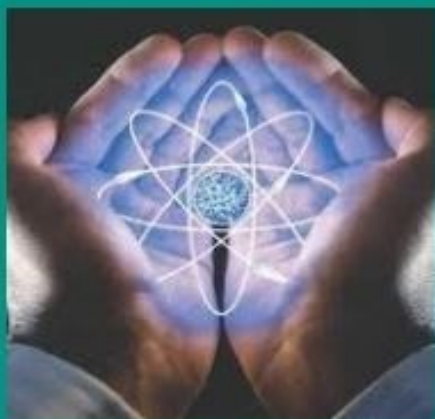


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# Academia Open



*By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo*

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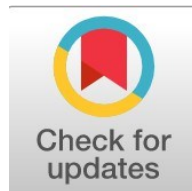
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# The Role of Human Resource Management in Achieving Competitive Advantage

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## Abstract

**General Background:** Contemporary organizations face intensifying global competition that demands strategic approaches to sustaining market position and achieving organizational excellence. **Specific Background:** Human resource management has evolved from an operational function into a strategic driver of competitive advantage, encompassing talent acquisition, development, training, compensation, and strategic workforce planning that directly influence organizational performance, innovation capacity, and adaptability. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite availability of financial and technological resources, many organizations struggle to effectively invest in human capital as a lever for competitiveness, demonstrating limited awareness of strategic human resource planning aligned with long-term organizational goals. **Aims:** This research examines the strategic role of human resource management in building sustainable competitive advantage by analyzing characteristics, skills, and capabilities required of human resources and evaluating how HR practices impact creativity, quality, flexibility, and operational efficiency. **Results:** Human resources constitute the most influential source for building competitive capabilities; organizations investing in training and development achieve superior innovation and excellence; rare and distinguished competencies prove difficult to imitate; strategic HR planning directly enhances sustainable performance and organizational capabilities. **Novelty:** The study provides an integrated theoretical framework demonstrating how human resources transform from operational components into value-generating strategic assets through systematic capability development. **Implications:** Organizations must adopt comprehensive HR strategies integrating recruitment, qualification, motivation, and strategic planning to enhance operational efficiency, foster innovation, strengthen loyalty, and achieve sustainable competitive differentiation in complex business environments.

**Keywords :** Human Resource Management, Competitive Advantage, Strategic Planning, Organizational Performance, Talent Development

### Highlight :

- Strategic HR planning directly enhances sustainable performance and organizational capabilities beyond traditional resources.
- Rare, skilled talent proves difficult for competitors to replicate, creating lasting advantages.
- Training and development programs significantly increase creativity, innovation, and operational process efficiency.

Published date: 2026-01-04

## **The Research Problem**

Contemporary organizations are increasingly challenged in their ability to build a sustainable competitive advantage in a rapidly changing and highly competitive business environment, forcing them to re-evaluate the role of human resource management as the primary driver of creating organizational capabilities for survival and excellence. Despite the availability of financial and technological resources, many organizations are still unable to invest in human resources in a way that achieves excellence in quality, creativity and innovation. The problem is reflected in the limited awareness of the importance of human capital as the real lever of any competitiveness, and in the weak implementation of modern human resources management programs, whether in the field of recruitment, training, or competency development. The problem also includes the lack of effective HR strategic planning in a way that is directly related to the long-term goals of the organization. Some organizations also suffer from a lack of a stimulating work environment that promotes belonging, commitment, flexibility, and innovation, leading to a decline in performance efficiency. The problem is exacerbated by poor investment in research and development, lack of support for talent and innovation, and the absence of policies that enable workers to exercise leadership and creative roles. Hence, there is a need to study the role of human resource management as a strategic source to build a sustainable competitive advantage that enables the organization to face challenges and develop its competitiveness effectively.

## **The Importance of Research**

### **1. Theoretical Significance**

The theoretical importance of the research is that it highlights the concept of competitive advantage from a strategic perspective and directly links it to the role of human resources as the basis of organizational efficiency, rather than just an operational component. Research also promotes a scientific understanding of the relationship between human capabilities and development, innovation, quality, and flexibility, which are essential in building modern competitive advantage. The research adds an integrated theoretical framework that illustrates how human resources are transformed from an adjunct to a value-generating element.

### **2. Practical Importance**

The practical importance of research results is evident in the ability of research results to help organizations improve their policies in selecting and developing employees, activate training programs, and invest in the intellectual and creative capabilities of human resources. The study also provides practical principles that can be applied in different work environments in order to enhance quality, reduce costs, increase productivity, develop flexibility, and achieve sustainable excellence. Research helps to support decision makers in building effective strategic plans for human resources to serve the overall competitiveness of the organization.

## **Research Objectives**

1. Explain the strategic role played by the Human Resources Department in building and enhancing the competitive advantage within modern organizations.
2. Identify the characteristics, skills, and abilities that must be available in human resources to be a real source of creating competitive capabilities.
3. Analyze the practices and functions of human resources management and indicate the extent of their impact on creativity, quality, flexibility, and achieving productive efficiency.

## **Definitions related to the competitiveness of human resources**

Large, active global companies strive to enhance their competitiveness by achieving the highest levels of quality, the fastest production pace, and at the lowest possible costs, to give maximum efficiency. Achieving these goals depends primarily on the presence of modern, competent and trained employees who work in a team spirit that works in integrated and motivated teams.

In today's business environment, creative minds are the cornerstone of an organization's success. With the diversity and intensification of competition in the global market, excellence in invention and innovation has become one of the main pillars of corporate success and sustainability, and even an imperative for their survival in the face of major global companies, especially multinational corporations. However, having the ability to invent and innovate requires the presence of qualified and trained human cadres.

Therefore, it is necessary to manage, maintain, and invest intellectual and intellectual capital in enormous efforts such as invention and innovation, in parallel with allocating financial budgets to research and development programs, which many of our managers unfortunately consider to be secondary things, rather than as the most important necessities and components of competitiveness.

Many business strategists believe that an organization's competitive advantage is achieved through its employees, and that the fundamental and real difference between good and poor performance lies in the quality and efficiency of the organization's team, and their motivation and commitment to contributing effectively to the organization's success.

Accordingly, multiple definitions of HR competitiveness have emerged, with most of them focusing on the unique skills, capabilities, and characteristics of HR and their impact on achieving outstanding performance.

According to some researchers, human resource competitiveness is defined as "a set of behavioral patterns that represent the basic requirements that a worker must have to accomplish the required tasks and perform his jobs competitively."

Other researchers focus on the distinct management of an organization's workforce compared to others, so that this feature can be considered as a product of the organization's intellectual capital and the advantage of its organizational operations [1].

## **The Importance of Human Resources in the Development of Competitiveness**

Modern management has realized that an effective "human resource" is the true foundation for building an organization's competitiveness and sustainability. While financial, material, technical and information resources, and their characteristics, are essential for the possibility of achieving



such competitiveness, they alone are not enough.

Therefore, the human element, with its processes of design and intellectual creativity, planning and programming, coordination and organization, preparation and qualification, development and modernization, implementation and achievement and other processes that are the product of humanitarian action, becomes indispensable for any success, whatever other resources are available to the Organization.

However, the mere presence of the human element does not guarantee the achievement of the organization's goals or the acquisition of a competitive advantage. Rather, it is necessary to develop their intellectual abilities, provide opportunities for creativity and development, and enable them to assume their responsibilities. This motivation resulting from challenges and problems drives human resources towards innovation and development. It is the characteristics and abilities of these individuals that make continuous success and turn ideas and innovations into reality [2].

## **New Human Resources Characteristics Compatible with Competitiveness Requirements**

There is no doubt that the human element is the cornerstone of achieving success and progress for any organization. The effectiveness and efficiency of human resources at all levels [3] is the foundation of excellence management. In order for these resources to contribute effectively to a competitive advantage for an organization, they must have specific characteristics and be able to possess the basic tools that enable them to do so.

First: Characteristics of a Distinguished Human Resource: The human resource is the beating heart of any success that organizations seek [4], and in order for this resource to contribute to achieving the desired excellence and success, it must have the following qualities [5]:

- a. Scarcity: An organization must possess human resources with unique skills and capabilities that are difficult for competitors to imitate or obtain. This includes having the ability to innovate and create their willingness to face challenges and challenging tasks, as well as mastering modern and diverse technologies.
- b. Continuous Development: Ensuring the acquisition of new knowledge, updating the knowledge stock, and continuing to develop oneself in the fields of knowledge and expertise that are highly compatible with the requirements of the work, while providing a wide range of experiences and knowledge that support Innovative and creative abilities: Investing mental energies in putting forward ideas and suggestions, providing solutions to problems, innovating new ways and methods of work, and looking at things from different and renewed angles.
- c. Exchangeability: In order for a human resource to be a source of sustainable competitive advantage, it must be easily replaceable by another resource similar at the level of the organization's strategy. In order for the organization to possess these outstanding human competencies, it must pay close attention and careful attention to the selection of qualified personnel for positions that contribute to building and enhancing the competitiveness of the organization.

Second: Keys to Excellence

In addition to having human resources with the aforementioned qualities, achieving excellence and growth that leads to unique competitive advantages requires the use of these resources to acquire key keys, including the following [6]:

### **1. Ability to imitate:**

This is the easiest and most common key, as the organization begins to produce products similar to imported foreign products with the aim of replacing them locally. It then seeks to create an exportable surplus, with a focus on imitation being less expensive than the original product to enable mass production at a low cost, thus selling at competitive prices.

### **2. Development Capability:**

He explains that the activation of dynamic capabilities (knowledge investment, restructuring, rapid response to the environment) represents the link between knowledge management, achieving competitive advantage, and sustaining a complex and changing work environment [7]. After the producers have absorbed all aspects of the imitated products, it seems that studies are being carried out to develop them, especially after collecting consumer feedback. This task is entrusted to research units and centers specialized in development, which are usually concerned with the following:

- a. Improve the performance and functionality of products with the aim of improving the satisfaction they achieve for the end consumer, the industrial user, and the medium.
- b. Developing raw materials to reach cheaper materials and better product quality.
- c. Developing manufacturing methods to make them faster, less expensive, and more productive. The more effective human resources are in developing and improving, the greater the Organization's competitive advantages.

### **3. Ability to innovate:**

This ability is one of the most important requirements for gaining real competitive advantages. This is achieved when the project experts have a high capacity to create, invent, create, and innovate. The organization usually seeks to find, nurture and support talented, bright-minded, and innovative capabilities. At the same time, it organizes competitions for inventors and directs their inventions to produce products that match its current product lines. In this way, projects gain competitive advantages characterized by:

- a. Unprecedented innovative features.
- b. Addressing all consumers.
- c. Difficult to imitate by competitors until after a period of time.

Excellence, excellence and excellence depend on creation, competencies, talents, geniuses, and serious researchers to achieve the desired goals.

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), <https://acopen.umsida.ac.id>, published by [Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo](#)

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Therefore, it is necessary to open doors for talented people and provide the right environment for discovering and developing their talents. In general, in order for human resources to contribute to the excellence of any organization, it must be characterized by the following [9]:

- a. Rare: That is, it is not readily available to competitors.
- b. Value Production: Human resources are able to create value for the organization.
- c. Inimitability: This means that it is difficult for competitors to imitate these outstanding resources, whether through training and qualification or attracting them from the organization.

### **Human resources as a source of competitive advantage.**

The intensity of global competition has led organizations, both public and private, to focus heavily on achieving competitive advantage.

He found that lean manufacturing practices have a direct impact on competitive advantage, with a recommendation to implement quality management systems to support superior performance, thereby enhancing the company's competitive position in the pharmaceutical sector [9]. In this context, the importance of human resources in contemporary organizations is highlighted as the primary source of building and enhancing competitiveness. Many experts and management specialists assert that achieving excellence in the performance of 21st century organizations no longer depends only on the possession of natural, financial, or technical resources, but also It is primarily based on the organization's ability to provide unique types of human resources that are able to make the most of those other resources.

Competitiveness refers to an organization's ability to sustain the growth of its market share in the sector or field in which it operates. An organization that fails to meet the needs and expectations of its customers, employees, and shareholders is less likely to be able to achieve a competitive advantage than other companies operating in the same industry or doing the same activity. [10] Human resource management practices contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of an organization in several key ways, including[11]:

- A. Talent selection: Selecting employees with high ability to innovate, develop and perform their job tasks efficiently.
- B. Qualifying Cadres: Preparing workers to effectively deal with modern technologies in production and operational processes.
- C. Promoting Belonging: Developing a sense of loyalty and belonging to the organization by improving the work environment and providing a positive environment.
- D. Productivity: Increasing the level of productivity by developing employees' abilities and boosting their motivation to work hard.
- E. Cost reduction: Reduce operating expenses and save on staffing costs and costs resulting from errors in personnel management [12]. In the last two decades, departments have recognized the increasing importance of human resources management practices in supporting other core activities of the Organization, thereby contributing to a sustainable competitive advantage that promotes profitability and growth.

At the organizational level, human resource management is a strategic entry point for managing its most important assets, which are the employees who contribute individually and collectively to the achievement of its objectives. The essence of this management lies in building a competitive advantage for the organization through the effective recruitment of highly skilled and committed competencies, in a dynamic and rapidly changing work environment, and relying on the integrated knowledge available within the organization that distinguishes it from its competitors [13]. Competitive advantage is demonstrated by an organization's advantage over its competitors by having a unique position that enables it to offer one or more products in a sophisticated manner and achieve better profitability. This advantage may be achieved by reducing costs compared to competitors, or by obtaining patents, franchises, manufacturing, or modern technology that is more effective. In addition, an organization can succeed in achieving excellence by designing its products in accordance with customer expectations, making them value this excellence They prefer to pay higher prices or choose the organization's products from all the products available in the market.

### **Human resources planning as a source of competitive advantage.**

Human resource planning is a very important strategic topic, given its pivotal role in the management of the human element, which is the main pillar of the productive process. He concluded that improving the audit mechanisms and qualitative attraction of talented human resources raises the level of organizational capabilities, which constitutes a basis for enhancing the excellence and competitive advantage of university institutions [14].

It is also considered a proactive tool aimed at accurately predicting future workforce needs. Through a regression model, it shows the power of the impact of these practices on improving the organization's results. It shows that adopting modern HR practices contributes to achieving sustainable performance and enhances the organization's ability to compete in a changing work environment[15]. Effective HR planning within any organization requires a deep understanding of its goals, policies, and programs to achieve those goals, leading to an accurate identification of needs. It shows that clarity of strategic intent, support for creativity, and empowerment of faculty members according to standards of excellence all contribute to the provision of an educational service Excellence and achieving sustainable competitive excellence for university institutions [16].

Human resource planning is defined as: the organization's efforts to provide the appropriate numbers and types of individuals it needs during a specific future period of time, and to seek their presence at the right time and place, in order to ensure the optimal utilization of their capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of the organization's performance.

[17] [18] The Human Resources Strategic Planning (SHRM) represents a model for directing human resources activities to serve the achievement of the organization's strategic objectives, and includes two main stages:

1. Strategy Formation : This aspect is concerned with evaluating the available inputs in terms of numbers and types of employees.
2. Strategy Implementation : Focuses on decisions regarding the initial allocation of resources, including organizational structure, operations, and human resources.

The HR strategic planning process is based on three main pillars:

1. Predicting future work requirements from HR: This is based on the design of the work identified in the organization's strategy.
2. Predicting the organization's ability to meet future business requirements : This is done by analyzing the available workforce.
3. Comparing future human resource needs with available ones: with the aim of identifying surplus or deficit in competencies.

This step involves accurately identifying the workers required in terms of number, quality, and efficiency. Strategic planning helps companies achieve a competitive advantage provided it is properly designed and executed. Studies have shown that companies that implement strategic planning achieve outstanding performance over the long term compared to their counterparts in the same industry.

## **Facing competitive challenges through human resource management practices.**

First, to address competitive challenges, human resource management practices play a pivotal role in four key aspects:

1. Creating an effective work environment for HR management: This includes establishing an infrastructure and policies that support HR efforts.
2. Attracting and qualifying talent: This dimension focuses on attracting skilled individuals and providing them with the necessary training to ensure their readiness.
3. Strategic alignment of human resources: Linking recruitment and development processes to the organization's overall goals and strategy.
4. Design of attractive compensation systems: It aims to offer competitive compensation packages and benefits to retain and motivate employees.

Second, effective management of the organization's internal and external factors enables it to maximize productivity and enhance its competitive advantage.

Third, changing customer requirements for new products and services directly affect the size and type of tasks performed by HR employees, which is a critical factor in the success or failure of an organization.

Fourth: The importance of human resources management in facing competitive challenges is highlighted through the role of managers in ensuring that the organization possesses the necessary skills to carry out its current and future work, which contributes to achieving competitiveness in light of the rapid developments witnessed in the modern era[19].

## **The role of human resources management in creating a strategic competitive advantage.**

Human resource management plays a pivotal role in building a strategic competitive advantage for organizations, through two main tracks: [20]

First: Emerging Strategies and the Role of Human Resources in them:

When talking about the contribution of human resources to achieving a competitive advantage, it is important to distinguish between two types of strategies:

Strategies (planned) and strategies (emerging). Strategies are often seen as a set of logical decisions based on initiatives aimed at achieving specific objectives. Planned strategies are the product of rational decision-making by senior management when formulating a strategic plan, and this type is prevalent in most organizations.

In contrast, emerging strategies are established or grown from within the organization itself, reflecting the actual practices of the organization rather than the intentions or plans set. In this context, the role of HR is to inform senior management of important HR issues when developing the strategy, and then to design HR programs that support the effective implementation of that strategy.

Second: Enhancing Competitiveness through Human Resources:

Human resource management contributes to supporting the organization's competitiveness in another important way, which is to develop a base of human capital that gives the organization unique capabilities that enable it to adapt to the complexities of the ever-changing environment.

The role of human resource management in achieving competitive advantage must be continuous and increasingly important, given the rapid changes in the current business environment. It has become clear that simply improving quality is no longer enough to succeed in global competition but rather requires the development of flexible and adaptable production systems to quickly respond to changing customer needs and competitors' strategies.

Some researchers believe that an organization that has a clear strategic vision can achieve a competitive advantage over one that lacks this vision. In order to successfully implement the strategy, it is necessary to involve individuals at all organizational levels and in various functional fields. Successful strategic planning also requires the integration of the strategic planning of human resources with the strategy of the organization as a whole, as the development of the human resources strategy requires adopting future thinking, enhancing the understanding of the organization's strategy, and providing the necessary technologies to counter Challenges [21].

### **1- The Role of Human Resource Management Functions in Achieving Process Efficiency**

Human resources are the main pillar of work efficiency. Human resource management, by applying its modern methods and functions, can raise the level of efficiency of a company. This starts with the careful selection of competent employees when hiring, and continues with their development through training and development to enhance their skills and performance. In addition, increased employee satisfaction and loyalty are considered indirect indicators of improved work efficiency.[22] The high efficiency of working human resources enables an organization to build a competitive advantage based on low cost[23].

### **2- The Role of Human Resource Management Functions in Quality Improvement**

Quality is related to all aspects of managerial behavior that directly target the quality of products and services offered, including human resource

management and investment in high-caliber employees. The Human Resources Management Department plays a critical role in an organization by adopting high-quality management practices at the core of its operations and continuously striving for improvement. HR management functions reflect and align with quality values and policies, as well as the organization's vision and mission, as they facilitate HR management policies and functions and support the implementation of quality practices [24].

### **3- The Role of Human Resource Management Functions in Achieving Creativity**

Human Resources Management is strategically positioned to promote creativity by adopting innovative approaches in its functions and practices. This leads to the dissemination of an organizational culture that stimulates performance and creativity at the individual and collective levels. Through the selection process, the department seeks to attract individuals with creative abilities and scientific qualifications that enable them to present creative and useful ideas. Through training, employees are able to introduce and apply new concepts, which in turn contributes their creative efforts to the overall performance of the organization. [25]

### **The Role of Human Resource Management Functions in Achieving Flexibility**

Human resource management functions contribute to the flexibility of an organization by providing qualified and trained cadres capable of responding quickly, adapting, and shifting between products in quantity and quality to meet the diverse needs and desires of customers[26], including the ability to adjust the number of employees or working hours, and to prepare employees to perform different tasks in response to changing business requirements. Thus, HR flexibility represents an intrinsic value of adapting human resources in terms of quantity and type (skill, behavior, knowledge, competence) according to for environmental variables. [27]

### **4- The Role of Human Resource Management Functions in Achieving Core Competencies**

Human resource management functions are a vital tool used by organizations to develop their core competencies that are most important to the company, hone the outstanding skills of their employees, and promote a knowledge-based collective learning process. This enables the organization to possess unique capabilities that competitors do not possess in its internal organization or are difficult for them to imitate, earning it sustainability, uniqueness, and excellence [28].

These capabilities, skills, knowledge, and experience can combine to serve as catalysts that create and bring together the organization's new strategic assets [29].

## **Conclusion of the Study**

### **A. Research Results .**

1. The study showed that human resources represent the most influential source in building competitive capacities compared to financial, material, and technical resources.
2. Organizations that invest in training, development, and qualification have been shown to achieve higher levels of creativity, innovation, and excellence.
3. The research concluded that the organization's ability to attract rare and distinguished competencies is a crucial element in achieving a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate.
4. The data showed that strategic planning for human resources directly contributes to achieving sustainable performance and enhancing organizational capabilities.
5. The results confirmed that the quality of the work environment and the promotion of belonging generate a positive impact on productivity and the organization's ability to adapt to challenges.
6. Modern HR practices have been shown to increase the efficiency of operational processes by improving selection, training, and motivation.
7. The study proved that organizational flexibility is largely due to the flexibility of human resources and their ability to adapt to market demands.
8. The results showed that organizations that have clear strategic visions and link them to human resources achieve a competitive advantage over their competitors.

### **B. Research Conclusions**

1. Human resource management is not a traditional managerial function, but rather the cornerstone of building a sustainable competitive advantage.
2. Human capacity development represents the most effective approach to raising organizational performance and achieving excellence in a complex and changing business environment.
3. Distinguished human resources represent a scarce, value-producing resource that is difficult to imitate, making them the most important sources of strategic excellence.
4. Integration between strategic HR planning and organizational strategy is a prerequisite for achieving excellence and long-term success.

### **C. The end**

The study concluded that human resource management is the backbone of any organization seeking to build sustainable competitiveness in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment. The research showed that human resources, with their skills, knowledge and experience, have become an indispensable strategic resource, and that investing them correctly promotes innovation, develops the quality of performance, and increases productivity. The study also confirmed that outstanding human competencies have become a rare and difficult element to imitate, making it the basis for building a competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to reach. The research stressed the importance of developing human resources management practices, especially in the fields of training, qualification, motivation and strategic planning, as these practices contribute to raising the efficiency of operational processes, improving the work environment, and enhancing loyalty and belonging. The

study also highlighted the importance of linking the organization's strategy with its human resources strategy, so that decisions about individuals are part of the organization's long-term goals. The results showed that the organization's ability to adapt to challenges and transformations depends to a large extent on the capabilities of its staff, and the extent to which management supports innovation, quality and flexibility. Based on this, the study emphasizes that building a competitive advantage no longer depends only on traditional resources, but on real investment in human beings as a resource capable of making a difference and achieving excellence

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