatives and therefore eliminate eligibility to participate in the study. The researcher selected inclusion and demographic characteristics based on previous studies and current scholarly literature.

Validity of Instrument

The ideal survey encompasses both validity and reliability. Validity refers to the degree to which a survey instrument measures what it intends to measure (Fink, 2003). Dillman (2016) states that data collection is useless unless the questions answered achieve valid measurement. The survey research objectives specify what the survey instrument plans to measure. The survey instrument created for this research study measures validity by requesting a select panel of human resource professionals to review the content of the research survey in the form of a pilot survey (see Appendix F).

Pilot Survey. Pilot surveying serves several needed purposes and continues to be critical when developing a new survey instrument. The researcher may conduct a pilot study of the survey instrument for multiple reasons. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) advise pilot testing in researcher-created scenarios or modifying an existing survey instrument. For this study, a pilot survey addresses any potential concerns with the survey instrument being created from a combination of two existing instruments. Pilot studies also serve as a validation instrument. Pilot survey testing identifies errors in the survey, reveals

necessary redesign, and predicts problems with the survey instrument (Litwin, 2003). Pilot studies expect to simulate the data collection process in the intended setting and adjust as necessary before launching the finalized research instrument (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The researcher utilized a sample of known human resource professional acquaintances who are not members of a human resource organization to pilot the survey.

The researcher attests that those reviewers selected to participate in the pilot survey were not included in the sample population from which statistical data is reported as part of the research outcomes. Information gathered from the pilot survey allows the researcher to address potential vagueness, conflicting, and unclear questions. Based on the pilot study, the researcher made two adjustments to the survey instrument. The researcher implemented grammatical adjustments for clarity in selecting the appropriate human resource job function and adjusted the prompts for exiting the survey for participants employed in organizations with 20 or less employees. The researcher re-paneled the pilot survey post edits to confirm validity.

Reliability of Instrument

A survey verified as valid infers its reliability. Reliability refers to the degree of dependability of a survey instrument to generate consistent results over multiple instances (Fink, 2003; Roberts & Hyatt, 2020). Fink (2003) also defines another attribute of a reliable survey instrument as being relatively free of measurement errors. According to Fink (2003), measurement errors may occur when participant scores differ from their actual scores. Measurement errors may result from difficult-to-understand or poorly administered survey instruments. The researcher sought to mitigate these challenges for this research study. Researchers use Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Litwin, 2003) to

calculate internal reliability. A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is the research standard for acceptability. In addition to the validity and reliability steps the researcher took, the researcher developed a survey map to align the survey questions to the research objectives. Table 3 illustrates the survey map for this research study.

Table 3

Survey Map Aligning Research Objectives and Survey Questions

Research Objective	Research Objective	Survey Questions
RO1	Describe study participants, including organization size, human resource organization affiliation, job function, and years of experience.	Q1 Q5-Q7
RO2	Describe the level of strategic human resource management practice integration perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times	Q2 (1-12)
RO3	Describe the level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times	Q3-Q4
RO4	Determine the relationship between level of strategic human resource management practice integration and level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.	Q2-Q4

Data Collection

Roberts and Hyatt (2020) emphasize the researcher's responsibility to follow ethical practices when gathering data for a research study. In this section, the researcher provides the steps and the order the steps occur, including how and when the data will be collected (Roberts, 2010). According to Roberts (2010), accurate and precise disclosure of all processes followed allows the research study to be replicated by others. Roberts

(2010) advises attention to timeliness and duration of the data collection effort with specific consideration given to the availability of the survey participants. Factors related to the timing of this research study include state and national conferences for human resource professionals' membership organizations. The researcher took these dates into consideration when outlining the data collection plan to avoid conflicts with availability of the survey sponsor. Once the availability of the sponsor and participants were confirmed, the researcher proceeded with to schedule the remaining dates for initial dissemination, reminder communication, and closure dates.

Before the survey instrument was disseminated, the researcher obtained permission from the Council Director of a national human resource organization chapter for utilization in this research study. The Council Director affirmed proxy access to the sample target and agreed to serve as the sponsor for this research study (Appendix G). Edwards et al. (2014) assert that having a research study sponsor increases the survey response rate. The sponsor for this research study agreed to disseminate two emails on behalf of the researcher to the state human resource professional organization membership body. The data collection plan window opened upon the survey sponsor sending the initial email survey communication. Table 4 lists the complete data collection plan. The sponsor's email encouraged participation among the membership body. Both email communications included a brief narrative of the research study endeavor and an embedded link to the survey instrument (Appendix H). The survey participation window spanned eight calendar days. The sponsor also disseminated a second email to participants on day five of the data collection plan as a reminder of the opportunity to participate in the research study (see Appendix I).

Table 4

Data Collection Plan

Day	Data Collection Task
0	Disseminate pilot survey on Qualtrics to HR professionals
0	Review pilot test survey feedback to determine if recommendations necessitate implementing technology or clarity improvements
0	Obtain IRB approval to conduct research
1	Email invitation sent via sponsor encouraging participation with an embedded survey link to participants
5	Email reminder with the embedded survey link sent via sponsor to participants
8	Closeout survey access and conduct random drawings for incentives
9	Analyze data using the statistical analysis software platform SPSS

The survey instrument for this research study was administered online to human resource professionals identified by their membership in the state chapter of a national organization of human resource professionals. The researcher generated the survey instrument using the online survey software tool Qualtrics.com. *Qualtrics* allows survey designers to create a questionnaire, collect data, perform analysis, and generate reports (Qualtrics, 2022). The survey administration employed in this research study follows Dillman et al.'s (2009) approach. Individuals in the targeted sample population received an email from the survey sponsor with a link to the survey instrument. The sponsor also sent one follow-up email before the survey closed.

The researcher included an incentive for participants to complete the survey instrument. Offering an incentive is recommended to increase the survey response rate (Dillman et al., 2014). Specifically, financial incentives rank highly as an effective opportunity to increase survey response rates (Dillman et al., 2009). Participants were required to consent to participate in the research study survey and incentive drawing by acknowledging consent before engaging in the survey. The survey's final question offered an opportunity to participate in a drawing for a gift card. If participants selected 'yes', the participant was routed to an external incentive survey (Appendix J). The researcher offered an incentive random drawing prize for one of four \$50.00 electronic gift cards. Participants provided their name and email address to enter the random drawing. Participants were given the opportunity to pre-select their preferred merchant during registration for the incentive drawing. The researcher offered a choice of five merchants: Amazon, Grubhub, Starbucks, Visa, and Walmart. The researcher sought to increase the survey response rate using a quasi-customized incentive. The incentive drawing was held in collaboration with and supervision of the researcher's academic advisor.

Consent to Participate

Consent to participate is another policy and procedure required by the IRB process. The IRB informed consent policy mandate that participant voluntarily and affirmatively consent prior to participate in a research study. The survey instrument started with a comprehensive information list detailing the research's purpose, participation requirements, voluntary and confidential nature of participation, and the researcher's contact information. Participation required an action of confirmed consent to participate by clicking "Yes, I consent" on the introduction page of the survey.

Participants who provided consent were permitted to continue with the remainder of survey questionnaire. Participants who declined consent triggered a notification message thanking them for their time and a statement affirming discontinuation of the survey.

Data Analysis Plan

The following section details a step-by-step plan for analysis and calculation of the data following data collection, along with a rationale for selecting the data analysis method. The researcher utilized IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data attained in this quantitative research study. Table 5 identifies the variables included in the data analysis plan, the data scale, and the statistical test used to analyze each Research Objective. The data collected was measured using nominal, ordinal, and interval scales. The researcher selected to analyze the data using frequency distribution, central tendencies, and statistical regression methodologies.

Table 5

<i>Data Analysis Plan</i>			
RO	Variable	Scale	Statistical Test
RO1	Organization Size	Ordinal	Frequency Distribution
	HR Chapter Membership	Nominal	
	Job Function	Nominal	
	Years of Experience	Ordinal	
RO2	Strategic Human Resource Management Practice Integration	Interval	Central Tendencies
RO3	Organizational Ambidexterity	Interval	Central Tendencies
RO4	Strategic Human Resource Management Practice Integration (IV) and Organizational Ambidexterity (DV)	Interval	Regression Analysis

For the first research objective, the researcher collected demographic data. The research analysis plan incorporated descriptive statistics to describe nominal and ordinal scales to measure the variables: organization size, professional human resource organization chapter affiliation, job function, and years of experience. Nominal scales do not have numerical values and are used to produce data that fit into categories (Fink, 2013). The researcher used nominal scales to report participants' professional human resource organization chapter affiliation and job function. Ordinal scales measure if a fundamental order is inherent between categories. When categories are ordered, the variable is known as an ordinal variable (Field, 2013). Ordinal data accounts for both that a thing occurred and in which order it occurred (Field, 2013). The researcher used ordinal scales to measure participants' years of experience and organization size based on the number of employees.

For the second and third research objectives, the researcher employed frequency distribution statistics to describe participant perceptions of their organization's level of strategic human resource management practice integration and their perception of their organization's ambidexterity. The researcher selected an interval data scale to analyze the central tendencies of the data reported. An interval data scale refers to data measured at equal intervals along a scale representing equal differences at each interval (Field, 2013). Central tendency statistical analysis measures where the center of a frequency distribution occurs (Field, 2013). The mean refers to the average score (Field, 2013). The mean is calculated by adding all the scores and then dividing by the number of scores.

For the fourth research objective, the researcher utilized a linear regression statistical test to assess the relationship between the two continuous, interval variables:

the level of strategic human resource management practice integration and the level of organizational ambidexterity. According to Laerd (2015), simple linear regression quantifies the direction and strength of the relationship between two numeric variables to determine how two variables are linearly related. The initial analysis of this relationship was determined by assessing the correlation between two variables. Simple correlation analysis measures the strength and direction of the linear association between two numeric variables that do not assume causality (Field, 2013). The researcher used the advanced correlation analysis of linear regression to further extrapolate data. According to Laerd (2015), this model makes predictions of values of a dependent variable (DV) based on values of an independent variable (IV). For this research study, the researcher identified strategic human resource management practice integration as the independent variable and organizational ambidexterity as the dependent variable.

Statistical Test Assumptions

Assumptions refer to the model's quality and the ability to take the statistical test outcomes at face value (Field, 2013). The researcher made assumptions that the statistical data analysis selected was appropriate for the data collected by reviewing specific test assumptions. A researcher cannot assume that the outcomes of the research study are valid and reliable when statistical test assumptions are not met (Jupiter, 2017). This study assessed statistical assumptions for Research Objectives 2 and 3. The researcher collected Likert data using a 5-point ordinal (Laerd Statistics, 2015). However, Boone and Boone (2012) justify the variable measured to be treated as continuous. The authors assert that combining a series of four or more Likert-type items to assess a particular variable allows the data to be analyzed as one composite mean score for each variable. The data

collection plan for the two variables measured in the study satisfied this criterion. According to Boone and Boone (2012), meeting this criterion allows the data to be treated as an interval. strategic human resource management practice integration was measured using 12 questions, and organizational ambidexterity was measured by two subgroups of four questions allowing for composite interval mean scoring.

Field (2013) states that statistical research models have four assumptions: linearity, homoscedasticity, independence, and normality. Field (2013) provides the following definitions of each term. Linearity indicates that the relationship between X and Y is linear. Homoscedasticity indicates the homogeneity of the variance, and the residual variance is the same for any value of X. The assumption of independence assesses that the observations are independent of each other. The fourth assumption, normality, relates to normal distribution. These four items identified the quality of the statistical model and the test statistics used for assessment (Field, 2013).

In addition to the four assumptions Field (2013) provided, Laerd Statistics (2015) identifies three additional assumptions for analyzing data using linear regression. The additional assumptions were that there was one continuous (interval) dependent variable, there was one continuous (interval) independent variable, and that there are no significant outliers (p. 7). The researcher demonstrated meeting these assumptions in the results chapter.

Summary

This research survey measured the relationship between strategic human resource management practice integration characteristics and organizational ambidexterity characteristics. A researcher-derived survey instrument seeks to collect data regarding the

perception of these two constructs. The researcher detailed techniques for assessing the validity and reliability of the research survey instrument and identified statistical analysis for testing the data collected. An SPSS data analysis plan was utilized to determine the cause and effect of the variables. The next chapter reviews the analysis of the research survey data.

CHAPTER IV - RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between strategic human resource management practice integration and organizational ambidexterity as perceived by human resource management professionals in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) times. This chapter details the analysis of the quantitative data collection techniques deployed by the research to address the research study's purpose, research objectives, and overarching research question – “What relationship exists between integrating strategic human management practices and organizational ambidexterity in VUCA times?” The chapter begins with a description of the data collection results, followed by an analysis of data points as related to the research objectives, and concludes with a summary review.

Data Collection Results

This study collected data from individuals using the online survey platform Qualtrics. Two hundred and four individuals accessed the survey in total. Of those that accessed the survey, all but one acknowledged consent to participate in the research study as required by the Institutional Review Board, thus precluding data collection from the potential survey participant. The remaining 151 individuals successfully gained access to the survey. One parameter referenced for inclusion and exclusion in the survey outlined in the research design and methodology was the population of employees working in the participant's organization. Individuals whose organization size totaled twenty or fewer employees were automatically rejected from completing the survey. This exclusion criterion eliminated 19 individuals. These factors resulted in the collection of 133 surveys completed in their entirety. The researcher downloaded the survey results into an Excel

spreadsheet from Qualtrics and compared and confirmed the accuracy of the raw data to the recoded values. Next, the researcher uploaded the data into the statistical software tool SPSS for analysis.

Research Objective One

Describe study participants, including organization size, Human Resource organization affiliation, job function, and years of experience.

Participants in the research study were members of a professional human resource practitioner organization chapter located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The online survey consisted of three demographic questions related to organization size, human resource job function level, and years of experience.

The first demographic survey question related to organization size. A majority ($n = 79, 51.97\%$) of survey participants worked for an organization with at least 250 employees. The second highest group ($n = 54, 35.53\%$) worked for an organization with between 21–249 employees. The remainder ($n = 19, 12.5\%$) were employed by an organization with 20 or fewer employees.

The second demographic question asked participants to identify their current level of human resource job function category. A majority ($n = 44, 33.08\%$) of participants reported being employed in the manager/supervisor job function category. The second highest group ($n = 39, 29.32\%$) reported working in the individual contributor job function category. The next largest group ($n = 31, 23.31\%$) reported working in the director or assistant director human resource job category. The smallest group ($n = 8, 6.02\%$) represented in the research study reported working in the human resource job function of Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) or Chief Learning Officer (CLO).

The third demographic question requested that participants identify the number of years of experience working in the human resource profession. The largest group (n = 64, 48.12%) reported working 16+ years as a human resource professional. The next largest experience level (n = 29, 21.8%) consisted of those that reported having between 6-10 years of experience as a human resource professional. The remaining participants were divided between those that reported working 11-15 years (n = 25, 18.8%) and those who reported having 0-5 years of experience (n = 15, 11.28). Table 6 displays the data collected from the three demographic questions analyzed by frequency distribution.

Table 6

Human Resource Professional Demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Organization Size		
21 – 249 employees	54	40.6
250+ employees	79	59.4
Total	133	100
Human Resource Job Function		
Individual Contributor	39	29.32
Manager/Supervisor	44	33.08
Director/Assistant	31	23.31
Vice President	11	8.26
C-suite Officer (CHRO/CLO)	8	6.02
Total	133	100
Years of Human Resource Experience		
0–5 years	15	11.28
6–10 years	29	21.8
11–15 years	25	18.8
16+ years	64	48.12
Total	133	100

Research Objective Two

Describe the level of strategic human resource management practice integration perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times.

For analysis for Research Objective 2, the researcher utilized central tendency frequency distribution statistics to describe participant perceptions of the extent of their organization's integration of 12 strategic human resource management practice characteristics (see Table 7). The researcher utilized Likert scale responses which were assigned numerical coding to determine a mean response for each of the five human resource job function classifications. The researcher justified using Likert scale ordinal data as interval data based on meeting criteria established by Boone and Boone (2012). The researcher coded the responses numerically as follows: 1 – *very low extent*, 2 – *low extent*, 3 – *moderate extent*, 4 – *high extent*, and 5 – *very high extent*. The researcher utilized central tendency statistical analysis to measure where the center of a frequency distribution occurred per individual group of human resource job function level (Field, 2013).

Table 7

Level of Strategic Human Resource Management Integration Practices

<i>Job Function</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Individual Contributor	39	40.85	10.85
Manager/Supervisor	44	40.95	9.09
Director/Assistant	31	43.74	10.52
Vice President	11	44.45	10.05
C-suite Officer (CHRO/CLO)	8	46.63	8.28
Total and Weighted Average	133	42.20	10.02

The scale used to measure the level of strategic human resource management practice integration ranged from 12 – *very low* to 60 – *very high*. The researcher derived the scale by adding the 12 individual integration practice characteristics responses to calculate a sum for statistical analysis. A score of 12 indicates the survey respondent rated each of the 12 integration practice characteristics as 1 – *very low*, while a score of 60 indicates each integration practice was rated 5 – *very high*. Participants' mean responses for the perception of the level of strategic human resource management integration practices ranged between 40.85 – 46.63 with a standard deviation range of 8.28–10.85.

All five job function level groups rated perception of strategic human resource management practice integration at their organization between moderate and high. The group with the lowest mean rating was Individual Contributor at 40.85. This job function group also has the widest standard deviation range of 10.85. The other four human resource job function groups rated in the high category. The high category mean range was 40.90 – 50.39. The perception of strategic human resource practice integration level increased incrementally at each job function level. The highest strategic human resource management practice integration mean rating was scored at 46.63 by participants that identified as performing at the C-suite (CHRO/CLO) Human resource job level function. This group also had the smallest standard deviation range of 8.28.

Research Objective Three

Describe the level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by Human Resource Professionals in VUCA times.

For analysis for Research Objective 3, the researcher utilized central tendency frequency distribution statistics to describe participant perceptions of their organization’s ambidexterity level (see Table 8). For this research study, the organizational ambidexterity level is characterized by the level of importance. The researcher calculated organizational ambidexterity in a three-step process. Organizational ambidexterity is the product of factoring the mean exploration innovation strategy objective scores with the mean exploitation innovation strategy objective scores. The researcher utilized two Likert scale question groups consisting of four scenarios each for both exploration innovation strategy objectives and exploitation innovation strategy objectives to calculate participant perceptions of organizational ambidexterity level. Ordinal responses were converted to interval data in the same manner as Research Objective 2.

Table 8

Level of Organizational Ambidexterity

Job Function	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Individual Contributor	39	14.00	7.32
Manager/Supervisor	44	13.82	5.93
Director/Assistant	31	13.98	6.79
Vice President	11	14.76	5.18
C-suite Officer (CHRO/CLO)	8	19.53	4.52
Total and Weighted Average	133	14.33	6.51

The researcher coded the eight innovation strategy objectives numerically based on level of importance as follows: 1 – *not important*, 2 – *slightly important*, 3 – *moderately important*, 4 – *important*, and 5 – *very important*. For step one of the calculations, the researcher averaged the rating of the four individual innovation strategy subgroup scenario questions geared to exploration. For step two, the researcher repeated the calculation for four subgroup questions geared to exploitation. For step three, the

researcher multiplied the mean exploration and mean exploitation innovation strategy objectives to determine the perception of organizational ambidexterity for each survey participant. The researcher utilized central tendency statistical analysis to measure where the center of a frequency distribution occurred per individual group of human resource job function level.

The mean score for the level of importance of organizational ambidexterity ranged from 13.8–19.53. The human resource job function group with the lowest mean organizational ambidexterity score was Manager/Supervisor. This group rated organizational ambidexterity as moderately important. Survey participants who identified as C-suite Officers (CHRO/CLO) averaged the highest mean at 19.53, which ranked in the important range. The weighted mean for all survey participants' organizational ambidexterity level of importance equaled 14.33, high in the moderately important classification.

Research Objective Four

Determine the relationship between the level of Strategic Human Resource Management practice integration and level of organizational ambidexterity perceived by Human Resource professionals in VUCA times.

Research Objective 4 determined the relationship between the level of strategic human resource management practice integration and level of organizational ambidexterity as perceived by human resource professionals in VUCA times. For the analysis of Research Objective 4, the researcher calculated a regression analysis (see Table 9). The results of the analysis indicate a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. The researcher assessed the data set assumptions to calculate linear

regression identified by Field (2013) and Laerd Statistics (2015): the existence of one continuous (interval) independent variable; the existence of one continuous (interval) dependent variable, linearity, independence of observations, absence of significant outliers, homoscedasticity, and normality.

Table 9

SHRM Practice Integration and Organizational Ambidexterity Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
.453 ^a	.205	.199	5.82

a. Predictors: (Constant), SHRM Practice Integration

Laerd Statistics (2015) defines an independent variable as a variable that is manipulated to observe the effect on the dependent variable. The researcher identified strategic human resource management integration practices as the independent variable and organizational ambidexterity as the dependent variable. Both the independent and dependent variables met the definition of interval data as defined by Laerd (2015). The researcher ran a scatterplot of strategic human resource management integration practice level against organizational ambidexterity level (see Figure 4). Visual inspection of the scatterplot indicates a linear relationship between variables. Next, the researcher assessed the independence of observations using the Durbin-Watson statistical test. The Durbin-Watson statistic can range from 0–4 (Field, 2013). A value of close to 2 indicates no correlation between residuals. According to Field (2013), the acceptable range for the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1–3. The researcher affirmed the independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.623. The linear regression analysis did not return any outliers based on analysis parameters outlined by Laerd (2015).

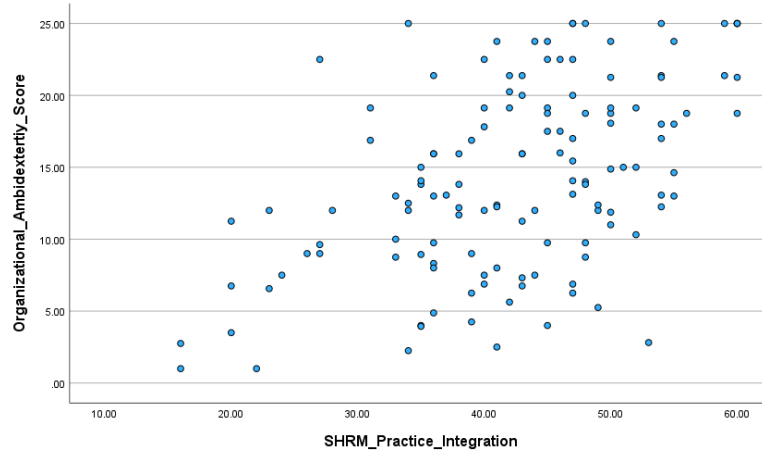


Figure 4. SHRM Integration Practices and Organizational Ambidexterity Scatterplot

The next assumption tested by the researcher was homoscedasticity. According to Laerd (2015), homoscedasticity is an important assumption of linear regression because it indicates that the variance of the errors (residuals) is constant across all the values of the independent variable. The researcher observed the homoscedasticity of the data by visual inspection of a plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values (see Figure 5). The researcher observed residuals that appeared randomly scattered, thus meeting the assumption of homoscedasticity.

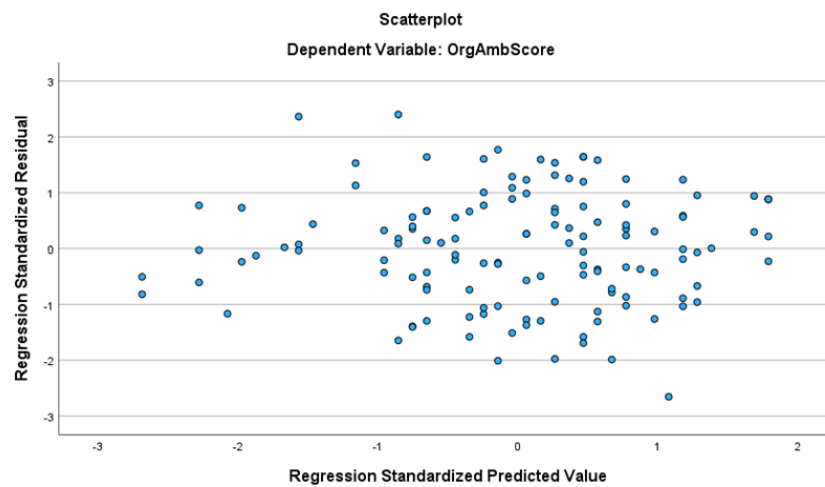


Figure 5. Organizational Ambidexterity Residual Homoscedasticity Scatterplot

Next, the researcher assessed normal distribution using a histogram and Normal P-P Plot. As shown in Figure 6, visual review of the histogram, the standardized residuals appear to be approximately normally distributed. Laerd (2015) asserts that histograms can be skewed in appearance based on the researcher selected bin width. Laerd (2015) recommends confirming normality by generating a Normal P-P Plot. When residuals are normally produced in SPSS, they appear to be approximately normally distributed along a diagonal line. Based on both visual assessments, the researcher accepted that the data did not violate the normality assumption.

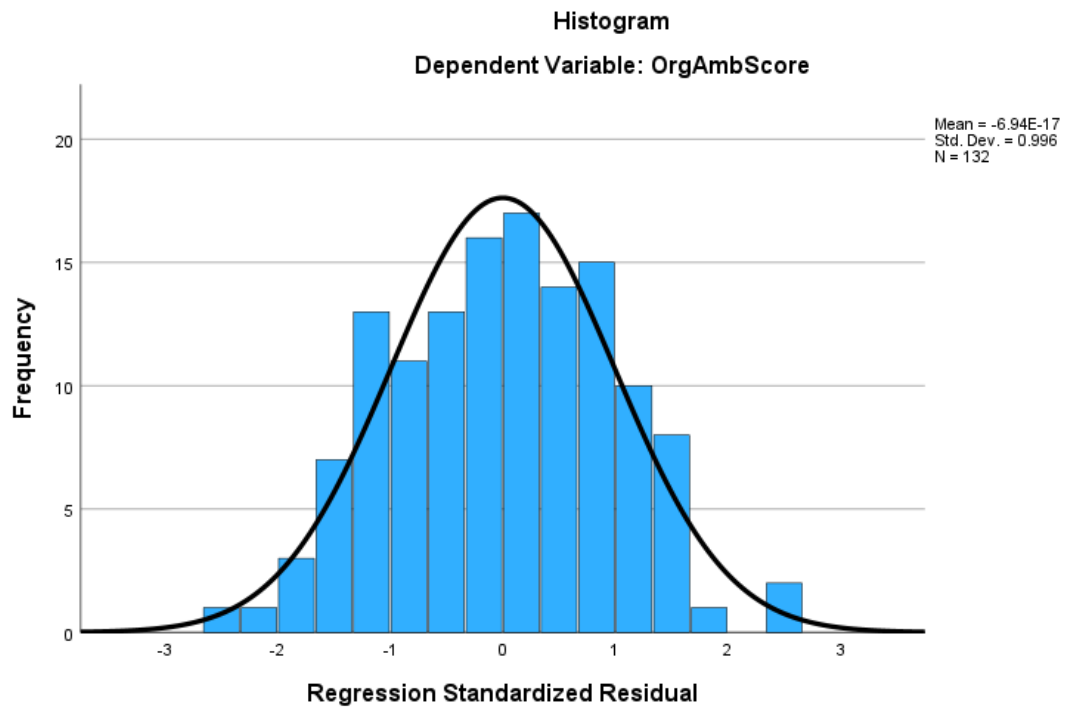


Figure 6. Regression Standardized Residual

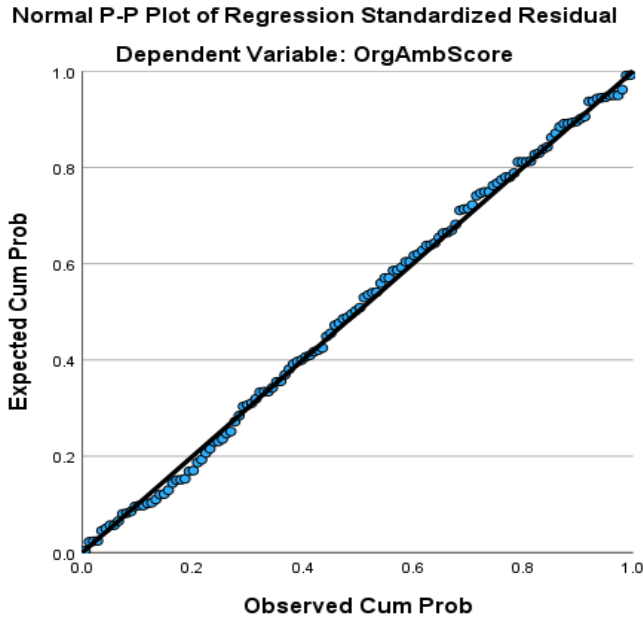


Figure 7. Normal distribution of standard residual values

The researcher used SPSS statistical analysis tool to generate a regression analysis to determine the statistical significance of using this model to predict organizational ambidexterity (see Table 10). For this study, the regression model was statistically significant. The average strategic human resource management integration practices perception level significantly predicted organizational ambidexterity perception level, $F(1,130) = 43.14, p < .05$. This result is statistically significant because $p < .05$. According to Laerd (2015), statistical significance indicates a statistically significant linear relationship.

Table 10 *Statistical Significance*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1363.606	1	1363.606	43.138	<.001 ^b
Residual	4109.361	130	31.610		
Total	5472.967	131			

a. Dependent Variable: OrgAmbScore

b. Predictors: (Constant), SHRMPraInt

Summary

This quasi-experimental, quantitative survey determined the relationship between strategic human resource management integration practices and organizational ambidexterity levels as perceived by human resource professionals in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) times. The researcher collected data from 133 study participants. The researcher analyzed descriptive and central tendency statistics on the participants and calculated linear regression to assess the relationship between strategic human resource management integration practices and organizational ambidexterity. Chapter 5 details findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the research study results.

CHAPTER V - FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a discussion of the data analysis conducted in Chapter IV.

This research study examined the relationship between the perception of strategic human resource management integration practice levels and the importance of organizational ambidexterity levels as perceived by a group of human resource Professionals currently working in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) times. In the first four chapters of the research study, the researcher sought to present a clear understanding of the research study. Chapter 1 provided an introduction that presents a background for the research study topics, research objectives and theoretical framework utilized. Chapter 2 contained a literature review of the three main focus areas – VUCA, organizational ambidexterity, and strategic human resource management. Chapter 3 focused on data collection, research methodology, and data analysis. Chapter 4 reviewed the results of the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides summary of the research study findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The chapter concludes with a review of the research study's summary, limitations, recommendations for future research, discussion, and concluding remarks.

Importance of the Study

Literature has long regarded the belief that the human resource function is vital to organizational success (Chopra, 2017; Stewart, 2016; Young & Hexter, 2011). Having a strategic approach to human resource management, human capital management can be a distinguishing factor for successful organizational outcomes (Gu and Luo, 2022).

Another factor that impacts improved business outcomes is organizational ambidexterity. Figure 1, Conceptual Framework, provides a visual aid to assist in understanding this

dynamic. This study provides both human resource leaders, and organizational leaders an opportunity to reflect on these two factors in the context of the dynamic, and everchanging VUCA environment.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The following section includes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the research study. The findings based on results derived in Chapter 4 support the literature review presented in Chapter 2. The researcher based the findings on survey participant responses. The researcher interpreted participant responses and made conclusions based on the analysis of the survey data collected. The researcher made recommendations included in this chapter align with the conclusions derived by the researcher. The researcher addressed opportunities for study participants, other human resource professionals, and organizational leaders to glean insight into actionable deliverables in day-to-day operations that align strategic human resource management practices in leveraging organizational ambidexterity. Lastly, the researcher included a summary, discussion points, limitations, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Finding 1

In the current VUCA times, human resource professionals' perception of strategic human resource management integration practices becomes more strategic as job responsibility increases from entry to executive level.

Participants indicated incorporating strategic human resource management integration practices as part of their job function. Participants indicated an increased awareness of strategic human resource integration practices the higher their job function

advanced in role and responsibility. As participants advanced in their careers, the more the strategic component of human resource management integration practices grew in recognition and importance to the survey participants.

Conclusion. This finding supports literature that organizations that proactively navigate an affective employer-employee relationship achieve greater success over competitors (Feffer, 2017; Goldman 2017; Roziq et al., 2021; Stewart, 2016). Strategic human resource management contributes to the foundation of business success by linking organizational goals and its most valuable asset, people. The rapidly changing VUCA times call for human resource professionals to be recognized as functional strategic contributors who understand the priorities of the business and engage in strategic organizational operations. Participants in this research study indicate alignment with Chopra's (2017) assessment that the human resource management function has risen in the organizational hierarchy. The results of this study also support the findings of Schnell and Gerard (2022) that a key aspect of strategic human resource management is integrating the human resource function with strategic decision-making. This finding also maintains and strengthens the findings that indicate human resource professionals become strategic partners when they define business strategy, ask questions that move strategy into action, and design HR practices that align with business strategy (Moreira et al., 2022; Sajeevanie et al., 2020).

Recommendation. Human resource professionals should seek mastery of competencies that distinguish their function away from administrative support to strategic partner. Each human resource professional within an organization should be able to articulate alignment of their role to business outcomes. Human resource professionals

should embody and champion organizational culture that explores and exploits change. The VUCA phenomenon impacts organizations as well as individuals. Human resource professionals must be able to adapt change and use it to an organization's advantage. As the workforce of today is vastly different to that is just three years ago. This turbulent and rapidly changing business environment has reset the business model as disruption has become the norm (Chadha, 2017; Du & Chen, 2018; George, 2017; Hamid, 2019; Mittal, 2014). Today's VUCA 'new normal' times require that organizations remain vigilant in monitoring changes in their market and how they relate to the ever-changing needs of their employee base.

Business leaders should seek opportunities to partner with strategic human resource management professionals. Kail (2010, 2011) states that different leadership initiatives are required in dynamic VUCA situations. In 2016, Johansen and Voto contend that human resources will be profoundly important in the VUCA world of the future. But as Zhang-Zhang et al. (2022) emphasizes, the context of a highly dynamic VUCA environment is now. Business leaders should invest time and initiative into assessing how VUCA will impact business operations. Business leaders should also seek to ensure that they have strategic human resource professional team with awareness of the business acumen and capable of driving adaptable change culture to achieve organizational goals.

Finding 2

In the current VUCA times, human resource professionals' perception of organizational ambidexterity becomes more strategic as job responsibilities increases from entry to executive level.

Research study participants found organizational ambidexterity relevant to organizational performance. As research study participants advanced in their careers, the higher the strategic component of organizational ambidexterity initiatives related to the individual. Organizations benefit from engaging in practices that support and enhance internal and external strategic resources.

Conclusion. The complexities of VUCA times impacts an organizations' ability to remain competitive and relevant. Ambidextrous organizations are identified by their ability to simultaneously implement incremental and progressive change often called exploitation and exploration (Alpkan & Gemici, 2016; Du & Chen, 2018; Moreira et al., 2022). This finding confirms the finding of Wicaksana et al. (2022), that businesses' agility initiatives incorporate collaboration of organizational culture, leadership, and work tactics that benefit all stakeholders operating in an uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment.

This finding supports the concept that organizational success has a positive effect on organizational ambidexterity. The rating of heightened organizational ambidexterity awareness increasing as human resource job function level increased aligns with Talerngsri (2014) research findings. Talerngsri advises human resources professionals to plan for different future scenarios, respond swiftly to drive business success, and enable enterprise agility. This capability becomes more attainable as human resource professionals grow in tenure and responsibility. This finding also supports the connection of collaboration between human resource management systems and organizational ambidexterity. These practices encompass exploration and exploitation by an

organization's human resource management function to adapt to changes in the VUCA work environment.

Recommendation. Based on the findings from this research study, human resource professionals should aspire to embed the concept of ambidexterity into general day-to-day strategic human resource practices. Organizational leadership should seek opportunities to measure and reward creativity and innovation, characteristics that positively correlate with ambidexterity. Human resource management professionals should seek opportunities to support organizational leadership in the focus on incentivizing organic, internal development of interrelated explorative and exploitative organizational capabilities.

Finding 3

In the current VUCA times, as human resource professionals' perceptions of strategic human resource management integration practices increase, the perception of Organizational Ambidexterity increases.

Human resource management professionals recognize the impact that VUCA challenges impose on modern companies to remain competitive (Hamid, 2019) and achieve organizational excellence (Saleh & Watson, 2017). This awareness increases as human resource management professionals grow in seniority and tenure. Literature reviews on these topics support accountability in both organizational leaders and human resource management professionals.

Conclusion. The VUCA phenomenon impacts every business sector. In the VUCA world, managing change is a continuous process where human resource professionals must invest in building the capabilities to adapt to this changing

environment. Today's human resource management community provides resources and organizational support from a strategic vantage point, far more than a few short years ago. As Schramm (2016) states, human resource professionals have the best vantage point to assess current business operations of today and the future. Organizational and human resource leadership face VUCA challenges from extreme weather, to advances in technology, to adjusting to a global health pandemic. According to Alpakan and Gemici (2016), agile, ambidextrous organizations need versatile human capital to succeed.

According to Li et al. (2021), studies have increasingly supported the theory that a strategic human resource management system positively impacts organizational competitive advantage. A leading enhancement toward gaining organizational success in today's VUCA world includes the ability to innovate and leverage technology. This finding also supports the theory presented by Delery and Roumpi (2017), that engagement in strategic human resource management practices leads to competitive advantage.

Recommendation. Human resource professionals should champion the role of organizational change agent. The role of change agent as identified by Van Brimmer (2016) and Gandhi (2017), was discussed earlier in the research study literature review. The best way to involve human capital with the organizational strategy is to align the human process and human resources strategy with the organizational strategy. As Khan and Ahmed (2021) state, an abundance of literature exists asserting the intricacies between strategic human resource management and organizational success.

Based on the findings of this research study that build on the systematic review of literature presented in Chapter 2, organizational leaders are urged to strategically leverage

their human resource management professional capabilities which in turn will elevate the Human Capital productivity of the workforce. Business leaders should continually seek out strategic business experts who produce solutions adaptable to the current rate of change. Ulrich et al. (2015), identify competencies business leaders should seek when evaluating the human resource management for business operations. Successful strategic human resource professionals possess capabilities to facilitate managing the delivery of functional stability while facilitating innovation, agility, and adaptability of organizational outcomes.

Summary of the Study

Globalization dominates the business environment (Wicaksana et al., 2022). This study focused on the multitude of challenges organizations face sparked by the unique and varying degrees of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, VUCA (Wicaksana et al., 2022; Zhang-Zhang et al., 2022). Current literature states that the VUCA environment impacts every business sector (Rajeshwari, 2022). VUCA's only constant is rapid and unpredictable change (Wicaksana et al., 2022). According to Thymi et al., (2022) the speed of innovations and advancements currently occur at a revolutionary pace with no historical precedent. Thymi et al. (2022) argue that human resources lead the determining factors that characterize organizational success in a competitive environment. The authors also contend that people and their talents encompass the definition of human capital. This aligns with the principles of human capital theory that considers economic processes associated with the maximizing of the benefit of individual talents (Becker, 1964; Schultz (1961). Expounding on this theory,

Gu and Luo (2022) contend that a strategic human resource management system can positively impact employee motivation and improve organizational outcomes.

One possible positive impact strategic human resource management provides is organizational ambidexterity. Organizational ambidexterity is the joint pursuit of efficiency in performing current operations while simultaneously pursuing new opportunities for the future (Chen et al., 2021; Vittori et al., 2022). This is exemplary of techniques defined within organizational change theory. Organizational change theory focuses on organizational issues that need fixing or changing (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Lewin, 1996). Organizations seeking to attain ambidexterity must continuously maintain an awareness for changes in business operations. Ambidextrous organizations are identified by their ability to simultaneously implement incremental (exploitation) and revolutionary (exploration) change (Alpkan & Gemici, 2016; Du & Chen, 2018; Moreira et al., 2022; Vittori et al., 2022).

This research study provides the opportunity for human resource management professionals to reflect on and assess these dynamics. Research study participation eligibility consisted of individuals that worked as a human resource professional, held membership in a professional human resource network group, and was employed by an organization with at least 21 employees. The researcher collected 133 responses from research study participants. The research study survey instrument combined two pre-existing survey instruments previously deemed valid and reliable by peer-reviewed research. The survey instrument for this study assessed perceptions of strategic human resource management integration practices and perceptions of organizational

ambidexterity among a group of human resource professionals that met the scope of participation criteria.

The research used SPSS statistical software to analyze the data provided by the research participants. Results of this study support assertions of previous scholarly research studies and articles cited above. Through analysis of the data, the researcher concluded there is a positive relationship between strategic human resource management practice integration and organizational ambidexterity. The more apt a human resource management professional was toward strategic human resource management initiatives the higher the likelihood the organization the participant worked for was to experience ambidexterity.

Discussion

The researcher used a quantitative study to examine strategic human resource practice integrations and organizational ambidexterity during current Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) business operation times. The human resource function requires strategic capabilities to respond quickly and intelligently to keep pace with the rate of change. As Gandhi (2017) emphasized that this critical skill accentuates the call for human resource professionals to lead the path to change. Honing the change champion competency has the propensity to counter Kotter's (2014) characterization of organizations as "struggling" when compared to the accelerating rate of change.

Human resource professionals and organizational leaders must be ready and adaptable in today's VUCA business operations environment. Human resource professionals must establish a collaborative work arrangement agreement with organization leaders. Human resource management leaders should be empowered to

monitor and management the culture required to flourish in a VUCA world. Human resource professionals should assertively seek opportunities to be the change leader. This skillset requires a flexible and adaptive approach to foreshadow changes initiatives critical to organizational success. Strategic human resource professionals must understand the reality of the VUCA environment and be able to deliver the message of value in their function to provide sustainable competitive advantage in perpetuity as the key to organizational sustainability success.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations identify factors that could influence the outcomes of a research study but are outside the researcher's control (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The researcher identified three limitations as part of the research study. First, the research study focused on a single perspective, that of human resource professionals. The views of other functional roles within an organization may differ. The study calls for perception of organizational leadership by human resource professionals.

The second limitation of this study addresses the generalizability of the study results. Roberts (2010) defines generalizability as the ability to generalize the findings of a research study to the entire population or other populations and settings. Thus, according to Shadish (2002), the results of the study should not be generalized outside the scope of this research population.

A third limitation of the study is the research design. The research relied solely on quantitative data. Other data collection methods such as qualitative and mixed methods may have contributed more personalized results than those in the predetermined responses of the closed ended survey approach. Another factor of the research design

limited the survey response window to seven days. A longer response window may have increased the survey response rate.

Recommendations for Future Research

The review of literature in preparation of this research study identified several calls for future research. The researcher sought to contribute to reducing this gap in the literature by conducting this research study. According to Ahammad et al. (2019), limited academic research focuses on the influence of human resource strategy and practices on organizational ambidexterity. The research study engaged an audience of human resource professionals from one geographic area to enhance this demographic.

This research study focused on the perspectives of human resource management professionals. A recommendation for future research is to engage both the human resource function and organizational leadership in tandem within the same organization for a comparison of perspectives. A qualitative or mixed methods research design would allow future research to dive deeper into to how and why organizations approach strategic human resource management and organizational ambidexterity differently.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between human resource management Practice Integration and organizational ambidexterity in VUCA times. Changes keep coming faster and faster. In the VUCA world, nothing is predictable. HR will play a strong role in encouraging the flow of information from the outside in, and from within silos to across silos in organizations. Organizations drift toward functional silos when human resources are not integrated with other strategic or function support roles in the business.

Organization leaders and human resource professionals should conduct a self-examination of individual strategic human resource management professional competencies as well as the human resource departmental capabilities. This would provide insight into the appropriate strategies needed to position human resources as a role model with the credibility and ability to support and sustain a thriving requisite organizational culture built for success.

Human resource functional elements of the 21st century have altered from positioned in the background to becoming a significant differentiator in businesses. Literature exists to equip business leaders and human resource professionals with functional tips to approach the VUCA dynamic. The strategy to mitigate the VUCA complexities include adapting a VUCA Prime approach (Chadha, 2017). Chadha classified VUCA Prime as a reverse actionable approach to the VUCA phenomenon. Chadha contends one should counter volatility with vision, uncertainty with understanding, complexity with courage, and use overcome ambiguity with adaptability.

The VUCA environment demands that human resource managers avoid traditional and outdated styles of leadership in disruptive environments. A more inclusive style of leadership that incorporates a strategic approach to human capital management and development is required to counter the challenges of VUCA times. Viewed from this broader perspective, the current VUCA world can be an opportunity for further advancement and greater collaboration among organization leaders and human resource professionals, rather than a threat to be alleviated.

As identified earlier in this study, business environment operations constantly change and continue to change more and more rapidly. These changes range from

regulatory framework, political and economic changes in domestic and global contexts, global health pandemic, dynamic weather events including devastating hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires. Other operational changes occur in consumer behavior, customer demands, advances in science, the arrival of domestic and international competitors, new regulations, price changes, demographic shifts, and other variables. Inclusive, these factors remain a constant threat to businesses (Bawany, 2016; Dechezleprêtre & Sato, 2017; Du & Chen, 2018; George, 2017; Jain, 2019). Today's successful organizations must adapt to societal changes to survive and thrive (Chattopadhyay et al., 2017). A key component to this success includes business leaders engaging competent strategic human resource professionals. In turn, strategic human resource management professionals also engage organizational leadership and partner through human capital development initiatives to deliver cross-functional stability, innovation, agility, and adaptability.

APPENDIX A - IRB Approval Letter

Office of
Research Integrity



118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5116 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6756 | WWW.USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-993
PROJECT TITLE: STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE INTEGRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY IN VUCA TIMES
SCHOOL/PROGRAM School of Leadership
RESEARCHERS: PI: Gizzatta Johnson
Investigators: Johnson, Gizzatta-Annulis, Heather-
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 22-Jul-2022 to 21-Jul-2023

Donald Sacco

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX B - Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

You are receiving this survey because of your knowledge and experience as a Human Resource professional. Completing this survey will help Human Resource professionals understand the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practice integration and Organizational Ambidexterity in VUCA times.

The survey focuses on your perceptions. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

The information you provide may help Human Resource professionals more effectively integrate Strategic Human Resource Management initiatives in their organizations.

There is little risk to you if you decide to participate. We will not identify you in any of our reports. Completing this survey is completely voluntary, and if you start, you are free to stop at any time.

This survey was reviewed by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol 22-993). Any questions or concerns about the rights of a participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 601-266-5997. Any questions about this project content should be directed to Gizzatta Johnson (w882095@usm.edu).

Please indicate your willingness to participate by selecting the appropriate response below.

- Yes, I consent

- No, I do not consent

APPENDIX C - Approval to use Sajeevanie et al. Survey Instrument

From: Dr. Thuduwage Lasanthika Sajeevanie <tsajeevanie@sjp.ac.lk>
Sent: Monday, May 23, 2022 11:13:48 PM
To: Gizzatta Johnson <Gizzatta.Cookjohnson@usm.edu>
Subject: Re: Survey Instrument Inquiry

Dear Mr Johnson,

Thank you for your e-mail. Hereby I give my written permission to use our questionnaire for your academic purposes. If you need any other help please let us know.
I wish all the best for your PhD,

Best Regards,

Dr Sajeevanie

On Sat, May 21, 2022 at 8:12 PM Gizzatta Johnson <Gizzatta.Cookjohnson@usm.edu> wrote:
Hello Dr. Sajeevanie, Dr. Opatha, and Dr. Dissanayake,

My name is Gizzatta Johnson. I am a student in the Human Capital Development doctoral program at the University of Southern Mississippi. My dissertation research focuses on the impact of strategic human resources on organizational ambidexterity in the VUCA environment. As part of my literature review, I came across your 2020 journal article published in the *Sri Lankan Journal of Human Resource Management* - **An instrument to measure the practice of strategic human resource management in private sector organizations**. I am keenly interested in your research and the compilation of your survey instrument. |

I am writing to request permission to utilize it all or in part for my dissertation research. I believe that your survey instrument encompasses components of strategic human resource management and would immensely align and enhance the revise of my research study. I request the use and distribution of your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

Respectfully requested,

Gizzatta Johnson
Doctoral Candidate
Human Capital Development
School of Leadership
University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX D - Approval to use He and Wong Instrument

RE: Survey Instrument Inquiry - Short Deadline

Zilin He <Z.L.He@tilburguniversity.edu>

Fri 5/20/2022 8:27 AM

To: Gizzatta Johnson <Gizzatta.Cookjohnson@usm.edu>; pohkam@nus.edu.sg <pohkam@nus.edu.sg>

1 attachments (36 KB)

HE Zilin (HD992323N) Thesis Table 3-2.doc

Dear Gizzatta,

Please feel free to use our survey instruments. The attached table in my dissertation provides a bit more information than the article in *Organization Science*. But we lost the full survey questionnaire long time ago.

I must say our instruments were a bit crude. Therefore, even if you also exactly focus on exploratory and exploitative innovation strategies, adjustment and refinement based on literature development in the past years are desirable.

Good luck,
Zilin

Assoc. Prof. Zi-Lin HE | Dept. of Mgmt. | Tilburg Univ. | 5000 LE Tilburg | The Netherlands

Google scholar profile: <https://scholar.google.nl/citations?user=oNuvhSQAAAAJ&hl=en>

From: Gizzatta Johnson <Gizzatta.Cookjohnson@usm.edu>

Sent: vrijdag 20 mei 2022 14:53

To: Zilin He <Z.L.He@tilburguniversity.edu>; pohkam@nus.edu.sg <pohkam@nus.edu.sg>

Subject: Survey Instrument Inquiry - Short Deadline

Importance: High

Hello Dr. He and Dr. Wong,

My name is Gizzatta Johnson. I am a student in the Human Capital Development doctoral program at the University of Southern Mississippi. My dissertation research focuses on the - Impact of strategic human resources on organizational ambidexterity in the VUCA environment. As part of my literature review, I came across your 2004 journal article published in the journal *Organizational Science – Exploration vs. Exploitation: An Empirical Test of the Ambidexterity Hypothesis*. I am keenly interested in your research and the compilation of your survey instrument outlined in Table 1.

I am writing to request access to your survey instrument with permission to utilize it all or in part for my dissertation research. I believe that your survey instrument encompasses relevant components of Ambidexterity and would immensely align and enhance the previse of my research study. I request the use and distribution of your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

Respectfully requested,
Gizzatta Johnson
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX E - Survey Instrument

Q1 Approximately how many total employees work in your company?

- Less than 20 (1)
- 21 - 249 (2)
- 250+ (3)

Q2 To what extent does each of the following things occur in your company/organization?

	Very Low Extent (1)	Low Extent (2)	Moderate Extent (3)	High Extent (4)	Very High Extent (5)
HR professionals give advice and suggestions based on their expertise to top management to make strategic decisions. (Q2_1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR department has so far given the expected impact on implementing various strategic decisions taken by the top management. (Q2_2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR Professionals facilitate the top management in assessing the effectiveness of strategy. (Q2_3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Head of HR department is a regular member of the strategic planning board/committee. (Q2_4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR representative at the board has the business knowledge of Company's operations. (Q2_5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR Representative at the board ensures that HRM issues are incorporated in the business/corporate strategies. (Q2_6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

HR issues are an integral part of strategic business/corporate strategy along with other functional issues. (Q2_7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of business/corporate strategies is a top-down process. (Q2_8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR Director is able to influence the management in the strategic decision making process. (Q2_9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business/Corporate strategies are developed by a combination of top-down, bottom-up approach. (Q2_10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees are given the opportunities to contribute to the development of business/corporate strategies. (Q2_11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each Head of the department has his/her part in the business corporate strategy formulation process. (Q2_12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 To what extent were the following objectives important to your company in the past three years?

	Not important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)
Introduce new generation of products (Q3_1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extend product range (Q3_2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open up new markets (Q3_3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enter new technology fields (Q3_4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4 To what extent were the following objectives important to your company in the past three years?

	Not important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)
Improve existing product/service quality (Q4_1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve production/service flexibility (Q4_2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce production/service cost (Q4_3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve yield or reduce material consumption (Q4_4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Which local Human Resource chapter are you a member of?

- Cen [REDACTED] (1)
- Gre [REDACTED] (2)
- Nor [REDACTED] (3)
- Ba [REDACTED] (4)
- Aca [REDACTED] (5)
- Imp [REDACTED] (6)
- Nor [REDACTED] (7)
- NO [REDACTED] (8)
- Nor [REDACTED] (9)
- Decline to answer (10)

Q6 Which of the following best describe your job function?

- Individual Contributor (does not manage a team, not a supervisor) (1)
- Manager/Supervisor (supervisor of one or more individual contributors) (2)
- Director/Assistant (manager of managers) (3)
- Vice President (including senior assistant/associate VPs) (4)
- C-suite Officer (including Chief Human Resources Officer and Chief Learning Officer) (5)

Q7 How many years of Human Resource experience do you have?

- 0-5 (1)
- 6-10 (2)
- 11-15 (3)
- 16+ (4)

Q8 Would you like to enter the drawing for a chance to win one of (4) \$50.00 gift cards from either Amazon, Grubhub, Starbucks, Visa, or Walmart?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

APPENDIX F - Pilot Survey Invitation

To: HR colleague

Hello,

I am requesting your participation in a pilot group to test a survey instrument for a doctoral research project at the University of Southern Mississippi. This research examines the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practices and organizational ambidexterity in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) times. The information collected from this survey will be used for validation purposes and **will not be included as data collected for analysis**. Your feedback will assist the researcher in ensuring the survey questions and formatting are easily understood by the participants.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete on any computer or mobile device with internet access. This online survey is open and will remain open for the next 24 hours.

Your participation is voluntary, and your information will remain anonymous. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at w882095@usm.edu.

Please click the survey link below or copy and paste the entire URL into your browser to access the survey.

https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/survey-builder/SV_8CSPpN3A3ggAN80/edit

Thank you in advance for your participation,

Gizzatta Johnson

APPENDIX G - Sponsor Approval

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 1, 2022 10:07 AM
To: Gizatta Johnson
Subject: RE: Dissertation Survey Assistance

We will be able to send this for you but cannot share the distribution list. When does this need to go out? I can plan for Monday. Can you draft an email to the HR distribution list for me? It needs to be casual in tone. The members need to be able to understand what info you are trying to get and exactly what they need to do it. In about two sentences. 😊

[REDACTED]
Director [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Gizatta Johnson <Gizzatta.Cookjohnson@usm.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 11:21 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Dissertation Survey Assistance

Survey attachment.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [Gizzatta Johnson](#)
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 11:02 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Dissertation Survey Assistance

Good evening [REDACTED],

It was great speaking with you last week. As we discussed, I am requesting your assistance with the distribution of a survey for my dissertation research. Below is a recap and highlights of our discussion.

Dissertation Topic: STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL AMBIDEXTERITY IN VUCA TIMES

Purpose: This study explores the relationship between implementing strategic human resource management practices and level of organizational ambidexterity within the VUCA environment by collecting the perceptions of Human Resource professionals.

Research variables:

Strategic Human Resource Management. A future-oriented process of developing and implementing Human Resource programs that address and solve business problems and directly contribute to major long-term business objectives (SHRM, 2022).

Organizational Ambidexterity. The result of an organization's ability to simultaneously exploit existing competencies and explore new opportunities to meet business needs and adapt to market changes (Chen et al., 2021).

VUCA. Acronym adopted by the strategic business leaders to describe the dynamic, chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing business environment characterized by four components: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021).

Significance to Population: Human Resource professionals in the targeted geographic area (██████████) have endured significant VUCA disruption events in the past three years including: hurricanes, floods, ice storms, global pandemic, implantation of remote working and distance learning, and technology enhancements utilizing Zoom/Teams and beyond. Human Resource professionals could use this information to help organizations thrive through change and disruption. Organization leaders could utilize results to allocate resources more appropriately to achieve strategic initiatives and prepare employees for resiliency and flexibility in society's continuing VUCA times.

Description of Study: The researcher will use a questionnaire to gather information on implementing strategic human resource practices and organizational ambidexterity. The survey is comprised of 24 multiple choice questions and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. No invasive techniques will be used, nor will this survey require disclosing personal or confidential information. Post survey completion, participants will be provided the opportunity to enter a participation incentive drawing.

I have attached a *draft* of the survey for your review. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Please respond with agreeance to support the survey distribution by forwarding the *finalized* survey via email to ██████████ members. If you are unable to facilitate mass distribution of the survey, please provide details of alternate availability to sponsor/promote this research initiative.

Thank you for your support and assistance,

Gizzatta Johnson

██████████

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

APPENDIX H - Initial Survey Invitation Email

Subject: State Membership: Participate in a survey for a chance to win a \$50.00 Gift Card

State Membership,

This research is not affiliated with local [REDACTED] or national [REDACTED] and will only be used for external research purposes.

Do you want a chance to win one of (4) \$50.00 gift cards?

You are invited to participate in dissertation research to examine the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management practice integration and Organizational Ambidexterity in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) times.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete on any computer or mobile device with internet access. This online survey is open and will remain open until **07/xx/2022**.

After completing the survey, you may enter a drawing for one of (4) \$50.00 gift cards from your choice of merchants: **Amazon, Grubhub, Starbucks, Visa, or Walmart**. If you choose to enter the drawing you will be redirected to a separate survey to enter your name and preferred contact email address.

Your participation is voluntary, and your information will remain anonymous. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact the researcher at w882095@usm.edu. This research is approved by the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board (Protocol #22-993).

Please click the survey link below or copy and paste the URL into your browser to access the survey.

[Qualtrics survey link](#)

Thank you in advance for your participation,

State Director

APPENDIX I - Reminder Survey Invitation Email

Subject: State Membership: REMINDER - Participate in a survey for a chance to win a \$50.00 Gift Card

State Membership,

This research is not affiliated with local [REDACTED] or national [REDACTED] and will only be used for external research purposes.

This is a reminder of the opportunity to participate in the dissertation research survey below to **win one of (4) \$50.00 gift cards**. This online survey closes **07/xx/2022**.

Please click the survey link below or copy and paste the URL into your browser to access the survey.

[Qualtrics survey link](#)

Your participation is voluntary, and your information will remain anonymous. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact the researcher at w882095@usm.edu. This research has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board (Protocol #22-993).

Thank you in advance for your participation,

State Director

Incentive Survey

Q1 Thank you for your time! In order to be eligible for one of the four (4) \$50.00 gift cards please provide your contact information below.

(Note: Your contact information will be kept confidential and will not be a part of the previous survey response.)

The drawing for gift card winners will be held virtually in collaboration with and supervision of the researcher's academic advisor. Winners will be notified the same day. Please enter your name, gift card merchant, and preferred email address for contact if you are selected. If no response is received from the winner within 5 days of notification, the prize will be voided by the researcher. Undeliverable message results in the next participant being selected as the gift card winner. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at w882095@usm.edu

Name (1) _____

Email address (2) _____

Q2 Please select your preferred gift card merchant.

Amazon (1)

Grubhub (2)

Starbucks (3)

Visa (4)

Walmart (5)

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