

From Fragmentation to Systems: A Configurational Perspective on HRM and Organizational Performance

Samuel Body

Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín, Faculty of Socio-Economic Relations, Slovakia, samuel.body@tnuni.sk

Lukrécia Body

Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín, Faculty of Socio-Economic Relations, Slovakia, lukrecia.hunkova@tnuni.sk

Abstract: Research in the field of human resource management (HRM) highlights a significant relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance; however, it also emphasizes the persistent fragmentation of knowledge and the insufficient explanation of the mechanisms through which these relationships operate. Existing studies focus on isolated practices or partial models, leading to ambiguous results. The aim of the paper is to conceptualize and empirically substantiate a comprehensive model of relationships between human resource management practices, mediating variables, and organizational performance based on the analysis of their configurations and mutual relationships, with implications for its further modeling. The model is developed based on a theoretical literature review and verified using a combined research approach. A sample of 450 respondents from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland is used. Spearman correlation analysis in the form of correlation heatmaps is conducted to verify the strength and direction of relationships among individual constructs of the model. Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis is applied to identify configurations of HRM practices and mediating variables that lead to higher organizational performance. The results indicate multiple configurations of HRM practices and mediating variables associated with higher organizational performance, while statistically significant relationships confirmed their mutual interconnections. These findings suggest the theoretical and empirical coherence of the model and provide a basis for its further testing using advanced analytical approaches, particularly PLS-SEM. The paper emphasizes the importance of systematic model verification prior to its application in complex analyses and contributes to a better understanding of HRM as an integrated system.

Keywords: HRM practices, organizational performance, V4

1 Introduction

The relationship between human resource management practices (HRMP) and organizational performance represents one of the key research areas in strategic human resource management (SHRM). Existing studies confirm that effective HRMP positively influence employee behavior, organizational effectiveness, and long-term organizational outcomes [1]. At the same time, organizations increasingly perceive human capital as a strategic source of competitive advantage and sustainable performance [2].

Despite extensive empirical research, the HRM–performance relationship remains fragmented and inconsistent. Previous studies frequently focus on isolated HR practices or partial explanatory models, resulting in insufficient understanding of the mechanisms through which HRMP influence organizational performance. This issue is commonly described as the “HRM black box” [3]. Recent literature therefore emphasizes the need to examine HRM as an integrated system rather than a collection of independent managerial practices.

One of the most influential approaches in this context is the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework, which explains organizational performance through employee abilities, motivation, and opportunities for participation [4]. Simultaneously, contemporary studies highlight the importance of mediating organizational mechanisms, particularly organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation, in explaining the relationship between HRMP and organizational outcomes [5, 6, 7].

The aim of this paper is to conceptualize and empirically validate a comprehensive model of relationships between AMO-based HR practices, mediating organizational mechanisms, and sustainable organizational performance. The study uses data collected from organizations operating in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland (N = 450). The proposed model is verified using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) and Spearman correlation analysis to identify configurations of HRMP and mediating variables associated with higher sustainable organizational performance.

The theoretical contribution of this study is threefold. First, it advances the configurational perspective in strategic HRM by conceptualizing HRM as an integrated system rather than a collection of isolated practices. Second, it extends the AMO framework by incorporating organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation into a single conceptual model explaining sustainable organizational performance. Third, it provides an empirically supported foundation for future causal testing of this integrated model using PLS-SEM and other structural approaches.

2 Literature review

Strategic human resource management research increasingly emphasizes that human resource management practices (HRMP) should be understood as integrated organizational systems rather than isolated managerial activities. Existing studies indicate that effective HRMP positively influence employee satisfaction, productivity, organizational commitment, and overall organizational performance [1]. At the same time, organizations increasingly perceive human capital as a strategic source of competitive advantage, long-term adaptability, and organizational sustainability [2]. However, despite extensive empirical research, findings regarding the HRM–performance relationship remain fragmented and inconsistent because many studies examine individual HR practices separately and use different conceptualizations of organizational performance [8].

Contemporary literature therefore highlights the need to examine HRM from a systemic and configurational perspective. According to [9], HRMP influence organizational outcomes primarily through implementation processes that shape employee attitudes and behavior, rather than through formal HR policies alone. Similarly, [10] emphasize that the effectiveness of HR systems depends not only on the existence of HR practices but also on how employees perceive and interpret them within organizational environments. These findings support the argument that HRMP should be examined as interconnected systems operating through multiple organizational mechanisms.

One of the most influential frameworks explaining these mechanisms is the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) model. The AMO framework assumes that organizational performance is enhanced when employees possess the required abilities, sufficient motivation, and opportunities to participate in organizational processes [4]. Ability-enhancing HR practices are associated primarily with recruitment, training, and employee development, while motivation-enhancing practices include compensation systems, performance appraisal, and recognition mechanisms. Opportunity-enhancing practices focus on employee participation, communication, autonomy, and knowledge sharing. Previous studies indicate that AMO-oriented HR systems positively influence organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and innovative work behavior [11,12].

Research further suggests that AMO-oriented HR practices contribute to organizational outcomes through several mediating organizational mechanisms. One of the most significant mechanisms is organizational strategy. [13] argue that HR systems become strategically effective when they are aligned with organizational goals and long-term priorities. Strategic alignment enables organizations to transform employee competencies and motivation into sustainable organizational outcomes. In this context, previous studies suggest positive relationships between AMO-oriented HR practices and organizational strategy, as well as between organizational strategy and organizational performance.

Another important mediating mechanism is work engagement. [5] identifies work engagement as a key behavioral mechanism explaining how HR systems influence employee and organizational outcomes. HR practices focused on employee development, recognition, and participation create conditions that increase employees' psychological involvement in work processes. [14] further demonstrate that sustainable HRMP positively affect employee resilience and engagement, which subsequently contribute to stronger organizational performance outcomes. Consequently, work engagement represents an important explanatory mechanism within the HRM–performance relationship.

The literature also increasingly highlights the importance of open innovation in explaining organizational performance. Open innovation refers to organizational processes supporting knowledge sharing, collaboration, and the integration of internal and external innovation resources. [15] argue that collaborative HRMP strengthen knowledge-sharing processes and innovation-oriented organizational climates. Similarly, [7] emphasize that HR systems supporting collaboration and employee participation positively influence organizational innovation capability and adaptability. Therefore, open innovation may represent another important mechanism connecting AMO-oriented HR systems and sustainable organizational performance.

Existing strategic human resource management research extensively examines the relationship between human resource management practices (HRMP) and organizational performance [16,17,18,1]. Previous studies either focus on individual HR practices or examine HRM systems as interconnected organizational mechanisms. At the same time, organizational performance is increasingly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that includes financial, sustainable, and innovation-oriented dimensions [19,7,20,11].

Recent literature also highlights the importance of mediating organizational mechanisms, particularly organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation, in explaining the HRM–performance relationship [22,23,5,24]. However, despite extensive empirical evidence, existing research remains fragmented because most studies examine these mechanisms separately and rarely capture the synergistic effects of integrated HRM systems. Therefore, a research gap can be identified in the absence of an integrated configurational approach examining the relationships between AMO-based HR practices, organizational strategy, work engagement, open innovation, and sustainable organizational performance simultaneously. This study addresses this gap by proposing and empirically validating a comprehensive configurational model of these relationships.

Based on the identified research gap, this study adopts a configurational perspective and assumes that sustainable organizational performance results from combinations of AMO-oriented HR practices, organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation. This assumption is consistent with previous studies emphasizing

the importance of integrated HR systems and mediating organizational mechanisms in explaining organizational outcomes [9,25].

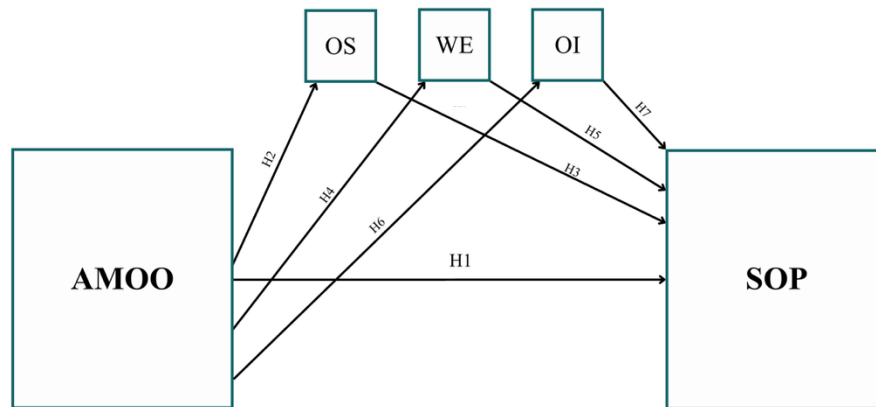


Figure 1
Hypothesis model

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: AMO-oriented HR practices are positively related to sustainable organizational performance.

H2: AMO-oriented HR practices are positively related to organizational strategy.

H3: Organizational strategy is positively related to sustainable organizational performance.

H4: AMO-oriented HR practices are positively related to work engagement.

H5: Work engagement is positively related to sustainable organizational performance.

H6: AMO-oriented HR practices are positively related to open innovation.

H7: Open innovation is positively related to sustainable organizational performance.

3 Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design focused on examining the relationships between AMO-based human resource management practices, mediating organizational mechanisms, and sustainable organizational performance.

The proposed conceptual model was developed based on the configurational perspective and the assumptions of the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework. The model integrates AMO-oriented HR practices with organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation as mediating variables influencing sustainable organizational performance.

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire survey administered to medium-sized and large organizations operating in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland. The final research sample consisted of 450 respondents representing organizations from different sectors and industries. The selection of the examined countries was based on their comparable economic and organizational environments within the Central European context. The questionnaire structure and operationalization of variables were derived from previous strategic human resource management research and adapted to the objectives of the study. Individual constructs within the model included AMO-oriented HR practices, organizational strategy, work engagement, open innovation, and sustainable organizational performance. The variables were measured using standardized Likert-scale items reflecting employees' and managers' perceptions of organizational HR systems and organizational outcomes.

Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the individual constructs of the proposed model. Correlation heatmaps were additionally used to visualize the relationships between AMO-oriented HR practices, organizational strategy, work engagement, open innovation, and sustainable organizational performance across the examined countries. The use of Spearman correlation analysis was appropriate due to the non-parametric character of the data and the exploratory nature of the study [26]. To verify the conceptual coherence of the proposed model, the study applied a combined analytical approach. First, fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) was used to identify configurations of AMO-oriented HR practices and mediating organizational mechanisms associated with higher sustainable organizational performance. The configurational approach was selected because it enables the identification of multiple causal pathways leading to similar organizational outcomes and is consistent with the assumption that organizational performance results from combinations of interconnected organizational conditions rather than isolated variables [27].

The proposed conceptual model and the analytical procedure were intended to provide empirical support for the configurational relationships between HRMP and sustainable organizational performance and to establish a foundation for future advanced model testing using structural equation modeling approaches, particularly PLS-SEM.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The first part of the analysis focused on examining the relationships between AMO-oriented HR practices, organizational strategy, work engagement, open innovation, and sustainable organizational performance using Spearman correlation analysis. Due to the non-parametric character of the data, Spearman correlation coefficients were considered appropriate for identifying the strength and direction of relationships among the examined constructs. The results revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all variables included in the conceptual model. The findings indicate that organizations implementing stronger AMO-oriented HR systems also demonstrate higher levels of organizational strategy alignment, work engagement, open innovation, and sustainable organizational performance.

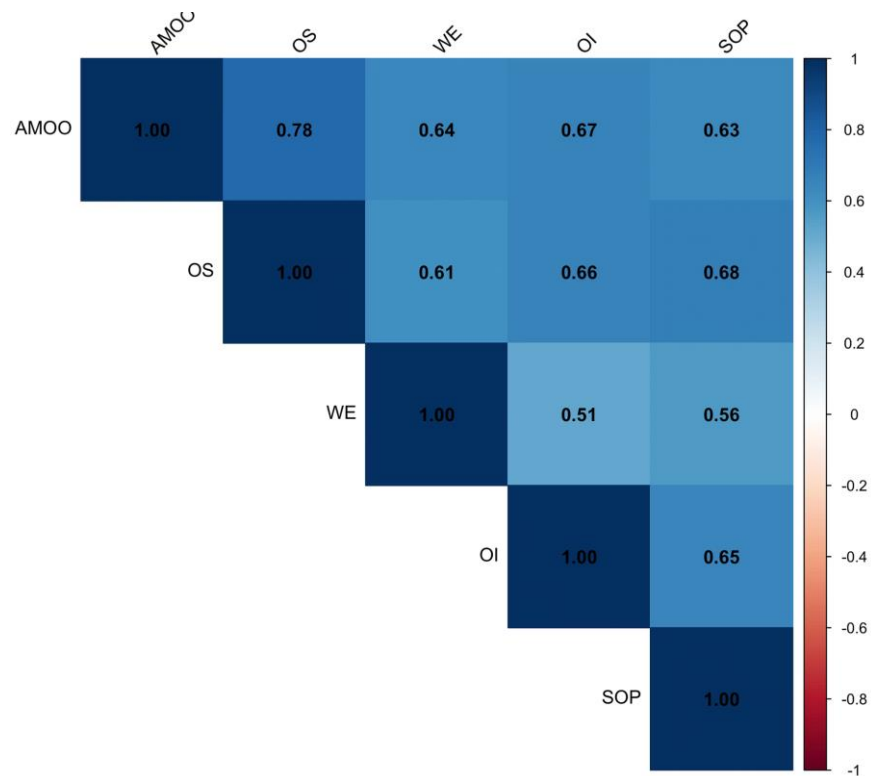


Figure 2
Correlation analysis - heatmap

Figure 2 presents the correlation heatmaps visualizing the relationships among the examined constructs across Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

The strongest relationship was identified between AMO-oriented HR practices and organizational strategy ($r = 0.777$), indicating that organizations with stronger AMO-based HR systems also demonstrate stronger strategic alignment. Strong positive relationships were also identified between organizational strategy and sustainable organizational performance ($r = 0.682$), as well as between open innovation and sustainable organizational performance ($r = 0.651$).

Hypothesis	Relationship	Correlation (r)	Status
H1	AMO $\rightarrow$ SOP	0.631	✓ Supported
H2	AMO $\rightarrow$ OS	0.777	✓ Supported
H3	OS $\rightarrow$ SOP	0.682	✓ Supported
H4	AMO $\rightarrow$ WE	0.643	✓ Supported
H5	WE $\rightarrow$ SOP	0.565	✓ Supported
H6	AMO $\rightarrow$ OI	0.665	✓ Supported
H7	OI $\rightarrow$ SOP	0.651	✓ Supported

Table 1
Correlation analysis and hypothesis testing results

The results confirm that all proposed hypotheses were supported. The identified relationships suggest that AMO-oriented HR practices significantly contribute to sustainable organizational performance both directly and indirectly through organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation.

4.2 fsQCA Results

To further examine the configurational nature of the proposed model, fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) was conducted. The fsQCA approach enabled the identification of multiple causal configurations leading to high sustainable organizational performance. Unlike traditional linear approaches, fsQCA assumes that organizational outcomes may result from different combinations of organizational conditions.

The analysis demonstrated that sustainable organizational performance is not generated by isolated HR practices alone, but rather through synergistic combinations of AMO-oriented HR systems, organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation. The findings therefore support the configurational perspective adopted in this study.

AMOO	OS	WE	OI	Outcome (SOP)	Consistency	Cases (n)
1	1	1	1	1	0,953	197
0	1	1	1	1	0,985	9
1	1	0	1	1	0,985	7
1	0	1	1	1	0,977	9

Table 2
fsQCA truth table

Configuration (Path)	Consistency	PRI	Coverage
AMOO * OS * WE * OI → SOP	0,783	0,619	0,989

Table 3
Configurations leading to high sustainable organizational performance

The identified configurations indicate that several alternative pathways may lead to high sustainable organizational performance. In most identified configurations, AMO-oriented HR practices appeared as a core condition associated with organizational strategy and open innovation. Work engagement also emerged as an important complementary condition contributing to stronger organizational outcomes.

The fsQCA findings therefore confirm that sustainable organizational performance should be understood as the result of interconnected organizational mechanisms rather than independent managerial variables. These findings are consistent with previous configurational HRM research emphasizing the importance of internally aligned HR systems and synergistic organizational processes.

4.3 Discussion of Results

The empirical findings support the assumptions of the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity framework and confirm the importance of integrated HR systems for sustainable organizational performance. The significant relationship between AMO-oriented HR practices and sustainable organizational performance supports previous studies emphasizing the strategic role of HR systems in organizational effectiveness [1,4].

The strongest relationship identified between AMO-oriented HR practices and organizational strategy suggests that HR systems become more effective when aligned with long-term organizational objectives. This finding corresponds with previous research highlighting the strategic integration of HRM as a prerequisite for sustainable organizational outcomes [13].

The results also confirm the importance of work engagement as a behavioral mechanism linking HR systems and organizational performance. Organizations implementing developmental, motivational, and participatory HR practices appear

to create stronger employee engagement, which subsequently contributes to higher organizational effectiveness. This finding is consistent with [5,14], who emphasize the role of engagement in explaining the HRM–performance relationship.

Similarly, the positive relationship between AMO-oriented HR practices and open innovation indicates that HR systems supporting collaboration, participation, and knowledge sharing contribute to organizational innovation capability and adaptability. These findings correspond with previous studies emphasizing the importance of collaborative HR systems for innovation-oriented organizational climates [15,7].

Finally, the fsQCA results provide important support for the configurational perspective adopted in this study. The existence of multiple causal pathways leading to sustainable organizational performance suggests that organizations may achieve high performance through different combinations of HR systems and mediating organizational mechanisms. Consequently, sustainable organizational performance should not be interpreted as the result of isolated managerial practices but rather as the outcome of interconnected organizational configurations.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to conceptualize and empirically validate a comprehensive model of relationships between AMO-based human resource management practices, mediating organizational mechanisms, and sustainable organizational performance. The study integrated organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation into a configurational framework explaining the relationship between HRMP and sustainable organizational outcomes.

The empirical findings confirmed statistically significant positive relationships between AMO-oriented HR practices and sustainable organizational performance, as well as between the individual mediating variables included in the model. The results additionally demonstrated that organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation represent important organizational mechanisms through which HR systems influence organizational outcomes. The fsQCA analysis further confirmed the configurational nature of the proposed model by identifying multiple causal pathways leading to high sustainable organizational performance.

The study contributes to strategic human resource management literature in several ways. First, it extends the configurational perspective by conceptualizing HRM practices as integrated organizational systems rather than isolated managerial practices. Second, it contributes to explaining the HRM “black box” by theoretically integrating organizational strategy, work engagement, and open innovation as interconnected mediating mechanisms within a single configurational framework explaining sustainable organizational performance. Unlike previous studies, which have predominantly examined these mechanisms separately, the proposed framework provides a coherent theoretical basis for understanding their combined

effects and offers a foundation for future theory development and structural model testing. Third, the paper provides empirical evidence from the Central European organizational context, which remains relatively underrepresented in contemporary SHRM research.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should focus on developing coherent AMO-oriented HR systems supporting employee development, motivation, participation, and collaboration. At the same time, organizations should align HR systems with organizational strategy and create conditions supporting work engagement and open innovation in order to strengthen long-term organizational sustainability and adaptability.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The research was based on cross-sectional questionnaire data collected within three Central European countries, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused primarily on selected mediating mechanisms and did not include other contextual organizational variables that may influence sustainable organizational performance.

Future research should therefore focus on longitudinal research designs and advanced structural modeling approaches, particularly PLS-SEM, to further examine the causal relationships between AMO-based HR systems and organizational performance. Additional studies may also investigate the role of organizational culture, leadership styles, and sector-specific conditions within configurational HRM models.

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