

**International HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis: a systematic review of literature  
(2000-2018)**

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [C.E], upon reasonable request.

## **International HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis: A systematic review of literature (2000-2018)**

### **Abstract:**

This study provides an overview of research on international HRM practices in the context of uncertainty and crisis. With a pool of 72 research articles drawn from 32 journals and published between the years 2000 and 2018, this paper aims to systematically review three distinct research streams within the uncertainty and crisis literature and their effects on international HRM. These three distinct research streams are 1) economic crisis, 2) natural disasters and 3) political uncertainty. In the context of constant economic crisis, we propose further research to explore and integrate high-performance HRM practices and talent management into socially responsible HRM practices. In a natural disaster context, we propose looking into emergency management frameworks within HRM. Finally, in a politically uncertain context, we propose that the development of expatriate assignments and their needs be further investigated. A key contribution of our research is its focus on context and responsiveness in an ever-changing business setting. The importance of boundary conditions and their effect on the implementation of HRM have been overlooked and understudied. A focus on these aspects will provide a nuanced and more realistic understanding of how international HRM unfolds. Relatedly, we consolidate existing research regarding international HRM practices in an uncertainty and crisis context, for our review found it to be scattered and fragmented among disciplines. By doing so, we review existing gaps in the literature and provide a detailed map for future research.

**Keywords:** International Human Resource Management (IHRM), systematic review, economic crisis, disaster management, political uncertainty

## 1. Introduction

In the past two decades, the world of work has encountered crisis, uncertainty and natural disasters, all of which came in many forms and shapes. Organizations and employees within them do not operate in a vacuum, and so are vulnerable to these externalities (e.g., Cooke et al., 2019; Dickmann et al., 2017). Economic crises, uncertainty, and political instability, three pillars of this research, touch upon the lives of everyone, thus shaping the direction and sustainability of HRM practices across the globe (Wilkinson & Wood, 2017). Accordingly, the main motivation of this study is to systematically review research on how international HRM practices are implemented and shaped by economic crises, natural disasters, and political uncertainty. These three distinct research streams<sup>1</sup> inform the strategies organizations need to take in times of macro-level uncertainties while keeping their “human capital” motivated and productive. Influencing our choice of focus, the common theme among these streams is their negative effects on organizations and the people working within.

With regard to the first dimension, a plethora of research has demonstrated the impact of economic crises on labour markets (Eichhorst, Escudero, Marx and Tobin 2010; Leschke and Watt 2010), employment relations (Gennard 2009; Lansbury 2009; Baccaro 2010; Zagelmeyer 2010) and different elements of HRM (Zagelmayer and Gollan, 2012). In this context, our review seeks firstly, to understand the impact of crisis on how people are managed and should be managed, and secondly, to explore how research into this subject can play an important role in tackling these issues. At the macro level, due to the high uncertainty and volatility inflicted on the external environment by crisis, organizations need to make strategic decisions which in return, affect the employees within the organization directly or indirectly (Streeck, 1978). At the micro organizational level, rising operational costs and decline in demand pose challenges for HR departments to manage their employees effectively (Psychogios, Brewster & Parry,

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<sup>1</sup> By systematically reviewing and analysing articles regarding the uncertainties described in these streams, it was found that organizations already deal with many types of crises, but the hardships inflicted by financial and economic crises seem to have the most significant and undesirable consequences on organizations and employees. Due to practical concerns and to ease the process of analysis and target our readership, we intended to develop and demonstrate explicit boundaries between these three streams. The articles on economic and financial aspects of organizations formed the first group of studies under the theme of “economic uncertainty”, while research conducted on HR practices during natural occurrences was categorized as “natural disasters”. Classifying the remaining articles was the most sophisticated and laborious part of our research. Separating published research focused on terrorism, crime, political instability, uncertain environments and expatriates from each other was impracticable. So, it was decided to analyze all these articles from the perspective of political uncertainty and hostile environments.

2016). Accordingly, our aim is to compare and contrast the hard and soft models of HRM practices in the context of economic crisis within organizations.

Natural disasters are unavoidable aspects of reality; they lead to emergencies and trigger organizational responses to deal with them. In this study, we explore the effects of natural disasters at both the organizational and individual level (Oh and Oetzel, 2011; Viswanath et al., 2012). Although studies on the negative effects of natural disasters on the organization and the employees are many, only a few studies explore how HRM practices are implemented by organizations in these contexts. We believe that HRM plays an important role in dealing with the negative effects of natural disasters and more research is needed to explore which paths and processes HRM strategies should adopt in response to the circumstances. Further research specifically focused on emergency management frameworks within HRM is necessary.

The third and final stream we focus on is political instability. Considering the political instability angle, we integrate research which shows the effects of these undesirable contextual constructs on expatriates. Our examination focuses on how expatriates are affected by the political climate of the country they work in, and how organizations should employ HRM practices to minimize these negative effects to keep these employees motivated. Our suggestions for future research include looking at the different types of assignments the expatriates are sent to, the family needs of expatriates who are operating in conditions of political uncertainty and hostile environments, and cross-disciplinary research that examines multiple functions of the organization under these circumstances.

One of the main contributions of this review paper is its focus on three key research streams that shape how HR practices are implemented in organizations and on how organizations adapt to such externalities. Organizations do not operate in a vacuum; but the integration and discussion of the macro components of the society have been either conceptualized at the theoretical level (e.g., Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) or research that considers their impact on HR practices has been limited and scattered across disciplines and fields (e.g., Oh & Oetzel, 2011). In the context of recent crises which highlighted the susceptibility and resilience of organizations as well as the overall political and economic direction the world is taking, research will increasingly focus on understanding how uncertainties and crises can be integrated in the implementation of HR practices. We offer a layered discussion of elements pertaining to macro resources and the role of context in the field of HRM research.

This study provides a systematic review of research on International HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis by conceptually reviewing 72 articles from 32 journals. The key questions examined in this study are:

1. What is the definition of crisis, especially in the context of organizations? What are the effects of uncertainty and crisis on organizations, especially as a boundary condition?
2. What is the reason behind the surge in crises lately and how are these crises interconnected?
3. What is the demographic dispersion of research on international HRM in the context of crisis and uncertainty within the literature in terms of journals published, home countries of the articles, main topics analysed, and main theories used?
4. What type of human resources strategies do organizations (soft or hard or a hybrid strategy) employ in response to crisis and uncertainty, namely in response to financial crisis, natural disasters and political uncertainty?
5. What are the future research opportunities to address the gaps related to HRM strategies as a response to uncertainty and crisis within the literature?

### **Crisis in the context of International HRM**

In defining crisis, we draw on the work of Rosenthal, Boin and Comfort (2001) who refer to it as situations that are “unwanted, unexpected, unprecedented, and almost unmanageable, causing widespread disbelief and uncertainty”. More precisely, crisis is referred to as a serious threat to the basic structure or the fundamental values and norms of a social system, which, under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances, necessitates making critical decisions (Rosenthal, Charles and ‘t Hart 1989:10). In this context, crisis can be conceptualized as a deviation from the normal in the form of economic crises, natural disasters, and political uncertainty. In each of these conceptualizations, there are two defining features: crisis is a deviation from the normal and is considered a threat to the basic structure of a system.

The research streams defined in this paper are conceptually congruent with the definition of crisis employed. First, in economic terms, we see a sudden downturn brought on by a financial crisis, attended by deviations from the normal in economic outputs, such as slower economic growth, high unemployment, private sector deleveraging, public sector deficits, and

public sector debts (El-Erian, 2014). Economic crisis brings on a deviation from the normal for organizations and the people who work there. There is a need to adjust and accumulate the effects of the crisis for a certain period of time, which has unexpected outcomes both at the organizational and the individual level. Detrimental effects of economic crisis for organizations include a decrease in innovation (Brem, Nylund & Viardot, 2020), decline in output (Chen & Hsu, 2005), and lower investment (Kahle & Stulz, 2013).

In this paper, we conceptualize Covid-19 as a natural disaster and an important crisis, as it fits all the criteria depicted in the definition of Rosenthal et al. (2001), being unwanted, unexpected, unprecedented, and unmanageable. In 2020, Covid-19 is the latest natural disaster that has affected both organizations and their employees by challenging the fundamental way people work in groups and threatening the basic social structure around places of work and transport to and from work.

Finally, in the context of political uncertainty, the unexpectedness of crises means that organizations have a hard time coping with the sudden and distinct changes in the socio-political environment they belong to. An important example of the detrimental impact of political uncertainty on organizations could be the tourism industry in Southeast Asia, where research into terrorism, crises and disasters has increased since the 9/11 attacks (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006). Rosenthal et al.'s (2001) definition of a crisis, cited above, is congruent with the key questions this research tries to answer, especially with the aspect of the various HRM strategies employed in response to crisis and uncertainty.

It is necessary for organizations to make critical decisions in times of crisis and uncertainty, and since all three of these external phenomena — economic crises, natural disasters, and political uncertainty — necessitate swift decision-making in response to changes in the environment, our selection of themes is consistent with the literature definition of crisis. Organizations and employees affected by these sudden changes to the environment try to manage these uncertainties through certain crisis-specific strategies, which are thoroughly analysed in the following sections.

Additionally, we need to factor in the surge in the numbers of crises that the world experiences and the increasing intensity of the crises as we become more interconnected. Literature on the subject of crisis conceptualizes “human-induced global change” (Battisti & Naylor, 2009) as the antecedent to this increase in the number and intensity of crises. Researchers argue that changes and disturbances which are on a large magnitude (e.g. climate

change, land conversion, and increase in global connectivity) have the potential to overlap and escalate to become crises. While this argument covers the increase in numbers of crises lately, it does not explain the increase in the intensity of the crises that the world experiences. According to Young, Berkhout, Gallopin, Janssen & Ostrom (2006), growing global connectivity, which allows local scale crises to disperse and grow into global scales is one of the causes of the quick spread and the increased intensity of crisis in the previous years.

## **6. Methodology**

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data set of the current study consists of research articles published in leading business and management journals between **2000 and 2018**. As a starting point for the analysis, **2000** was selected in order to cover two decades of research in this century. Our goal was to observe trends with a large sample instead of a specific population study; we have tried our best to obtain as many papers as possible for the aforementioned time intervals. A literature search was conducted from Scopus, Emerald, EBSCO and Web of Science (WoS) databases using the keywords: ‘international HRM’ and ‘crisis’; ‘international Human Resource Management’ and ‘uncertainty’; ‘IHRM’ and ‘turbulence’; ‘international HRM’ and ‘recession’; ‘international HRM’ and ‘dynamic environment’; ‘IHRM’ and ‘conflict’; ‘international Human Resource Management’ and ‘hostile environment’; ‘international HRM’ and ‘economic downturn’; ‘IHRM’ and ‘terrorism’; ‘international Human Resource Management’ and ‘disaster’. Using a combination of these words, a comprehensive search was performed, which ensured that the most pertinent articles were included in this review. The search period from 2000 to 2018 (inclusive) allowed us to see trends over a longer period. All relevant papers were screened by one member of a team to make sure that they were relevant to review. A total of 72 research papers were included in our analysis, 58 (81%) of which are empirical studies, and 10 (14%) review/conceptual papers, while 4 (5%) articles are conceptual with empirical implementation. These research papers were published in 32 business and management journals (see Table 1). The selected period helped us to divide the analysis into two parts: 2000 – 2009 (14 articles), and 2010 –2018 (58 articles), showing that the numbers of articles have increased significantly over the last decade. We have done our best to include all relevant papers on the topic in academic journals in our search period.

## **Data coding and analysis**

The data from the selected articles were entered in an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis. Data coding was performed independently by two researchers in order to ensure accuracy. Any differences or discrepancies in the coding were discussed and resolved at regular team meetings. In addition, the authors randomly evaluated ten articles for accuracy. For each article, the following information was entered into our spreadsheet: year of publication, journal name, type of paper (empirical vs. review), research methods (qualitative, quantitative or mix), key findings, type of crisis (uncertainty), theory or theories used, and direction for future research. The aim of such coding was to address the following research questions of the present study.

1. What research methods have been employed?
2. What has been studied (aspects of HRM)? What has been more or less studied? What are the research gaps in the existing literature?
3. What theories have been used to explain HRM in the context of uncertainties?
4. What is the future scope of research in this field?

For the aim of this research, all tables were produced from each column of the excel sheet to summarize the findings. Some of these tables were then further categorized to clearly demonstrate research trends in the field of HRM in the context of uncertainties. Themes/HRM practices studied were determined mainly from the title, keywords, and subheadings of the papers. Then they were grouped into broader categories, such as HRM practices, strategic HRM, and employment relations. These procedures were performed by one researcher, checked by another and verified by the lead researcher. The approach that was used by us is similar to that of Cooke, Wood, Wang, & Veen (2019) who carried out systematic review of papers on IHRM in MNCs that were published between 2000 and 2014.

**[Insert Table 1 to Table 6 here]**

## **Dispersion of Literature on the Topic of International HRM in Uncertain Contexts**

Below, we discuss the demographical dispersion of literature on international HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis in order to analyze and point out certain trends that can be derived from the systematic review. Next, we review the main findings pertaining to the three research streams identified: economic crises, natural disasters, and political instability. Finally,



we point to certain gaps in the literature which could pave the way for future researchers in conducting research on the subject.

In terms of dispersion between publishing outlets, we note that most of the papers (40%) in our review were published in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* (see Table 1). Articles on HRM in the context of uncertainties were mainly published in the top five journals (making up over 60% of our sample). This dispersion indicates that international HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis is a significant subject which attracts high quality research in the field. In regard to the analysis of time trends, it is important to note that 80% of the articles were published after 2009, which leads us to define international HRM in the context of uncertainty and crisis as an emerging and important topic. Additionally, we can link this upward trend in research output to the increasingly volatile global environment for organizations, where crisis and uncertainty are becoming a constant rather than an occasional occurrence in the lifetime of organizations. This increase could also be attributed to the global financial crisis of 2008, which created a lot of interest on the topic of organizational response to crisis.

We believe it is important to focus on geography-specific literature on the subject area, since these streams will be geography-contingent, meaning they will have different effects on organizations in different geographies. Thus, it is important to evaluate and derive trends from the host countries where the research has been conducted. A total of 21 home countries and 29 host countries have been found in the literature review. Table 4 provides a summary of home and host country of MNCs investigated in our research. Of the home countries defined in the review, developed countries such as USA, UK, Germany, France, and Switzerland were the main source for articles relating to economic crisis. Although this output of research could be linked to the quality of research institutions in these developed nations, we suggest the resources available for examining organizations during crisis and uncertainty in these countries and the transparent nature of organizations also contribute to the amount of research produced on the topic. Additionally, we have captured an increasing trend on the number of publications from emerging countries such as China, Sri-Lanka, India and Afghanistan, which we evaluate as both an increase in the output from the research institutions, and an increase in interest from these countries in understanding and managing crisis from a more scientific standpoint. In the future, we expect this shift from developed countries to emerging countries to continue, due to the increased resources provided to research institutions and the increase in the prevalence of

crisis and uncertainty, especially in emerging markets, due to their volatile and changing nature.

In terms of research methods implemented, 40% of the empirical studies were conducted by using quantitative research methods, while qualitative research methods were used in 36% of articles. The remaining 10% utilized a mixed-method approach and 14% were conceptual studies. This suggests that understanding uncertainty is open to all methodological approaches. We categorized 72 articles according to the number of broadly defined topics to identify what has been investigated over the last two decades. We first identified the main areas of research and then grouped topics under these areas. As shown in Table 5, there are eight main research areas: HRM practices, HQ – Subsidiary Relations, Strategic HRM, Employment Relations, Organizational Behavior, Cultural Studies, Comparative HRM, and Expatriate Management. Some thematic subtopics appear to be more favored than others, such as training and development, recruitment and selection, performance management, and work adjustment of expatriates. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that high-performance work systems and cultural distance and differences in uncertain and hostile environments became the focus of the last decade in international HRM literature.

We subdivided 72 papers according to the types of uncertainties (see Table 3). The subject matter researched in each article was recorded first, and then we grouped them under three different thematic uncertainties. As shown in Table 3, 32% of the studies were related to economic crisis, recession, or other sources of economic crises. Furthermore, we can see that only 4% of studies were devoted to examining HRM in the context of natural disasters or other emergencies. Continuing our analysis, we can observe that 16% of studies were related to political instability. Lastly, 48% of studies were about hostile environments and other related contexts.

Table 6 is important because it indicates the wide variety of theories that have been identified and categorized within the literature. In our study, these theories are separated into eleven main categories, in order to see how the literature is condensed in certain areas of theory. The majority of papers in our research used one (45 papers) or two (16 papers) theories to frame their arguments, whereas only six papers adopted three or more theories to establish the theoretical framework of their studies, and all these papers are published in the last decade. We suggest that further research on this topic will use at least two different theories to interpret uncertainties related to international HR practices adopted in emerging markets. Although this

section will delve further into the theoretical development of international HRM in the context of crisis, our findings in general highlight that institutional, social, and management theories dominate the framework in explaining uncertainty and crisis in the context of International HRM. In the first decade of the 21st century, institutional, social, and management theories were the main frameworks for studies, while we find that resource-based views, contingency perspectives and organizational behavior aspects have become the popular trend in the last decade. However, most of the articles published in the last couple of years have applied Institutional Theory in order to explain the dynamic perspective and institutional void of emerging markets. Furthermore, on the theory front, recent studies highlighted social aspects of HR practices by using Social Identity Theory, Social Network Perspective, Social Exchange Theory, Social Categorization Theory, Social Integrative Approach and Social Presence Theory. These results imply that future studies could benefit from the integration of multi-level and multi-foci theoretical angles to expand this body of research. In particular, we see a surge in the use of theoretical frameworks that bridge and connect micro perspectives with macro level analyses. This finding corresponds to recent calls in HRM research for multi-level theoretical frameworks to be adopted.

### **Economic crisis and international HRM**

For organizations, one way to tackle the unwanted effects of the recent economic turmoil was to have a new approach to human resource management. As noted by Ramlal (2013), HRM is an effective tool for organizing during tumultuous times, but traditional approaches to HRM were outdated and inadequate to tackle the unprecedented economic crisis. In this context, the main aim of this paper is to investigate the practices applied by organizations during times of uncertainty and crisis. The literature points to certain HRM practices that organizations apply during uncertainty and crisis, and our aim in this paper is to review these applications.

There are two approaches to HRM in uncertain times on the part of organizations, namely, “soft” and “hard” models of HRM. In the soft approach to HRM, employees are treated as valuable resources for the organization (Psychogios, Brewster and Parry, 2016). Researchers who defend the soft model of HRM as effective in crisis and uncertainty situations argue that taking care of employees in these times should be the key success indicator of a socially responsible organization (Barrena-Martinez, López-Fernández and Romero-Fernandez, 2018).

Looking more closely at the soft model of HRM, we can see that organizations who are operating in situations of uncertainty or crisis may employ strategic planning of human

resources in order to stay competitive (Strang, 2018). We believe that high-performance HRM practices are essential in the survival of organizations, especially in an economic crisis context. After the crisis of 2008, the literature emphasised that HR professionals had to come up with certain HRM practices that would yield high performance during times of economic crisis (Maley and Kramar, 2010; Townsend and Wilkinson, 2013). In particular, resources, coordination, and training to develop new skillsets (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012), knowledge sharing and information-sharing schemes (Zhu, 2005), flat hierarchy and informal coordination (Zhu, 2004), and highly individualized systems of results-based motivation (Gurkov and Settles, 2013) were singled out by researchers as strategies for tackling the unwanted effects of economic crisis. Additionally, other soft HRM practices included mentoring, counselling and coaching, which could be used to address the fears and stresses that come with an economic crisis, such as fear of losing one's job (Ramlal, 2013). Additionally, the literature shows that organizations adopt certain practices that put the employee in the centre, such as employee involvement (Marchington and Kynighou, 2012) and leadership development (Martin and Gollan, 2012). Another impact of economic crisis on HRM practices that can be found in the literature is the shifting effect it has on global talent management practices, due to the change it creates in the supply of talent and the resources available for global mobility (Sparrow, Farndale and Scullion, 2013).

As for the hard model of HRM during economic crises, we see applications of this model in specific practices such as pay cuts and pay freezes (Cibborn, 2018), reductions in the workforce (Zagelmeyer, Heckmann and Kettner, 2012; Roche et al., 2013), recruitment halts, decrease in the training budget, decrease in individual performance goals and benefits (Shen and D'Netto, 2012; Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2012) and re-negotiation of the contractual agreements and voluntary departure plans (Jaidi and Thévenet, 2012). In their paper, Gunnigle et al. (2013) also supported the notion that economic crises could have a negative effect on salaries and training and development budgets. Additionally, we can see that during economic crisis, certain organizations tend to increase the intensity of the job (Cook, MacKenzie and Forde, 2016), suppress certain functions of the organization and organizational mobility, (Gomes, Asseiro and Ribeiro, 2013) and limit or freeze additional payments (McDonnell and Burgess, 2013).

The approach to HRM practices during economic crisis does not have to be either hard or soft. The literature on the subject points to a mix of these models as well. In this approach, we see organizations employ both hard and soft practices of HRM in order to create maximum efficiency and effectiveness on part of their employees. McDonnell and Burgess (2013) have

shown that employees could act as “innovators” during a recession, and the HR division employed both soft practices such as processes to improve employee motivation and involvement, and hard practices such as cutting operational costs and aiming for organizational efficiency to help the employees in their new role within the organization.

Finally, the resilience and agility of organizations was found to be a popular topic in the literature, especially in the context of economic crisis. Organizational resilience refers to how well companies could face severe economic challenges (Wieland and Wallenburg, 2013). Resilience is a factor in HRM practices since it is a characteristic that organizations can rely on in times of high uncertainty. Developing resilience, for organizations, means that they acquire the ability to bounce back from hardship and continue to be competitive in highly uncertain environments (Ramlal, 2013). In becoming resilient, organizations need to focus on developing dynamic capabilities and using an agile workforce (Ray, Barney and Muhanna, 2004). Since the ability to learn in highly uncertain environments is a crucial survival skill for agile firms, they need to have an infrastructure that is highly adaptable to the needs of the employees in order for them to effectively manage their human resources (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012).

We have developed some future research suggestions in the topic of economic crises and HRM. An important line of inquiry is the implementation of HRM practices in emerging and developing economies. An example would be to focus on Africa and the Middle East; Wood et al. (2011) explored the case of Mozambique and the HRM strategies of organizations in the country. Their findings suggest that even in the case of an emerging economy like Mozambique, there are distinct HR capabilities and organizational approaches to tackle these contextual problems. Similar lines of inquiry could be adopted to study other economies.

While we have focused on the IHRM strategies that the organizations need to follow in the context of crisis, we believe a further analysis of what the organizations have done to tackle these issues post-2008 are important as well. The global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008 has in fact affected organizations on multiple levels:

At the organizational or firm level, the GFC also highlighted the tensions between external forces and a challenging macroeconomic environment on the one hand, versus actor agency and strategic choice on the other. At the individual level, we can also consider the implications of the GFC for organizational actors including trade unions, workers and managers (Johnstone, Saridakis & Wilkinson, 2019).

The effects of labour on employee relations and HR today can be seen in journals related to socio-economic issues; we found that four out of eight papers are about labour relations or employment during crises (Grady & Simms, 2019; Johnstone, 2019; Cibborn, 2018; Brandl & Bechter, 2019). This tells us that while the field was dominated by employment relations and HRM in the post-crisis era, it is fair to assume that the issues of unionization and employee rights and well-being during times of crisis will continue to be a major force within the field in the coming decades.

Investigating international HRM from a socio-economic standpoint, the focus of the literature is on economic crisis and its effects on work and employment relations. Especially in the journal *Socio-Economic Review*,<sup>2</sup> we can see the rise and importance of the amount of research conducted on the relationship between crises and employment. While some researchers focused on the social aftermath of crisis and its effects on employment policy and labour (Kentikelenis, 2018; Boyer et al., 2009; Baccaro, Boyer & Crouch, 2010), others chose to focus on the instantaneous effects of economic crisis (Picot & Tassinari, 2017), the housing crisis (Dwyer, Neilson & Nau, 2016), and the drivers of competitive threat during economic crisis (Polavieja, 2016). Nau and Soener (2017), on the other hand, investigated income precarity as a result of economic crisis. From a pure employment relations standpoint, Picot and Menendez (2017) investigated non-standard employment practices in countries affected by the economic crisis of 2008, namely Italy and Spain. Polavieja (2005) looked at temporary employment and job tasks from a flexibility and polarization lens as a result of economic crisis in Spain. As can be seen, the authors published in *Socio-Economic Review* explored a wide range of topics pertaining to labour and human relations in the context of international HRM. From our analysis of the literature between 2000 and 2018 regarding economic crisis and employment from a socio-economic point of view, we argue that there are many opportunities for researchers to explore in their future research agenda. The main path that could be explored in future research endeavours regarding employment and IHRM is the policy responses and reforms in response to the aftermath of an economic crisis. Of the ten papers published in *Socio-Economic Review* since 2017 related to employment, six of them (Kentikelenis, 2018; Buendia, 2018; Pagliari, Phillips & Young, 2018; Ubert, 2017; Bulfone, 2017, Picot & Tassinari, 2017; Schwander & Mannow, 2017) focused on the policy response or the reforms applied in the aftermath of an economic crisis. Relating this to IHRM and the subject in hand, we argue that

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<sup>2</sup> We conducted a thorough literature review of this journal, thanks to the recommendation of anonymous reviewer.

exploring how MNCs devise policy responses and make reforms in their respective IHRM strategies after an economic crisis could be a research stream that would be beneficial for both the literature and the industry.

### **Natural disasters and IHRM**

Natural disasters can have a drastic effect on the employees' psychological wellbeing (Oh and Oetzel, 2011; Viswanath et al., 2012). An obvious example is the current negative influence of COVID-19, which is expected to have a long-lasting negative influence on employee wellbeing and cumulative stress, which we will discuss in the discussion section. A widespread disorder observed among tsunami survivors is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research evidence indicates that rates of PTSD after a disaster may range from 5% to 60% (Neria, Nandi and Galea, 2008). Despite the significance of these issues, our literature review revealed only a few studies that explore how organizations implement HRM practices in order to deal with the effect of natural disasters on their employees. Merlot and de Cieri (2012) have found that natural disasters (like a tsunami) can pose significant challenges for HRM, and have important implications for organizational performance. The same authors further argued that the quality of HR systems has become a central feature of organizations' response to natural disasters.

Another study by Goodman and Mann (2008) emphasized the importance of HRM as part of the emergency or disaster plan during catastrophic events. They found that HR directors should be part of the emergency management team (Goodman and Mann, 2008). Other research has reported that companies that respond to natural disasters (like typhoons) should effectively coordinate their human resources in limited-resource environments (Opdyke et al., 2017).

From a socio-economic point of view, our analysis regarding the relationship between IHRM and natural disasters revealed interesting findings. For example, Ubert (2017) investigated the difference in policy responses to the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons in Florida, and the homeowner insurance crisis resulting from these hurricanes. We found this study to be particularly interesting, since it covered the two main areas of focus of this paper: economic crises and natural disasters. From a point of view that interlinks natural disasters and employment relations and thus IHRM, we argue that Ubert (2017)'s work is important because: 1) it talks about the aftermath of both economic crises and natural disasters, which we have defined as a future research stream; and 2) it is the only paper in our literature search which

relates natural disasters and employment as a policy response. In his paper, Ubert (2017), compared the policy responses of two states, namely Florida and Louisiana, and asked the question “Why did Florida turn to the state to become a central provider of homeowner insurance in high hurricane-risk regions, while Louisiana continued to rely on the private insurance market?”. Ubert (2017) found that policy responses to natural disasters were emphasized either by interest group theory, which argues that policy responses were a result of interest groups, or structural class theory, which argues that policy responses are a result of capital accumulation. As a future research direction, we argue that further focus on the aftermath of a natural disaster in terms of employment, generating policy responses, and reform strategies concerning IHRM would be an interesting path to follow. Following Ubert’s (2017) footsteps, a focus on the source of the policy response after a natural disaster in the context of IHRM is an area that is open to research. As natural disasters are becoming more prevalent and increasing in their intensity (Biggs, Biggs, Dakos, Scholes & Schoon, 2011), the follow-up to a natural disaster will play an increasingly important role in creating support mechanisms for employees of MNCs in the future. We believe research looking into the follow-up response to natural disasters would yield important results for both the field and the industry.

Most recently, the world has come to a standstill as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has extremely negative consequences for organizations and how they conduct their IHRM practices worldwide. In the pre-COVID literature, we found that pandemics were categorized as a contemporary challenge that needs to be addressed (Holland, 2019; Podgorodnichencko, Edgar & McAndrew, 2019; Stahl, Björkman & Morris, 2012). Although researchers have defined pandemics as a contemporary challenge for HRM scholars to tackle, we found that research interest in the field was low. Most of the work on the relationship between IHRM and pandemics and infectious diseases focused on Africa, with HIV/AIDS as their primary disease of focus (Baxter, 2007; Horwitz, 2009; Kamoche & Nyambegera, 2003; Mpabanga, 2004; Bischoff & Wood, 2012). Nevertheless, these previous studies may throw light on how COVID-19 will affect organizations. On the indirect effects of HIV on organizations, Baxter (2012) found that there was a decrease in turnover, increased costs, a decrease in work performance and social bonds, and a disruption in the knowledge transfer process of the organization (Aventin & Huard, 2000). Additionally, Rosen et al. (2002) argued that indirect costs on the organization included reduced productivity, absenteeism, production disruptions, and lower morale.



Organizations are not the only entities that are affected by pandemics; people working in these organizations suffer severe consequences in their private and work lives. In this context, HR divisions should be ready to tackle any problems and issues that could arise from the pandemic, especially regarding IHRM policies and practices. For IHRM, one result of this pandemic was the halt to global mobility, which meant that most expatriates have not not been able to go back to their home countries. Furthermore the pandemic puts great stress and strain on employees. HR departments are expected to help employees cope with the extra stress in these turbulent times if they want to mitigate the human and financial costs of this pandemic. One novel research came from Naveed and Rana (2012); they investigated the burnout effects of frequent and emotional interaction with patients on trainee doctors; we would expected this to be replicated and intensified for doctors worldwide in the fight against COVID-19. It is important that the issue of discrimination against people who have had the virus, or have been tested positive for it, is taken head-on by organizations. There is a concern that the discriminatory practices that were common against HIV-positive employees (Aventin and Huard, 2000) may be repeated against COVID-19 patients.

Thus, as with all uncertainty and crisis situations, organizations need to be dynamic and innovative in facing the unwanted consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both organizations and employees who face the detrimental effects of a global pandemic need to find strategies to minimize the destructive effects of COVID-19. As Rosen et al. (2002) argued: “The only cost-effective way to respond is to fight the epidemic.”

### **Political Instability and Hostile Environments**

In times of political instability, a hostile environment can be defined as an environment that is vulnerable to events or circumstances that present a threat to the safety and security of expatriates (Fee, McGrath-Champ and Berti, 2017) and can be categorized in two main groups: legitimacy-dependent risks which relate to the way in which local actors perceive expatriates and their employers, and knowledge-dependent risks, which emerge from expatriates' contextual or cultural ignorance and incompetence (Fee and McGrath-Champ, 2017).

Since 2001, firms that operate globally increasingly take terrorism into account in their HR planning (Reade, 2009). Terrorism can be defined as including violence that is ideologically, religiously or socially, but not criminally motivated, directed against civilians, terrifying them to order to achieve a strategic target (Gannon and Paraskevas, 2017). While several empirical articles in our literature review focused on criminal activities in hostile environments

(Bhanugopan and Fish, 2008; Reade and Lee, 2012), other studies concentrated on terrorism in different locations of the world, such as Mexico, Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan (Howie, 2007; Bader, 2015; Bader and Schuster, 2015; Suder *et al.*, 2017).

Most research in this field focuses on managers' individual perceptions of their experiences, their perspectives on the treatment and support they received, and their concerns about their locations when it came to the implementation of HR practices (e.g., Suder *et al.*, 2017). This underlines that individual managerial viewpoints have been at the expense of the organizational assessment of the challenges and practices of managers in a hostile environment (Fee, McGrath-Champ and Berti, 2017). Two themes emerged which point to interesting directions: most empirical studies adopted an organizational perspective, while the remaining qualitative studies underlined individual expatriates' experience of being managed in hostile environments (Bader, 2015; Bader and Schuster, 2015; Gannon and Paraskevas, 2017).

The key themes which arose from this stream of research in terms of practical and theoretical importance could be described as the level of organizational support which the employees perceive they have, employees' overall commitment to the work and the organization, the level of social support received from co-workers, and attitudes of the employee towards the work and the organization (Reade, 2009; Bader and Berg, 2014; Bader, 2015; Bader, Reade and Froese, 2016; Rodgers *et al.*, 2017). According to Reade (2009), perceived organizational support has a positive effect on employee commitment and motivation, and social support from co-workers has a positive effect on the amount of value that the employees believe they derive from the organization (Heavey and Simsek, 2013). Although these key themes are prevalent in the literature, it should be noted that these themes are mainly investigated in the developed, Western world. This lack of attention to the developing world is important, since social support is an important aspect of work in developing countries, especially in times of uncertainty. On the other hand, the negative themes that emerge in the literature include safety and security of expatriates (Fee and McGrath-Champ, 2017), stress, burnout, and a decrease in satisfaction as a result of uncertainty and anxiety (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2008; Li and Jackson, 2015). One interesting issue was the lack of research on the topic of the work adjustments that expatriates make during uncertain times; Bader (2015) argues that "expatriation in hostile environments is increasingly important."

The majority of the studies highlighted that HR concerns were tackled at the organizational level. These practices include the protection of critical assets, investments in security to

decrease risk and aid development, and training for top managers (Morris and Calamai, 2009). The research conducted in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Mexico revealed similar results: studies on the impact of uncertain environments on HR practices analysed strategies and practices at the organizational level (Dickmann, Parry and Keshavjee, 2017). However, a relatively small amount of research was conducted on how expatriates at different levels of the organization were supported, both psychologically and physiologically (Ramirez, Madero and Muñiz, 2016). In contrast, research by Gannon and Paraskevas (2017) focuses on how HR executives feel about the risks that their expatriate assignees face in uncertain environments and the support mechanisms developed for managers working in these locations. In addition to a theoretical level of analysis on the organizational level, there is a stream of research which focuses on the practical approaches to key issues that are arising from hostile environments. According to Bader and Berg (2014), Bader (2015), and Bader and Schuster (2015), organizations should help expatriates to use social supports to reduce stress, to seek more interactions with host country nationals, to include family members in issues related to their work, and finally, should emphasize the importance of safety measures. Additionally, it is argued that there is a need for international HR strategies which address on-site challenges such as socialising for managers; interactions with local staff could result in the organization acquiring unique capabilities through the interaction of their expatriate employees and the local environment (Suder et al., 2017).

Looking at the relationship between political uncertainty and international HRM from a socio-economic perspective, the first stream of research focused on institutional change in times of political uncertainty. Amable and Palombarini (2009) focused on the political economy of institutional change and how different types of institutional change could happen in situations of political and systemic crisis. In the literature on economic crisis and political uncertainty, researchers focusing on the neoliberal crisis and the political economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century investigated the political processes during economic crisis (Lee, McNulty & Shaffer, 2013), the transformation of employment relations as a result of regulatory crisis (Amable et al., 2009), social learning in active labor policy in times of political development (Amberg, 2015), the political economy of labor markets in Latin America (Schneider & Karcher, 2010), and finally, income inequality and its political determinants (Huber & Stephens, 2014).

In terms of future research suggestions, we believe that integrating the subject of non-standard employment related to the shifting political systems of the world would yield interesting results for researchers. Relating this suggestion to our analysis of the *Socio-Economic Review* journal,

we found that topics of liberalism, neoliberalism, capitalism, and how employment and employment relations change according to these political systems is a topic that is gaining a lot of traction. Of the ten papers on employment relations and political instability published in *Socio-Economic Review* since 2015, five of them focused on either non-standard employment or a shift in the political spectrum related to employment relations (Kinderman, 2017; Picot & Menendez, 2017; Brinton & Mun, 2016; Jansen, 2016; Hipp, Bernhardt & Allmendinger, 2015). This increase in focus on these topics, combined with the shifting political and economic spectrum of the world, suggests that more research into the issues of employment relations in regard to political climate is needed in the future.

## **Discussion**

### **Directions for future research**

The aim of our analysis was to consolidate research in a fragmented field by identifying different IHRM approaches, policies, and practices that can be applied during economic crises. The analysis identifies some specific areas in which we need further research.

#### *Future Map on Economic Crises and International HRM*

**[Insert Table 9 here]**

In reflecting on the effect of economic crisis on HRM, one area that needs further attention is the role of socially responsible HRM practices as part of strategies to tackle the consequences of an economic crisis for HRM. A second area that demands more research attention is the strategic planning of human resources during economic turmoil. Specifically, international HRM literature would benefit from a better understanding of how to apply strategic management and decision-making techniques within strategic planning. Clearly, there is a need for more work on analyzing general strategic planning techniques.

High-performance HRM practices have attracted research attention for more than two decades, mainly due to their positive effect on both individual- and firm-level performance (Subramony, 2009; Takeuchi, Chen and Lepak, 2009). Despite its favourable status, there is a lack of such research in the context of economic crisis and from an emerging-country perspective. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine different bundles of high-performance HRM practices in the context of economic uncertainties.

Another research gap in HRM in the economic crisis context is related to the role of talent management. Specifically, researchers have pointed to several questions that require further empirical exploration, such as the role of talent management in different countries and in different types of organization where industry and organizational factors interact with institutional and cultural forces in shaping talent management practices (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Our literature review also demonstrates the importance of resilience and agility during the global economic crisis. A few studies have focused broadly on examining organizational agility in the time of crisis. We propose that future research should provide more insights into specifics of how HR managers been able to develop agility within organizations during times of economic turmoil.

#### *Future Map on Natural Disasters and International HRM*

**[Insert Table 10 here]**

This research theme represents the most overlooked area of investigation. Natural disasters represent a significant challenge to the organizations and entities that operate under such pressure and we need to understand the various aspects of strategic HRM that can be applied within these contexts (Merlot and de Cieri, 2012). The unfortunate experience of COVID-19, has had and is expected to have long-lasting consequences on how organizations adapt and modify their HR practices. With the new ways of working, such as working from home, and challenges surrounding the management of work-family boundaries, organizations are under pressure to devise and implement new forms of HR practices. Given the timeframe, theory and literature on the devastating consequences of the pandemic are still limited. Studies of restructuring of HR policies in times of crisis are needed in the following areas: management of flexible work arrangements; addressing employee concerns about perceived support and flexibility; management of employee communication; and issues around employee promotion and development. Future HRM research on natural disasters should adopt a post-COVID approach and focus on the integration of emergency management framework with HR policies. More specifically, scholars should examine the mitigation and planning phases of the emergency management framework in relation to HRM. Innovative, resilient, and crisis-responsive theories need to be developed in response to COVID-19 and the possibility of further pandemics and other international crises (Goodman and Mann, 2008).

**[Insert Table 11 here]**

This research stream has underlined a key theme of expatriate management in times of political instability. An intriguing research question is about the types of expatriate assignments, such as comparing how long-term expatriates initiated by the company adapt to such times and environments with how self-initiated expatriates adapt. The form of expatriate assignment may be influenced by cultural distance effects such as norms, customs, values and traditions (Kossek et al., 2017).

The family needs of expatriate employees is an understudied field of work, although some MNCs have started to pay more attention to them. In a qualitative study conducted by Li and Jackson (2015), one of the interviewees mentioned the existence of the Outpost program initiated by Shell, and complimented their more inclusive approach compared to most other MNC employers. Examining the nature of such programs, especially the organizational motivations and their unique ways of helping expatriates manage uncertainty and anxiety, will increase understanding of the complexity found in the relationship between corporate support and expatriate adjustment. (Li and Jackson, 2015).

A third area of emerging research is HRM strategies for management of subsidiary performance, such as the management of the performance of subsidiary branches of MNCs. Studies could explore how subsidiary performance may be influenced by various other policies initiated and implemented by companies; for example, by the level of discretion managers have to customize subsidiary marketing activities. Future research could extend this study by conducting cross-disciplinary research that examines multiple functions (e.g., HRM, marketing, sales) in combination (Cogin and Williamson, 2014).

Another exciting field of research is crime issues in countries such as Papua New Guinea (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2008) and Mexico (Ramirez, Madero and Muñiz, 2016). The authors propose future studies to do longitudinal studies on the effects of crime on financial losses incurred by the multinational corporations and other joint venture business operations overseas. Studies need to determine the crime vulnerability of each business, expatriate predicaments, crime prevention strategies, and risk management over the continuum of crimes against the implementation of organizational policies and practices. Further research may focus on

formulating crime prevention measures and developing a model for a crime reduction program and training for expatriate managers.

From a methodological perspective, longitudinal research design is crucial to understand and trace the effects of unstable and hostile environments on the well-being and attitudinal reactions of expatriates. This would help to detect changes in expatriates' contact behavior with local citizens of high-risk countries. It is reasonable to assume that ties with locals need some time to evolve and will develop with a longer stay in the host country. Future research could also focus on cultural differences, comparing social networks in different parts of the world. Studies looking at the actual exchange of social support, rather than social support solely from the expatriate's perspective, would be useful to see whether social support is effective. Employers want to know if their efforts in supporting their expatriates in uncertain environments are fruitful for both the organization and the employee. The aim is to create a process where social support from the local community and staff translates into better performance on part of the expatriate (Bader and Berg, 2014; Bader and Schuster, 2015; Bader, Schuster and Dickmann, 2015). Future research focusing on the personal and emotional characteristics of expatriates and how they affect stress and harmony within the local environment would be informative, together with examining the cultural and the institutional environment of the host country and their effects on the expatriate (Bader, Reade and Froese, 2016).

Last but not least, addressing the calls for conducting multi-level research in HRM (Peccei & de Voorde, 2016), future research could look at how individual and company level contextual factors interact to influence employee well-being and attitudinal outcomes in developed and less developed economies. Areas of possible inquiry include commitment and extra-role behavior, or engagement outside one's scope of work, which usually refers to extra-role behaviors. Research is also needed to examine knowledge acquisition, innovation, and creativity in hostile environments, as well as the associated time factor in understanding these associations in longitudinal research, which allows the researchers to capture negative and positive effects over a period of time (Suder *et al.*, 2017).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The aim of this systematic review was to examine emerging trends and develop future research maps in the following three research streams: 1) economic crisis, 2) natural disasters, 3) political uncertainty and hostile environments. This study seeks to outline the scope of the

literature in these areas and propose possible research agendas, framed by the position that there is a need for more holistic approaches to managing people in the context of high uncertainties.

In terms of theoretical contributions, the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* dominates the field, with 30 papers published on the subject; *Human Resource Management* follows with six papers, and *Journal of International Management* with four. In the methodology domain, quantitative papers were preferred, constituting 40 percent of total articles, and qualitative papers followed with 37 percent of the papers within the subject domain. When we look at the types of uncertainties studied within the field, we can see that political uncertainty and hostile environments were central, with 64 percent of the papers on the subject, followed by economic crisis (32%) and natural disaster (4%). Our findings show that home and host countries where MNE's were studied varied; USA has 24 studies hosted, and UK follows with 13 articles and Germany with 9. We believe there should be an emphasis on which topics were studied under IHRM and how this trend has changed from 2000-2009 to 2010-2018. On HRM practices, we can see that the number of total articles on the subject has risen from 18 to 50; organizational behavior has gone up to 23 from 3, and papers about strategic HRM have gone up from 3 to 13. In this regard, we found that HRM practices, organizational behavior and strategic HRM are the subjects which have gained the most attention. Equally, if not more important, are the theories used within the IHRM literature. From our research, we found 11 categories of theories used for research within the field. Our findings show that institutional theories and social and management theories are dominant throughout the field, with OB-related subjects gaining traction.

Future research could benefit from cross-cultural comparative studies, especially with data from developed, under-developed and developing countries. Studies should also utilise multilevel frameworks in international HRM subjects, especially in the subjects of political crisis and uncertainty. We are aware there has been research on the company level of IHRM, and we argue that future studies should use more multi-level studies where the highest order factor is the country's contextual factors.



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## APPENDIX

Table 1: List of journals and number of articles related to studies of HRM in context of uncertainties (2000 –2018)

No		No of papers
1	<i>Advances in Developing Human Resource</i>	1
2	<i>Asia Pacific Business Review</i>	2
3	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources</i>	3
4	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Management</i>	1
5	<i>British Journal of Industrial Relations</i>	2
6	<i>Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences</i>	1
7	<i>Construction Management and Economics</i>	1
8	<i>Cross Cultural Management International Journal</i>	1
9	<i>Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal</i>	1
10	<i>Economic and Industrial Democracy</i>	1
11	<i>European Journal of International Management</i>	1
12	<i>Employee Relations</i>	1
13	<i>Human Relations</i>	2
14	<i>Human Resource Management</i>	6
15	<i>Human Resource Management Journal</i>	3
16	<i>Industrial Relations</i>	3
17	<i>International Journal of Global Management Studies</i>	1
18	<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	30
19	<i>International Journal of Manpower</i>	1
20	<i>International Journal of Physical Distribution &amp; Logistics Management</i>	1
21	<i>Journal of International Management</i>	4
22	<i>Journal of Management Development</i>	1
23	<i>Journal of Product Innovation Management</i>	1
24	<i>Journal of Management</i>	
25	<i>Journal of World Business</i>	1
26	<i>Labour &amp; Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work</i>	1
27	<i>Management International Review</i>	1
28	<i>Management Research Journal</i>	1
29	<i>Measuring Business Excellence</i>	1
30	<i>Personnel Review</i>	1
31	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	1
32	<i>Strategic Outsourcing: An International Journal</i>	1
33	<i>Strategy Beyond Markets</i>	1
34	<i>Socio-Economic Review</i>	43
34	<i>Sustainability</i>	1

Table 2: Research methods used by HRM in the context of uncertainties

Research methods	No of papers	% of No	
Qualitative	Interviews		
	Observations		
	Policy documents, secondary data	26	36%
	Case study, interviews		
	Longitudinal interviews		
Quantitative	Survey, questionnaire	29	40%
	Secondary data		
Mixed	Survey and interviews		
	Documental search from international agencies	7	10%
	Survey, secondary data		
	Case study		
Conceptual papers	10	14%	
Total	72	100%	

Table 3. Types of Uncertainties

Types of uncertainties	No of papers	No of papers
Economic Crisis	23	32%
Natural Disasters	3	4%
Political Uncertainty and Hostile Environments	46	64%
Total	72	100%

Table 4: Home and host countries of MNCs studied

No.	Home countries	Frequencies	Host countries	Frequencies
1	USA	24	China	5
2	UK	13	Sri-Lanka	4
3	Germany	9	USA	3
4	France	5	India	3
5	Switzerland	4	Australia	3
6	Australia	3	Germany	3
7	Ireland	3	UK	3
8	Russia	2	Afghanistan	3
9	China	2	Colombia	1
10	Brazil	2	Mexico	1
11	Japan	2	Brazil	1
12	Spain	1	Philippines	1
13	South Korea	1	Argentina	1
14	Netherlands	1	Vietnam	1
15	Singapore	1	Ireland	1
16	Taiwan	1	Hungary	1
17	Denmark	1	Poland	1
18	Norway	1	Romania	1
19	Sweden	1	Czech Republic	1
20	Poland	1	Russia	1
21	India	1	Spain	1
22			Papua New Guinea	1
23			France	1
24			Taiwan	1
25			Saudi Arabia	1
26			Pakistan	1
27			Canada	1
28			Switzerland	1
29			Norway	1

Table 5: Main thematic topics studied in IHRM in the context of uncertainty between 2000-2018.

Main IHRM themes studied	2000-2009	2010-2018
<i>HRM practices</i>		
Remuneration	2	8
Training and development	6	13
Recruitment and selection	3	7
Performance management	1	7
HRM dynamics		1
Talent management	1	2
Organizational learning	1	1
Diversity management	1	
Career management	2	3
Coaching	1	
Retention		1
High performance work systems		7
Sub-total	18	50
<i>HQ – Subsidiary relations</i>		
Talent management between different business divisions		1
Transfer of HR practices	1	2
Subsidiary performance		1
Globalization vs. localization	1	1
Sub-total	2	5
<i>Strategic HRM</i>		
Strategic planning HRM		5
HR business partners		2
Organizational structure	1	1
Management model	1	2
HRM-flexibility	1	
Corporate governance		3
Sub-total	3	13
<i>Employment Relations</i>		
Manager ambidexterity		1
Workgroup ethnic diversity		1
Work–life balance		1
Pay cut, pay freeze and termination of employment		1
Collective bargaining		1
Re-negotiate contractual agreements		1
Assignment duration		1
Work sharing		1
Transfers within organization		2
Voluntary departure plan		1
Sub-total		11

*Organizational Behavior*

Role flexibility, clarity novelty and role conflict		1
Stress		3
Self-efficacy		2
Trust	1	2
Work value	1	
Employee involvement and participation	1	1
Organizational commitment		2
Job satisfaction		1
Perceived organizational support		5
Social network		1
Psychological well-being		1
Self-confidence		1
Psychological resilience		1
Managerial willingness to learn		1
Legitimacy-seeking behavior		1
Sub-total	3	23

*Cultural studies*

Cultural distance and difference		5
Language	2	1
Cultural empathy	1	
Sub-total	3	6

*Comparative HRM*

HRM practices of MNCs and their local counterparts in host countries		1
Comparison of reporting to HQ and Regional office		1
Comparing MNCs of UK, US, Germany, and Japan		1
Implementation of best practices in UK, Canada, Norway, and Switzerland		1
Sub-total		4

*Expatriate Management*

Expatriate safety and security management.		3
Performance management		2
Uncertainty and anxiety management		1
International relocation		1
Work adjustment	1	6
Inpatriate experience		1
Expatriate assignments	1	
Premature return and turnover intentions	2	2
Job stress, burnout, satisfaction	1	
Sub-total	5	16

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Table 6: A summary of the theories used

No.	Category of theories	Examples of theories used
1	Agency theory	Agency theory
2	Resource-based view and resource-dependence theories	Resource dependency theory, resource-based view, conservation of resources theory, job demands-resources theory
3	Communication theories	Communication cycle, contact theory
4	Contingency theories	Contingency theory, contingency framework, contingency perspective, context dependent model, evolutionary perspective
5	Grounded theory	Grounded theory
6	Institutional theories	Institutional theory, institutional approach, institutionalist approach, institution-based theory, neo-institutional theory
7	Political perspective	Political theory of populism
8	Economic theories	Micro-political approach, transaction cost economics, neo-classical micro-economic theory, real option theory, theories of cycles and waves
9	Organizational studies and organizational psychology theories	Normative theory of organizational design, organizational learning, enlightened shareholder value perspective, realistic job previews, shareholder value model, stakeholder theory, stress perspective, stress theory, survivor syndrome, theory of anxiety, theory of propensity to trust
10	Social theories	Social categorization theory, social exchange theory, social identity theory, social integrative approach, social learning perspective, social network perspective, social network theory, social theory of "duality of structure", social value theory
11	Management theories	Contrasting business models and product market situations, efficient bargaining model, globally integrated network model, internalization theory, marked based approach, strategic choice theory, crisis management theory

Table 7: A summary of the literature review conducted in *Socio-Economic Review*

Types of uncertainties	No of papers	No of papers
Crisis	38	44%
Natural Disasters	1	2%
Political Uncertainty and Hostile Environments	4	5%
Employment Relations	41	49%
Total	84	100%

Table 8: Articles related to crisis in *Socio-Economic Review*

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<i>Reference</i>	<i>Article</i>
Kentikelenis (2018)	The social aftermath of economic disaster: Karl Polanyi, counter movements in action, and the Greek crisis
Buendía (2018)	A perfect storm in a sunny economy: A political economy approach to the crisis in Spain
Pagliari et al., (2018)	The financialization of policy preferences: Financial asset ownership, regulation, and crisis management
Schwander & Manow (2017)	'Modernize and Die'? German social democracy and the electoral consequences of the Agenda 2010
Goldstein et al., (2017)	Financial markets as production markets: The industrial roots of the mortgage meltdown
Madariaga (2017)	Mechanisms of neoliberal resilience: Comparing exchange rates and industrial policy in Chile and Estonia
Bulfone (2017)	Insider job: Corporate reforms and power resources in France, Italy, and Spain
Picot et al., (2017)	All of one kind? Labour market reforms under austerity in Italy and Spain
Van Gunten et al. (2017)	Washington dissensus: Ambiguity and conflict at the International Monetary Fund
Ubert (2017) Nau & Soener (2017)	Investigating the difference in policy responses to the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons and homeowner insurance crises in Florida and Louisiana
Polavieja (2016)	Labour-market competition, recession, and anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe: Occupational and environmental drivers of competitive threat
Dwyer et al., (2016)	Mortgage worries: Young adults and the US housing crisis
Muennich (2016)	Readjusting imagined markets: Morality and institutional resilience in the German and British bank bailout of 2008
Pagliari & Young (2016)	The interest ecology of financial regulation: Interest group plurality in the design of financial regulatory policies

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Noelke (2016)	Economic causes of the Eurozone crisis: The analytical contribution of Comparative Capitalism
Armingeon et al., (2016)	How the Euro divides the union: The effect of economic adjustment on support for democracy in Europe
Hager (2015)	Corporate ownership of the public debt: Mapping the new aristocracy of finance
Fligstein & Habinek (2014)	Sucker punched by the invisible hand: The world financial markets and the globalization of the US mortgage crisis
Culpepper & Regan (2014)	Why don't governments need trade unions anymore? The death of social pacts in Ireland and Italy
Rueda (2014)	Dualization, crisis and the welfare state
Lee, McNulty and Shaffer (2013)	'Hard Times, Hard Choices': marketing retrenchment as civic empowerment in an era of neoliberal crisis

Table 8: Articles related to crisis in *Socio-Economic Review* continued

Reference	Article
Swedberg (2013)	The financial crisis in the US 2008-2009: Losing and restoring confidence
Carruthers (2013)	From uncertainty toward risk: The case of credit ratings
Fourcade et al., (2013)	The economy as morality play, and implications for the Eurozone crisis
Martin & Gabay (2013)	Fiscal protest in thirteen welfare states
Fourcade et al., (2013)	Moral categories in the financial crisis
Weber & Schmitz (2011)	Varieties of helping capitalism: Politico-economic determinants of bank rescue packages in the EU during the recent crisis
Hellenier et al., (2011)	Reforming the global financial architecture
Campbell (2011)	The US financial crisis: Lessons for theories of institutional complementarity
Block (2011)	Crisis and renewal: The outlines of a twenty-first century new deal
Schimank (2011)	Against all odds: The 'loyalty' of small investors
Sorkin (2011)	Too big to fail. The inside story of how Wall Street and Washington fought to save the financial system from crisis—and themselves
Amable et al. (2010)	Crisis in the regulation regime—a new paradigm?
Baccaro et al. (2010)	The US labour movement and the audacity of hope
Morgan (2010)	Legitimacy in financial markets: Credit default swaps in the current crisis
Halliday et al. (2010)	Rhetorical legitimation: Global scripts as strategic devices of international organizations
Boyer et al., (2009)	Labour and the global financial crisis
Amable & Palombarini (2009)	A neorealist approach to institutional change and the diversity of capitalism
Burroni et al., (2008)	Local economic governance in hard times: The shadow economy and the textile and clothing industries around Łódź and Naples
Boyer (2007)	Assessing the impact of fair value upon financial crises
Hayo (2005)	Mass attitudes toward financial crisis and economic reform in Korea
Beunza & Stark (2003)	The organization of responsiveness: Innovation and recovery in the trading rooms of Lower Manhattan

Table 9. Map of insights, research priorities and research pathways for economic crisis and international HRM

Type of Uncertainty	Insights into IHRM applications during economic crisis
Economic Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft model of IHRM: resource and coordination, training in order to develop new skillsets (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012), knowledge sharing and information-sharing schemes (Zhu, 2005), flat hierarchy and informal coordination (Zhu, 2004), and highly individualized systems of results-based motivation (Gurkov and Settles, 2013) were singled out by researchers in tackling the unwanted effects of economic crisis.</li> <li>• Hard model of IHRM: pay cuts and pay freezes (Cibborn, 2018), reductions in the workforce (Zagelmeyer, Heckmann and Kettner, 2012; Roche et al., 2013), recruitment halts, decrease in the training budget, decrease in individual performance goals and benefits (Shen and D'Netto, 2012; Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2012), and a re-negotiation of the contractual agreements and voluntary departure plans (Jaidi and Thévenet, 2012).</li> </ul>
Research Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational resilience, issues of unionization, employee rights and well-being during times of economic crisis will continue to be a major force within the field in the coming decades</li> <li>• While some researchers focused on the social aftermath of economic crisis and its effects on employment policy and labour (Kentikelnis, 2018; Boyer et al., 2009; Baccaro, Boyer &amp; Crouch, 2010), others chose to focus on the instantaneous effects of economic crisis (Picot &amp; Tassinari, 2017), the housing crisis (Dwyer, Neilson &amp; Nau, 2016), and the drivers of competitive threat during economic crisis (Polavieja, 2016). Nau and Soener (2017), on the other hand, investigated income precarity as a result of economic crisis.</li> </ul>	
Research Pathways	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of socially responsible HRM practices as part of HRM strategy in order to tackle the consequences of an economic crisis for HRM.</li> <li>• The strategic planning of human resources during economic turmoil. Specifically, international HRM literature could benefit from a better understanding of how to apply strategic management and decision-making techniques within strategic planning.</li> <li>• What is the role of talent management in different countries and in different types of organizations, where industry and organizational factors interact with institutional and cultural forces in shaping talent management practices? (Sparrow &amp; Makram, 2015).</li> <li>• There is a critical need to examine different bundles of high-performance HRM practices in the context of economic uncertainties and from an emerging-country perspective.</li> <li>• Addressing the calls for conducting multi-level research in HRM (Peccei &amp; de Voorde, 2016); future research could also examine how individual and company level contextual factors interact to influence employee well-being and attitudinal outcomes in developed and less developed economies.</li> </ul>	

Table 10. Map of insights, research priorities and research pathways for natural disasters and international HRM

Type of Uncertainty	Insights into IHRM applications during natural disasters
Natural Disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural disasters can have a drastic effect on the employees' psychological wellbeing (Oh and Oetzel, 2011; Viswanath et al., 2012).</li> <li>• A study has emphasized the importance of HRM as part of the emergency or disaster plan during catastrophic events. The results revealed that HR directors should be part of the emergency management team (Goodman and Mann, 2008).</li> <li>• Most recently, the world has come to a standstill as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic undoubtedly has negative consequences on organizations and how they conduct their IHRM practices worldwide.</li> </ul>
	<hr/> <b>Research Priorities</b> <hr/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the work on the relationship between IHRM and pandemics and infectious diseases, in general, focused on Africa as geography and HIV/AIDS as their primary disease of focus (Baxter, 2007; Horwitz, 2009; Kamoche &amp; Nyambegera, 2003; Mpabanga, 2004; Bischoff &amp; Wood, 2012).</li> <li>• One novel research from Naveed and Rana (2012) investigated the burnout effects of trainee doctors in response to frequent and emotional interaction with patients, which in turn could be expected to be replicated for doctors worldwide in the fight against Covid-19.</li> </ul>
	<hr/> <b>Research Pathways</b> <hr/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future research on natural disasters should adopt a post-COVID approach and try to focus on the integration of emergency management framework with HR policies. More specifically, scholars should examine the mitigation and planning phases of the emergency management framework and their relationships with HRM. Emergent, resilient, and crisis-prone theories need to be developed in responding to COVID-19 crises (Goodman and Mann, 2008).</li> <li>• Focusing on the aftermath of a natural disaster, in terms of employment, generating policy responses and strategy reform concerning IHRM would be an interesting path to follow. Following Ubert (2017)'s footsteps, focusing on the source of the policy response after a natural disaster in the context of IHRM is an area that is open to research.</li> </ul>

Table 11. Map of insights, research priorities and research pathways for political instability and international HRM

Type of Uncertainty	Insights into IHRM applications during political instability
Political Instability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A core component of political instability, a hostile environment can be defined as an environment perceived to be vulnerable to events or circumstances that present a threat to the safety and security of expatriates (Fee, McGrath-Champ and Berti, 2017) and can be categorized as the legitimacy-dependent risks which are related directly to the way in which local actors perceive expatriates and their employers.</li> <li>• Especially since 2001, firms that operate globally increasingly take terrorism into account in their HR planning (Reade, 2009).</li> </ul>
<hr/> <b>Research Priorities</b> <hr/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual perceptions of managers' experiences and their perspectives of the treatment and support they receive, and their concerns associated with their locations when it comes to the implementation of HR practices (e.g., Suder et al., 2017).</li> <li>• Level of organizational support which the employee perceives, employee's overall commitment to the work and the organization, the level of social support received from co-workers, and attitudes of the employee towards the work and the organization (Reade, 2009; Bader and Berg, 2014; Bader, 2015; Bader, Reade and Froese, 2016; Rodgers et al., 2017).</li> <li>• Political processes during economic crisis (Lee, McNulty &amp; Shaffer, 2013), the transformation of employment relations as a result of regulatory crisis (Amable et al., 2009), social learning in active labor policy in times of political development (Amberg, 2015), political economy of labor markets in Latin America (Schneider &amp; Karcher, 2010) and finally, income inequality and its political determinants (Huber &amp; Stephens, 2014).</li> </ul>	
<hr/> <b>Research Pathways</b> <hr/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of expatriate assignments, such as comparing the adaptation and consequences of long-term expatriates initiated by the company to those of self-initiated expatriates initiated by the global traveler expatriates.</li> <li>• The family needs of expatriate employees have emerged as an understudied field of work. Examining the nature of such programs, especially the organizational motivations and their unique ways to help expatriates manage uncertainty and anxiety, can further reveal the complexity of the relationship between corporate support and expatriate adjustment (Li and Jackson, 2015).</li> <li>• Another exciting field of research is crime issues in countries, including Papua New Guinea (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2008) and Mexico (Ramirez, Madero and Muñiz, 2016). The authors propose future longitudinal studies that will provide deeper insights into the implications of crime on financial losses incurred by the multinational corporations and other joint venture business operations overseas.</li> </ul>	