

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE-ORIENTED HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between strategic human resource management and organisational performance has been widely discussed in the literature. However, very little research explores the precise mechanism of this relationship. This paper aims to examine the influence of strategic human resource management on organisational performance, introducing employee-oriented human resource policy as a potential mediator. The developed mediation model is empirically verified based on the data collected from 264 managers working in profit-oriented organisations in Poland. Factor analysis has been used to verify constructs (strategic human resource management, employee-oriented human resource policy, and organisational performance), and regression analysis has been used to verify the proposed model. The findings of the study suggest that employee-oriented human resource policy mediates the relationship between strategic human resource management and organisational performance. The results of the study can help contemporary managers to understand how to develop and implement human resource management solutions aligned with an employee-oriented approach to human resource policy including development programmes, pay systems, performance appraisal, planning and succession plans, as well as the recruitment and selection of candidates. This research conceptualises and tests a novel strategic human resource management-based model of organisational performance with employee-oriented human resource policy as a mediator.

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KEY WORDS

Strategic human resource management, organisational performance, employee-oriented human resource policy, management

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Introduction

A rapidly changing business environment has become the norm for most organisations. To compete, organisations must continually improve their performance. Concerning the uncertain and complex business environment, organisations

look for practices, procedures, policies, and guidelines to gain competitive advantage. Increased attention is paid to the more effective management and utilisation of human resources. Organisational mission statements very often state that

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people are a company's most valuable resource. Organisations look for ways of job performance that will allow employees to face increasingly difficult challenges. In such a dynamic environment, human resource (HR) professionals need to go beyond administrative roles. Organisations need to implement the gradual transition to formulating essential information for organisational policymakers and prepare broader analyses of employees, their competences, and the skills determining the company's development. The basis of their activity should be specific data and evidence. Therefore, the task of HR managers is to provide reliable and comprehensive information, both qualitative and quantitative, concerning employees in order to make strategic business decisions (Chakraborty and Biswas, 2019).

HR professionals can partner with organisational policymakers because they are knowledgeable, not only in the field of human resource management (HRM), but also in the field of business (Nguyen and Teo, 2018). A study by Huselid et al., (1997) revealed that organisational effectiveness is dependent on the competences of HR staff. HR professionals must be credible and ready to demonstrate the ability to solve various issues related to employees on an everyday basis.

The concept of HRM is not new; its theoretical roots in organisations initiated by Taylor, Mayo (Obedgiu, 2017), Drucker and McGregor (Malik, 2018) have existed for decades. However, strategic human resource management (SHRM) represents a new transformation in HRM practices (Huselid et al., 1997). Changes in HRM are closely related to changes in the organisation. It is no longer enough to focus on the present, as there is a need to look ahead and forecast certain phenomena that the organisation will have to face. In dynamically developing organisations, people are

a factor in competitive advantage. Through obtaining and retaining skilled and motivated employees, managers aim to achieve the optimal benefits from their abilities. This requires the development of an internal, coherent system of various, interrelated HR practices integrated with business needs, including recruitment and selection procedures, development and training activities. Flexibility and the ability to predict – in addition to precise data analysis – are necessary to link the strategic aims of organisation with HR strategies.

SHRM concerns the role of HRM practices in improving organisational performance and achieving a competitive advantage through the alignment of human resources. Hence, organisations consider HR policies and practices oriented towards employees as a means by which to improve business performance (Huselid et al., 1997) in terms of productivity, the quality of goods and products, and financial performance.

The article aims to explore the links between SHRM and organisational performance through a survey of the perception of managers in Polish companies' managerial practices, and propose a SHRM-based model of organisational performance as a result. The model aims to show the way SHRM contributes to the achievement of sustainable development and competitive advantage.

Although there are a number of studies in the literature on the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance, there has been very little research exploring the precise mechanism of this relationship, especially considering an employee-oriented approach to HR policy. Hence, this study attempts to outline the mechanism explaining the relationship between those two constructs, considering the indirect influence of SHRM on organisational performance through an employee-oriented human resources (HR) policy.

This study fills the research gap by including novel notions related to organisational performance, i.e. employee-oriented HR policy, as a statement of how organisations regard, treat and manage their human resources (Monks et al., 2013) in terms of their sourcing, development, assessment, and compensation (Katou and Budhwar, 2010).

1. Literature review

1.1. Strategic human resource management

Over recent decades, the concept of strategic human resource management (SHRM) has received a great deal of research attention (Ferris et al., 1990; Wan et al., 2002; Green et al., 2006; Stanton and Nankervis, 2011). SHR emerged in the 1980s where the concept of human resources (HR) practices (Wright et al., 2004; Delery and Roumpi, 2017) became a critical concern, especially the selection, development, and compensation of managers (Devanna et al., 1981).

SHRM researchers adapted theories from the literature on strategy (Green et al., 2006), where the vertical and horizontal fit to business strategy can be found (Huselid, 1995; Delery, 1998) as a core of the rationale building HRM systems. Horizontal fit refers to HR practices which are coherent and integrated with other organisational functions to offer suggestions to departments for the improvement thereof. In terms of vertical fit, HR practices are aligned to the organisational context (Green et al., 2006). Both fits may be the basis for the implementation of HR strategies in the organisational context. Organisations implementing SHRM tend to apply coherent HR practices to support the unique business context (Lepak and Snell, 2002; Green et al., 2006).

The development of organisational strategy begins with obtaining data sources related to its closer and further environment

and the interior of the organisation itself. Based on the strategic analysis, these data are interpreted and conclusions are recorded as goals in strategic plans. At the stage of developing the organisational strategy, the design of SHRM specifies and sets the direction for building an HRM strategy. The most important aspect related to the importance of developing SHRM and including it in the organisation's strategic plan is to use the synergy of compliance of activities of all organisational units to achieve the company's strategic goals. Strategic data analysis of the environment and the interior of the organisation allows policymakers to draw conclusions in order to develop the long-term plans and goals of the organisation.

SHRM theory assumes that HRM practices are effective and can contribute to organisational performance. SHRM aims to develop and implement HR strategies integrated with business strategies to facilitate their achievement (Armstrong, 2014). SHRM is considered a cross-section of the goals and decisions included in the strategic plan of the organisation operationalised by HR strategies, policies and practices. It requires strategic planning which reflects the use of organisational capabilities, resources, decisions (Ferris et al., 1990) and is followed by a rational decision-making process. Strategic planning aims to achieve alignment between the external environment and internal organisational capabilities. SHRM aims to conduct a systematic analysis of the organisational needs and context, as well as the effectiveness of HR practices in the organisation (Wright and McMahan, 1992).

The use of SHRM takes not only the mission, values, culture and philosophy of the organisation into account, but also the approach to managing people and their talents, knowledge, skills and development in the company's adopted strategy. It

is necessary to move away from treating employees as cost-generating resources to discover the correlation between investment in employees and organisational performance. Organisational capacity may be generated by ensuring unique and skilled individuals (Huselid et al., 1997). To achieve this, the organisation needs to contribute to the business strategy in terms of providing talented human resources. Therefore, the importance of SHRM results from the perception of people working in the organisation as a “strategic resource”, which can be used to combine competitive HR practices and policy with a clear organisational strategy.

SHRM supports the organisation's strategy in key HR areas. It relates to the range of organisational functions resulting in the decision-making process including organisational structure and culture, change management, organisational efficiency and effectiveness from a long-term perspective, competence and selection of resources in terms of future company requirements, employee development, as well as the analysis of an organisation's responses to changes in the external environment (Mohammad, 2019). Strategic HR decisions form the foundations for developing HR strategy, which indicates how the organisation aims to exploit its HRM practices and integrate with the organisational business strategy. They focus on the individual, organisational plans, and changes that need to be made concerning employees. HR strategies are mainly developed in the areas of HR planning, employee recruitment, management by effects, employee development, employee remuneration, and employee relations.

HR strategies should be aligned with the overall strategy of the organisation. The process of developing HRM strategies is determined by environmental changes and the ability to predict the impact of such

changes on individual HR factors. This is done by associating assumptions about the future of the organisation with problems to be solved in the area of human resources. Planning HRM strategies requires a detailed analysis of the organisational environment. Organisations should be able to perceive emerging opportunities as well as anticipate and estimate the likelihood of potential risks. HRM strategy requires strategic planning that provides the organisation with the resources necessary to achieve its objectives and enables the recruitment of candidates and the development of employees with the skills required to implement the plan. In order to successfully apply a strategic plan, the organisation needs to implement practices aimed at retraining and maintaining employees, as well as recruiting new candidates (Armstrong, 2014). SHRM is designed to match human resources to the needs of organisations operating in a changing competitive environment. This adjustment is implemented through HR policies and programmes tailored to the requirements of the organisational strategy.

1.2. Strategic human resource management and organisational performance

The relationship between SHRM and organisational performance has been a topic of interest to researchers since the early 1990s (Huselid et al., 1997; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011). Hence, SHRM seems to have an important influence on organisational performance. Various studies have confirmed this positive impact (Green et al., 2006; Gurbuz and Mert, 2011; Choi and Yoon, 2015). It has been revealed that the role of human resources is crucial in creating the sustainability of organisational performance and competitive advantage (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Haque, 2020). However, the scope of research on the re-

lationship between SHRM and organisational performance is relatively small, and as such indicates the need for future attention (Wright et al., 2004).

The initial research attempts to examine the contribution made by SHRM to organisational performance revealed its links to formalised strategic planning (Ferris et al., 1990). HR research, based on the theory of strategy, argues that human resources support the building of a sustained competitive advantage (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Huselid, 1995; Delery and Roumpi, 2017). The implication of the organisational strategy to SHRM may be considered either an "outside-in" or "inside-out" approach (Wright et al., 2004; Malik, 2018).

The "outside-in" view of HR practices indicates that HR strategy emerges from the challenges coming from the business, relations with customers and competitors. HR continuously communicates its strategy to the external business environment; hence, this approach is known by scholars as the "business-driven" approach (Wright et al., 2004). The analysis of the industry environment allows for strategic choices about the business (Mohammad, 2019) to be made, which also has direct implications on HR practices. An outside-in view was discussed in the early stages of the development of the concept of strategic management and explored the strategy determined by the external environment. It assumed that organisational performance depends on the behaviours of external stakeholders (Malik, 2018).

An "inside-out" approach to strategic analysis challenges assumptions of the dominance of external business through the concept of the resource-based view (RBV) and explains how internal resources can grow for sustained competitive advantage (Boxall, 1996). Researchers in the field of SHRM drew on the resource-based perspective of the organisation (Delery

and Roumpi, 2017) to explain the role of HRM in providing a competitive advantage (Wright et al., 2001; Armstrong, 2014) through the combination of human capital resources (Delery and Roumpi, 2017). Penrose's (1959) work is the foundation for RBV, whereby the organisation is defined as a collection of resources aimed at achieving organisational goals (Penrose et al., 2009). It is also argued that how a company organises these bundles of resources and capabilities (MacDuffie and Kochan, 1995) which enhance competitive advantage (Boxall, 1996; Penrose et al., 2009) matters. The current conceptualisation of RBV is a dominant framework in business strategy and aims to analyse how organisations may achieve a competitive advantage. RBV explains the role of HRM in delivering unique, core organisational competences by selecting highly qualified employees as well as developing them (Colbert, 2004). RBV assumes that only rare and valuable resources can provide sustainable competitive advantages for organisations (Barney, 1991). Research on SHRM suggests that not individual practices alone (Delery and Roumpi, 2017), but instead a collective system of HR practices (Malik, 2018), may lead to higher organisational performance and support competitive advantage through competences providing value to the organisation (Collins and Clark, 2003). A resource-based approach requires unique and rare organisational resources to build a sustained competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995; Green et al., 2006; Choi and Yoon, 2015). Research on SHRM suggests that HR practices can enhance organisational performance when they are internally integrated and aim to develop employee competences (Collins and Clark, 2003).

Scholars have not yet reached an agreement regarding the best definition of SHRM (Wright and McMahan, 1992); neverthe-

less, there is a collective agreement that it involves designing and implementing internally aligned HRM practices (Huselid et al., 1997).

Organisational performance can be defined in different ways. It might be manifested in terms of organisational turnover, productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, profitability (Huselid, 1995), as well as in terms of financial indicators – return on assets, return on equity (Darwish et al., 2013) or return on investment. Research on the effect of HRM on turnover revealed a relationship with individual-level factors, such as job enrichment (McEvoy and Cascio, 1985), organisational culture (Sheridan, 1992; Harrison and Bazzy, 2017), job security, compensation level, job satisfaction, demographic variables, and organisational commitment (Arnold and Feldman, 1982; Jawaad et al., 2019). These individual factors are predictive of employee turnover. The impact of HRM practices on organisational performance may be observed in organisations which emphasise cooperation and dispute resolution (Katz et al., 1985; Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1991). Other researchers indicate different factors that increase productivity, such as innovative practices (Katz et al., 1987), quality of work, labour-management teams (Schuster, 1983), training programmes (Bartel, 1994), extensive recruiting (Holzer, 1987), compensation systems, as well as employee turnover (Brown and Medoff, 1978; Haque, 2020). Furthermore, links between HRM practices and corporate financial performance have been explored by several authors.

The strategic goal of each organisation is high financial performance, which depends on operational performance as a function of human capital elements, including employee productivity, process, and technology (Bendickson and Chandler, 2019). The organisation needs

competent people who will interact with technology and processes, and who will have the required skills, knowledge, and attitudes. HR practices, including selection, high-quality training (MacDuffie and Kochan, 1995; Bendickson and Chandler, 2019), and performance appraisal may enhance competitive advantage and impact operational and financial performance. HR professionals need to stimulate human resources to drive organisational performance through their contribution to the execution of organisational strategy. These strategies are related to employee development, talent management, creating a work environment, job design, commitment, engagement and motivation, and a reward system (Armstrong, 2014).

Based on these deliberations, it is hypothesised that:

H1. Strategic human resource management has a positive influence on organisational performance

1.3. Employee-oriented HR policy and organisational performance

The study of the impact of SHRM and organisational performance is derived from the theory of management, in particular human resources management (HRM), considering the impact of other notions related to SHRM and organisational performance (Harrison and Bazzy, 2017). According to the literature, the HR policy should contribute to explaining the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance.

Along with the development of a network approach to the structure of the organisation, it has become necessary to develop separate models of work with various groups of employees (Becker et al., 2009), which should be reflected in the practice of separate HR policies. The HR policy is based on the organisational philosophy in the context of managing human potential (Lepak and Shaw, 1995). It is defined as

the system of coordinated, long-term activities aimed at developing highly capable employees in order to achieve the goals of the organisation. HR policies include guidelines and principles for specific HR managerial activities that identify and characterise the value given to employees and their treatment (Monks et al., 2013).

Employee-oriented HR policy emerges from Human Resource Management (HRM) philosophy aimed at enhancing employee capabilities (Monks et al., 2013). It is based on the assumption that lifelong development is human nature; hence, investment in "human resources" is profitable. The organisation analyses current and future personnel needs and selects employees from a long-term employment perspective; attention is paid to personality, self-improvement and cooperation. There is an emphasis on continuous employee development related to benefits and the job performed (Armstrong, 2014). It leads to an organisational culture based on loyalty, cooperation and employee engagement; however, the organisation needs to ensure appropriate conditions. This model represents a subject approach reflected in employee-oriented practices (De Bussy and Suprawan, 2012).

The employee orientation approach impacts the stability, loyalty and commitment of employees, as well as fostering an atmosphere of cooperation, which subsequently results in low turnover and high satisfaction (Darwish et al., 2013). Due to broad training and development opportunities, employees demonstrate high morale from skill enhancement; they are eager to learn new skills and develop competences, and also share and exchange knowledge with others (Monks et al., 2013).

The literature revealed a link between adopting people-oriented HR practices including recruitment, selection, reward systems (Terpstra and Rozell, 1993; Saeed

et al., 2013), HR planning programmes including staffing and succession plans (Chakraborty and Biswas, 2019), training and development programmes (Russel et al., 1985; Bendickson and Chandler, 2019), and performance appraisals and higher productivity (Huselid, 1995) and organisational performance. A study by De Bussy and Suprawan (2012) revealed evidence supporting the assumption that employee-oriented HR practices contribute more to organisational financial performance. They considered employee orientation to be a dialogue, operationalised in terms of the organisational engagement in communication with its employees. Their second study uses a conceptualisation of employee orientation. Both notions of employee orientation are positively associated with corporate financial performance (De Bussy and Suprawan, 2012). Regardless of existing studies, the relationship between organisational performance and HR policies has been not sufficiently manifested in empirical studies.

Therefore we hypothesise that:

H2a. Employee-oriented human resource policy has a positive influence on organisational performance

1.4. SHRM and employee-oriented HR policy

It is possible to assume that employee orientation is also somehow related to SHRM. Since SHRM in the literature mostly relates to organisational performance, with limited consideration of other notions (Delery and Roupni, 2017), the analysis of the relationship between SHRM and other notions is therefore needed to fill the identified research gap.

The first efforts to describe these notions emerged from HRM and were linked to the behavioural perspective (Wright and McMahan, 1992), suggesting employee behaviour (Jackson et al., 1989) as the

mediating mechanism between HRM and organisational performance (Wright and McMahan, 1992).

The role of SHRM in shaping HR policy seems to be indisputable. This refers to strategic employee management choices to enhance organisational performance (Lepak et al., 2007). Monks et al. (2013) reveal that HR strategy relates to social capital as a driver of intellectual capital, considered to be a resource which provides a sustainable competitive advantage. Social capital may be established by organisations with an employee-orientated HR policy (Roca-Puig et al., 2007; Monks et al., 2013) which value employee contributions and pay attention to competency development (Roca-Puig et al., 2007). Employee-orientated HR policy is a key driver for SHRM and aims to utilise strategic human capital effectively (Lepak et al., 2007; Delery and Roumpi, 2017) through HRM practices, including development (Boxall and Macky, 2009). The need for consistency between employee-orientated HR policy and SHRM has also been revealed in the literature (Nguyen and Teo, 2018).

Given these facts, we formulate the hypotheses that:

H2b. Strategic human resource management has a positive influence on employee-orientated human resource policy

H3. Strategic human resource management positively influences organisational performance through employee-oriented human resource policy as an intermediary variable

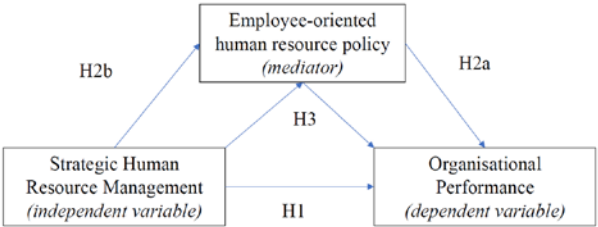
1.5. Research gap

Meaningful issues and relationships between SHRM and organisational performance have been revealed through a study of the literature; however, there are very few research findings exploring how employee-based orientation to HRM may mediate links between SHRM and organi-

sational performance (Collins and Clark, 2003). The role of employee-oriented HR policy has not been sufficiently featured. Moreover, there is a lack of a comprehensive model in the literature explaining the mechanism of SHRM's influence on organisational performance with the notion of employee-oriented HR policy. Therefore, in the context of the relations described, it became vital to analyse the indirect influence of SHRM on organisational performance with the mediating role played by employee-orientated HR policy. This study provides an SHRM-based model of organisational performance, considering the mediating role of employee-oriented HR policy manifested through the approach to employee development, compensation and pay systems, appraisal systems, HR succession and staffing plans. The study contributes to the identified research gap.

The proposed hypothesis conceptual framework of the study illustrating the adopted research hypothesis is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The mediation model of SHRM influences organisational performance



Source: Own elaboration.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

The survey aimed to verify the proposed hypotheses and identify the mediating role of employee-oriented HR policy in the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance. The research was conducted in January 2020 among profit-oriented organisations in Poland. It was also the only substantive limitation of the sample (organisations of various sizes, activity profile, age and range of activity were examined). Survey questions were related to organisational policies and practices; hence, in order to obtain valuable answers, senior managers were identified for the study.

The decision to conduct research in Poland emerged from the analysis of the literature which revealed that a great deal of empirical research describing the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance had been done in Western countries, where the concept of SHRM was developed. However, Poland, as a rapidly developing country, has relatively limited research on SHRM (Geary and Hunek, 2019). Secondly, in past decades, the role of the HR function in Polish companies with-

nessed a move from administrative roles to strategy-oriented ones; hence, further analysis will add value to the literature in the field (Fedyk et al., 2021).

The study was commissioned to SurveyMonkey. Only one survey was completed in each organisation. Empirical research was carried out using the Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method. 268 organisations conducting business activity in Poland participated in the study. The selection of organisations was done deliberately, aiming to select a diverse and representative research sample for enterprises of various sizes, types of activity, age and area of activity. The resulting organisational distribution is presented in Table 1.

Slightly more than one-third of the sample are micro- and small organisations (36.4%), a similar number are medium-sized organisations (34.8%), while the remaining are large organisations (28.8%) (Table 1).

The distribution of the sample shows that HR practices are present regardless of the size, age or sector of the company.

Table 1. Characteristics of organisations employing the respondents

Organisation size	Frequency	%
Micro (under 10 people)	32	12.1%
Small (11-50 people)	64	24.2%
Medium (51-250 people)	92	34.8%
Large (over 250 people)	76	28.8%
Total	264	100.0%

Source: Own elaboration.

2.2. Overview of variables

To verify the proposed hypothesis and develop a mediation model, this study is built on the following variables (items building each variable are presented in Table 2):

- SHRM was measured based on a five-point Likert scale, where the responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); it contains two items. The items were selected based on the main organisational indicators of HR strategic orientation; hence, managers provided reliable information about the SHRM approach.
- The employee-oriented HR policy scale was measured by seven items, assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree). The scale is two-dimensional, and the responses collected were aggregated to represent a shared

perception of the HR policy -object approach (low results) or subject approach (high results) – to employees in the organisation. The analysis revealed the employee-oriented HR policy in the organisations examined.

Both items – SHRM and employee-oriented HR policy – have been developed from an extensive review of the literature.

- The organisational performance scale contains 10 items, which were also assessed based on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to rate their own firm's competitive advantage in relation to competitors (1 – Much worse than our competitors; 2 – Worse than our competitors, 3 – The same as our competitors, 4 – Better than our competitors, 5 – Much better than our competitors)

Table 2. Items building each variable in the model

SHRM	1. The organisation defines long-term goals in the personnel area, in particular the needs in terms of the number of employees and their competences.
	2. The organisation indicates the assumptions regarding the methods of acquiring, retaining and developing employees.
Employee-oriented HR policy	1. Current and future staffing needs are analysed.
	2. People are recruited and adapted to the organisation based on personality, character, professional and development potential, formal qualifications, and hard competences are required less frequently.
	3. The principle of "lifelong learning" is adopted: employees are trained in terms of their future tasks, and particular importance is given to key employees and the improvement of their skills.
	4. The pay system is flexible.
	5. All bonuses given to managers and other employees are closely related to their job performance.
	6. The assessment system is aimed at the professional development of employees in accordance with the organisation's plans.
	7. Employees are dismissed only in necessary cases, while employees with lower potential have the possibility of horizontal promotion (are placed in another appropriate position).
Organisational performance	1. The overall financial situation of the company.
	2. Job performance.
	3. Quality of products or services (reliability, diligence).
	4. Innovativeness of products or services.
	5. The modernity of the applied technological solutions.
	6. The efficiency of organisation management.
	7. Reliability of business processes.
	8. Market share.
	9. Customer satisfaction.
	10. Employee satisfaction.

Source: Own elaboration.

2.3. Scale validity testing

All scales were tested using Cronbach's α and factor analysis. Table 3 presents the results. All items meaningfully loaded from 0.615 to 0.873 are acceptable values and provided adequate support for the use of all proposed scales for further analysis of the measurement model and hypothesis testing (van Griethuijsen et al., 2014).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and reliability of scales of variables

Variable	No. of Scales	Cronbach's &	Factor Analysis	M	SD
SHRM	2	0.615	72.201 %	3.5172	.84164
Employee-oriented HR policy	7	0.843	51.597 %	3.4151	.77748
Organisational performance	10	0.873	46.817 %	3.4079	.69477

Source: Own elaboration.

3. Research results

To answer the question about the mediating role of the employee-oriented HR policy in the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance, a mediation analysis was performed, supplemented with the results of the Sobel test.

The classical approach to mediation analysis assumes that mediation exists when independent variable no longer significantly predicts the dependent variable in the regression model with the mediator. The mediation is partial when the influence of the dependent variable on the independent variable is reduced (Baron and Kenny, 1986). An alternative approach is presented by Cohen and Cohen (1983), who stated that mediation is confirmed when relations between the independent variable – mediator and the mediator – dependent variable are statistically significant and strong (Cohen et al., 2003). It is assumed that the most important relationship is that which is mediated by the mediator and when two relations, namely independent variable – mediator, and mediator – dependent variable, are significant, then it may be considered that the variable plays the mediator role. This approach extends the previous one to include the additional analysis of the significance of mediation.

The analysis is carried out in three steps. First, the independent variable must be related to the dependent variable (direct relation C). Second, the independent variable must be related to the mediator (relation A). Third, relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables are significant when both the independent variable and the mediator (relation B) are introduced (relation C') (Baron and Kenny, 1986). At the end of the analysis, the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman test is applied to confirm the significance of the beta coefficients in relation A and B.

The first stage initially aimed to verify the first two conditions of mediation significance and hypotheses H1, H2a and H2b; hence, the r-Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The results obtained, summarised in Table 4, clearly show that there is a statistically significant and high correlation between all analysed variables, supporting H1, H2a and H2b. Because the correlation analysis is not sufficient to draw a conclusion on a cause – effect relationship between variables, additional statistical analysis was undertaken to accept the indicated hypotheses.

Table 4. Correlation analysis between analysed constructs

		SHRM	Organisational Performance
SHRM	Pearson Correlation	1	.603**
	Sig.		.000
	N	261	251
Employee-oriented HR Policy	Pearson Correlation	.519**	.529**
	Sig.	.000	.000
	N	251	246
Organisational Performance	Pearson Correlation	.603**	1
	Sig.	.000	
	N	251	254

Source: Own elaboration.

The next stage aimed to verify the mediating model of organisational performance. Regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics was used to verify the hypothesis for proposed relations. Firstly, a regression analysis of the independent variable (SHRM) with a dependent variable (organisational performance) was performed:

Table 5. Regression analysis for the relationship between SHRM (independent variable) and organisational performance (dependent variable)

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.732	.146		11.885	.000
	SHRM	.481	.040	.596	11.944	.000

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the data summarised in Table 5, the hypothesised model showed a good fit to the observed data, and that the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance is positive and statistically significant (beta = 0.6, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting H1.

In the course of further analysis, tests were performed to assess whether SHRM as an independent variable was associated with employee-oriented HR policy as a dependent variable (mediator).

Table 6. Regression analysis for the relationship between the independent variable (SHRM) and the mediator (employee-oriented HR policy)

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.723	.181		9.509	.000
	SHRM	.481	.050	.519	9.592	.000

Source: Own elaboration.

The model again proved a good fit to the observed data. The standardised regression coefficient beta = 0.52 is significant $p < 0.05$ and shows a positive relationship between SHRM and employee-oriented HR policy. Such a result confirms the sec-

ond condition of the mediation model and supports H2b.

In the last step, multiple regression analysis was performed with two predictors (SHRM, employee-oriented HR policy).

Table 7. Multivariate regression analysis with the independent variable (SHRM) and mediator (employee-oriented HR policy) as predictors of the dependent variable (organisational performance)

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.311	.164	7.974	.000
	SHRM	.343	.046	.429	.000
	Employee-oriented HR policy	.265	.049	.307	.000

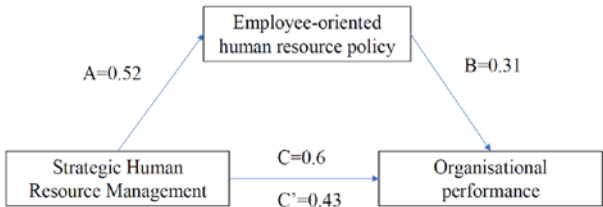
Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the standardised regression coefficients, it is clear that SHRM still significantly affects organisational performance after taking into account employee-oriented HR policy as the mediator. Employee-oriented HR policy also positively influences organisational performance, i.e. there are two predictors. However, the beta coefficient of the relationship be-

tween the independent and dependent variable in the mediator model is significant but has a lower value than in simple regression (0.43), i.e. the relation between the independent and dependent variable is weaker after introducing the mediator to the regression model.

The list of obtained beta coefficients is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. SHRM based model of organisational performance



Source: Own elaboration.

Because it is difficult to determine whether the change in the value of the beta coefficient of the independent and dependent variable is statistically significant (comparison of paths C and C') based only on regression analysis, an additional test was performed to check the significance of the product of the regression coefficients for the indirect relationship between variables including the mediator.

The Sobel, Aroian or Goodman tests are based on the values of coefficients of the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator as well as the mediator and dependent variable (paths A and B of the mediation model). It assumes that

if both these relationships are statistically significant, then mediation occurs (Cohen et al., 2003). The analysis omits the comparison of the direct effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable and the same relationship in regression, including the mediator. The Sobel test was chosen for the analysis because it is suitable for mediation analysis when the sample is large (over 50), a condition which is met in this test (Cohen et al., 2003). The Sobel test verifies if the product of beta paths A and B in the mediation model substantially differs from 0.

Figure 3. Sobel, Aroian and Goodman test in mediation analysis for the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance.

Input:		Test statistic:	Std. Error:	p-value:
a	0.481	Sobel test: 4.71426902	0.02703813	0.00000243
b	0.265	Aroian test: 4.69503372	0.0271489	0.00000267
s _a	0.050	Goodman test: 4.73374269	0.0269269	0.0000022
s _b	0.049	Reset all	Calculate	

Source: Own elaboration.

Based on the analyses, at a 95% confidence interval, all three tests indicate significant mediation.

4. Discussion

The present study has proved that SHRM has a significant effect on an organisation -using SHRM positively influences organisational performance. The results obtained are in line with the views underlined in the literature (De Bussy and Suprawan, 2012), confirming that the variables described are related to each other, and thus should be analysed jointly. Researchers also confirm that SHRM is mostly related in the literature to organisational performance with limited consideration of other notions. In examining the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance, the study has drawn upon the concept of employee-oriented HR policy. It has been shown that SHRM will have a greater influence on organisational performance after applying employee-oriented HR policy in organisational strategy and practices.

The analysis of the relationship of SHRM together employee-related notions conducted in this study fills the research gap through providing evidence for other conditions supporting the influence of SHRM on organisational performance. The correlation analysis confirms that the relationships between the proposed constructs are positive and statistically significant. The research findings allowed for the empirical verification of the influence of employee-oriented HR policy as a notion that

has not yet been studied in the mediation model, but was merely assumed based on the literature (H3).

The verified mediation model shows that implementing HR solutions emerging from employee-oriented HR policy plays a significant role in the relation between SHRM and organisational performance. It remains consistent with the views found in the literature (Lam and White, 1998; Roca-Puig et al., 2007; Boxall and Macky, 2009; Monks et al., 2013), based on which it might have been assumed that employee-oriented HR policy would be a determinant for the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance.

Conclusions

The literature analysis and empirical research allowed the researchers to fill the identified research gap. Based on the research, the empirically verified model of the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance was presented, including employee-oriented HR policy as the mediator of this relation. The analysis facilitated the definition of the mechanism by means of which SHRM influences organisational performance. It shows that SHRM can condition organisational performance to achieve sustainable development through employee-oriented HR policies implemented in the organisation.

Therefore, the aim of the article (to examine the impact of SHRM on organisational performance and to propose an SHRM-based model of organisational perform-

ance with employee-oriented HR policy based on the findings) was successfully achieved. The presented study adds to the literature on management, especially HRM, placing SHRM as an important element in achieving sustainable organisational development and competitive advantage through the implementation of HRM solutions derived from an employee-oriented HR policy. Such a contribution is novel from the perspective of building HRM theory in a developing country which had not previously been examined. As such, efforts should be made to conduct further analysis of the other notions through which SHRM influences organisational performance.

The relationships discussed also have practical implications. The proposed SHRM-based model of organisational performance shows the mechanism that can be used for improving organisational performance, underlying the role of an employee-oriented HR policy. Managers should cooperate with HR professionals who may help them implement employee-oriented HRM solutions significantly related to organisational performance. The focus should be on the following long-term HRM solutions:

- Life long learning development programmes aimed at training employees for future tasks. It includes continuous investment in human capital through the creation of opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, improving skills, and changing attitudes. Managers should create a learning and knowledge-sharing culture. It helps employees to consider themselves valuable resources, and motivates them to behave in alignment with organisational objectives as a result.
- A pay system related to job performance, aiming to differentiate high-performing and poorly performing employees.
- A competency-based performance appraisal system aimed at professional development. The objective is to assess individual performance and the potential for future career advancement. Managers should set motivational goals for personal development and the improvement of job performance.
- HR planning programmes, including succession plans and staffing. These programmes help to identify, develop, and retain employees with potential for future promotion. Employees with lower potential have a possibility of horizontal promotion, meaning that they are placed in another appropriate position, rather than being dismissed.
- A personality – and potential-based recruitment approach to candidates, manifested in considering real competences rather than formal qualifications.

It is paramount for managers to create an employee-oriented culture aimed at developing the most effective behaviours consistent with business strategy to achieve higher job and organisational performance. This will help managers to understand the broad advantage of SHRM in supporting organisational performance.

However, the empirical study presented herein has several limitations worth mentioning. Although the model revealed the importance of an employee-based orientation to HR policy, there could also be other notions which influence the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance. Future researchers can advance the developed model by incorporating other employee-related notions as important mediators of the relationship between SHRM and organisational performance. Moreover, only organisations operating in Poland participated in the research, and further

verification of the proposed hypotheses in other cultural contexts is needed. However, the positive verification of the proposed hypotheses based on empirical research performed among organisations operating in Poland can be treated as a successful pilot study. It shows the starting point for further analysis of the broader notion of the influence of employee-oriented HR policy on organisational performance.

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