EXPLORING TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SMEs IN A TURBULENT CONTEXT: LESSONS FROM BREXIT AND COVID-19

By

BERTHA DZIFA KUMODJI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Birmingham City University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences

Birmingham City University Business School

Birmingham City University

November 2021

ABSTRACT

Talent management is a rapidly evolving subject of study. At all levels of an organisation, talent is critical to success. When managed properly, it has a beneficial effect on the bottom line. As a result, talent management has become a critical strategic issue for businesses worldwide. However, there is a dearth of research on applying TM concepts and practices in various corporate settings, including SMEs. This thesis examines TM practices in SMEs during turbulent times (Brexit and Covid-19). First, it discusses TM's application in SMEs, followed by the current state of TM in UK SMEs and the impact of talent retention on UK SMEs during times of turbulence. Next, an integrated institutional resource-based framework is developed from human resource management and talent management fields to achieve this goal.

Two (2) case studies of SMEs operating in the UK were selected to address the research questions and validate the framework using a qualitative and abductive research approach. Twenty-eight (28) semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with owners, managers, and employees of participating companies, supplemented by qualitative documentation method, following the framework's order and structure. According to the empirical findings, talent management practices are critical in turbulence and uncertainty for the SME sector. Finally, the integrated institutional resource-based TM framework is reviewed and modified to facilitate future researchers and practitioners' use and expansion.

Additionally, the findings of the thesis add to the body of existing research and practice. Finally, it provides recommendations about the role of human resource management

and talent management practices in enabling organisations to configure valuable and committed employees with a high level of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Overall, the study adds to a better theoretical understanding of talent management in the context of SMEs in the UK, a subject that has received little attention in the literature.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, ***'EXPLORING TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SMEs IN A TURBULENT CONTEXT: LESSONS FROM BREXIT AND COVID-19'***, is submitted to Birmingham City University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Apart from acknowledging the work of others, this study has not been submitted to another university or research programme.

Signed…Bertha Dzifa Kumodji…………..

Ms. Bertha Dzifa Kumodji

Date……**20-11-2021**……………………………

Student Number……**17140523**………………..

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Ms Kate Araba Appiah and Mr Reuben Kwashie Kumodji, my mother and father. Mr Alex Ewoenam Kumodji, Ms Antoinette Laura Kumodji, Ms Pearl Afi Kumodji, and Mr Erasmus Nii Aflah Sackey; not to mention my sister-in-law Mrs Linda Lois Larkwor Kumodji and my lovely niece and nephew Miss Lauryn Renee Elorm Kumodji and Mr Danny Eyram Laud Jnr for their love, support, confidence, prayers, and encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was nothing short of catching current events at the speed of light with a delicate thread of intelligence in an ever-changing and technologically laden business environment. Pages were ripped and scraped because an idea was outdated and antiquated soon after it was inked. Failure was not an option, even if it was not easy, and I am no stalwart. I was sure of success since there was no hindsight illusion; there was a glimmer of hope and a beam of light at the end of the dark tunnel. However, I can only reach the first stepping stone on the path to the valley of knowledge and wisdom. “The only true knowledge is understanding that one knows nothing,” Socrates said. It was not the product of a single person’s efforts; instead, it was the consequence of collective and shared knowledge. I want to express my gratitude to everyone who taught me a single piece of information and for their generosity, valuable and constructive criticism, culminating in solidifying my work.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Alexandros Psychogios and Dr Stefania Paladini, and my advisor, Professor Alex de Ruyter (CBS), for challenging and guiding me throughout this study. Second, I am grateful to the University’s Business School Doctoral Office and the Centre for Brexit Studies (CBS) for making this research possible. Finally, I would like to thank the participating companies, owners, managers, and workers for their willingness to engage in the study and share their experiences. This helped in contextualising the topic from the standpoint of SMEs.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS / TERMS USED IN THIS THESIS

ABBREVIATIONS	**FULL TERM**
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TM	Talent Management
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
EU	European Union
UK	United Kingdom
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operations and Development
WTO	World Trade Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
UN	United Nations
MNE	Multinational Enterprises
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
IFC	International Finance Corporation
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
WBG	World Bank Group
WHO	World Health Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development
RBV	Resource Based View
TMS	Talent Management System
T&D	Talent Development
HRP	Human Resource Planning
PM	Performance Management
DRC	Doctoral Research College
CBS	Centre for Brexit Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary of the Chapter

Section 1.1 of this chapter provides an overview of the thesis. Sections 1.2 present the introduction to the research. Section 1.3 expands on the research rationale, while Section 1.4 describes the research aims, objectives, and questions. Sections 1.5 and 1.6 details the methodological approach and the study's contribution, respectively. Finally, Section 1.7 outlines the thesis.

1.2 Introduction to the Research

Although change is unpredictable, it is critical to address its underlying causes. Difficult circumstances highlight the importance of Mr Ducker's lesson that *'only change is constant.'* However, it may also be a time for many companies to recognise and embrace the new reality. Demand and supply dynamics have made it difficult for organisations to maintain talent flows in today's unpredictable market conditions, globalisation, and global competition (Schuler and Tarique, 2009). People seem to be the most critical competitive advantage, rather than financial resources, efficient processes, and technology. Companies seeking an edge over their competition must recruit, develop, and retain top-tier staff. However, this only applies to a small and restricted set of prospective workers, which is why competition for these individuals is becoming more intense. The current population's supply of the most competent individuals is relatively limited. As a result, organisations that compete for these limited resources must identify and implement the most efficient tools to succeed.

Businesses must not just adjust to shifting demographics and employee preferences. Nonetheless, they must revitalise their organisations while investing in new technologies, expanding their operations globally, and competing with new threats. A cost-effective and focused people management strategy is critical for any organisation's success. The bulk of organisations' fate will be determined by their talent pool and talent development throughout the whole workforce. Organisations must engage in various actions to guarantee that talent is recruited and nurtured among all workers. Employees and management must work together to manage performance, career development, and training. Line management is critical in identifying and deciding on staff development opportunities in their respective areas.

One HR managers' challenge is selecting from a growing talent pool of exceptional, marginal, and fluid staff (Kayode, 2012). Having individuals with unclear abilities to choose from seems to be a problem. On the other hand, hiring more educated employees is advantageous since talent may provide a long-term competitive advantage and influence organisational outcomes. With global talent supply falling short of long-term demand, especially for highly skilled people, organisations must prioritise human capital above financial capital. This is readily available to investors and lenders, and it can be reproduced inexpensively and quickly.

Developing great HRM is the most acceptable way to differentiate one organisation from another (Kapoor, 2011). This is done by creating a strategy that ensures organisations manage their employees effectively, thus boosting company success (Gratton, 2003). Therefore, organisations that care about their employees should prioritise HR strategies (Subhash, 2011). In addition, those willing to adapt their HR procedures to changing labour circumstances will attract, develop, and retain people, improving their chances of success in global competition (Kapoor, 2011). This has resulted in a significant dependence on HR by business organisations to gain a competitive advantage, an important economic growth component.

Despite demonstrating its value and competitive advantage for the business environment, TM remains a relatively undeveloped and new idea in HRM for many institutions, such as SMEs in the UK. Most of these institutions are uninformed of the TM techniques used in organisations to aid them and their effectiveness. Talent is valued like innovation and creativity, yet it is rarely understood and nurtured inside organisations. Many organisations, such as SMEs, want brilliant individuals. Even if they are lucky enough to acquire outstanding individuals, they often struggle to engage or retain them. Organisations often try to implement TM processes and practices. However, real success is achieved when people's hearts and minds are involved. Organisations that do this have values and visions that are linked to the individual. TM must be prioritised for this to happen.

An organisation may assign tasks to an individual and hope that everything goes as planned. Hence, there must be conviction and dedication to making it happen, beginning with the owners, managers and going down to line management and the newest recruits. When a company develops a defined process or specifies a technique for managing people, it may convince itself that TM is occurring. TM emerges when a company creates a culture based on shared values. Emotions, thinking, and feeling are engaged, and leadership demonstrates commitment via actions and attitudes. Individuals who join an organisation should feel valued, as though their efforts are recognised and will make a difference. It is simple to assert that this happens in most UK SMEs. However, it is much more difficult to show actual evidence of implementation and application.

TM has developed into a virtual drive to gain a competitive edge in the business environment using human resources (Tarique and Schuler, 2010). Horváthová (2011) outlines two significant views on what or who talent is. The first point of view is that specific organisations concentrate their attention on a selected number of high performers. They are the organisation's 'stars.' They consider a talented individual a successful employee who can significantly influence an organisation's output. The second point of view is that other organisations may be more inclusive through fostering different people's talents, skills, abilities, capabilities, and knowledge (Horváthová, 2011).

TM, whether selective or inclusive, is a significant issue. Various organisations may use a variety of approaches to finding, selecting, developing, and retaining talent. Prioritising people management, growth in TM processes, or developing high potential is essential in every business organisation. No company should concentrate all its efforts on managing a portion of its human capital. Recognising the needs of different individuals inside the organisation is therefore critical. Thus, talent is defined as everyone who can contribute to an organisation's objectives. TM should not be confined to a selected set of favoured individuals. This approach is founded on the notion that talent must be handled comprehensively. TM is a growing profession, whether selective or inclusive; different organisations may have different ways of identifying, developing, and retaining their talent.

Companies profit from TM not just during tough times but even when the economy has stabilised. The corporate world has changed because of the crisis and challenging conditions. It is becoming more common for companies to engage in so-called “talent wars.” Workers are likely to leave their current employers as the job market is becoming increasingly competitive. As a result, a flurry of lucrative employment opportunities will open up, particularly for top performers. Having committed employees will assist the company in retaining essential people and making the transition to a more robust economy much easier. However, SMEs must deal with the unexpected. Preparing for and coping with the unexpected has been a common challenge in recent turbulent times (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19). Recession and unpredictable events such as Brexit and Covid-19 have altered the business environment, and organisations are faced with talent wars. SMEs are becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of intellectual property and knowledge workers and the need to recruit and retain talent. Surprisingly, companies in more disposable industries, where employee turnover is high, are beginning to recognise the cost of recruiting and training their employees.

On that account, SMEs in the UK must ask themselves: What if our top workers are not as good as we believe they are? Our organisation's personnel pool may lack the requisite behavioural DNA and the experience, knowledge, and competence to produce what has to be done or performed in the next five (5) years. Thus, ‘talent’ becomes a lever, mechanism, and technique that aids in keeping the organisation prepared for future and unforeseen circumstances both in and outside the organisation. Talent is a top priority in UK SME organisations now, tomorrow, and forever. It is, however, a continuous process that requires authority, responsibility, and commitment – not forms, procedures, and assessment centres. One of the main issues here is the SME's ability and willingness to confront the realities of the current scenario.

1.3 Research Rationale

Good HRM is recognised as a critical factor in determining a business's success or failure (Vaiman *et al*., 2012: Collings and Scullion, 2012). This emphasises the crucial need for operational organisations investing in TM initiatives to select and develop high-potential personnel capable of maintaining their operations with a decreased risk of failure. Therefore, developing talent is essential to the overall running of the company (Stahl *et al.*, 2012). In addition, for a firm to survive, it needs a steady stream of new information. In this context, recognising the impact of a complex economy that requires more sophisticated people, new knowledge at all levels, and fundamental changes in how organisations adapt to the imperatives of new technology and globalisation offer substantial hurdles to successful TM (Stahl *et al.,* 2012; Schuler, 2015).

The results of Rauch and Hatak's (2016) research may be used as the starting point for analysing HRM practices in SMEs. They find a positive cause and effect relationship between HRM activities and performance. They argue that such a relationship can be stronger in SMEs than in larger companies. Moreover, the positive relationship between

HR practices and SME performance finds support in other studies (Razouk, 2011; Sheehan, 2014). Thus, it may be concluded that the potential of SMEs to achieve a sustainable and competitive advantage depends on the quality of HR processes. Such a relationship stems from the importance of human capital, which can be characterised by the VRIN attributes: valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Kaufman, 2015).

TM is a dynamically developing field of research, proven by a number of publications and findings that describe the current understanding of this area (Al Ariss *et al.,* 2014; Morley *et al.,* 2015; McDonnell *et al.,* 2017). Most literature that review articles continuously raises two issues. The first refers to the underrepresentation of empirically grounded research (McDonnell *et al.,* 2017); the second indicates the insufficient consideration of contextual issues (Dries, 2013a; Dries, 2013b; Al Ariss *et al.,* 2014). TM has emerged as one of the key issues facing organisations and will undoubtedly continue being an important challenge for management (Schuler *et al.,* 2011). According to some scholars and practitioners, TM is an HR challenge that firms will confront in the future years (Tansley *et al.,* 2007). Most TM's surveys indicate that at least 75% of top managers believe it is the second critical problem organisations will face in the future (Deloitte, 2008). The consensus among the academic community is that the management of talent represents an important source of competitive advantage for organisations worldwide and that the prosperity of an organisation depends on its ability to manage its talents effectively (Nilson and Ellstrom, 2012; Collings and Mellahi, 2013). Thus, organisations striving to survive in the current highly competitive and uncertain business environment (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19) must consider TM as a key organisational and management issue.

In terms of TM within a global context, questions such as the following abound: What are the TM practices and strategies required of line managers and HR managers to effectively manage talent? To what extent do employee engagement, job satisfaction and organisational commitment mediate the relationship between TM practices and intention to quit? How can organisations attract, engage and optimise talent in the current global market conditions? These questions are likely to have a particularly important applied benefit as they represent some of the key challenges organisations like SMEs are grappling with in effectively managing their talent. Darvish, Najafi and Zare (2012) maintain that the future of most businesses is reliant on the acquisition, development and retention of talented people to create the leadership capacity and talent required to implement new strategies so as to meet current and future business needs.

Despite the growing popularity of TM in the literature, the current conceptualisation of TM remains narrow and limited (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). Even though TM is essential to the organisation's day-to-day operations, most academic literature, including organisations like the CIPD in the UK, tends to be intensely focused on national settings (Mcdonnell *et al.,* 2009). Consequently, there are few comparative studies. The current study on global TM is mainly anecdotal (Mcdonnell *et al.*, 2010) and has many theoretical flaws (Tarique and Schuler, 2010). The lack of empirical research on applications of TM in different contexts is a serious limitation (Festing *et al.*, 2013; Skuza *et al.,* 2013). Although there is a wide range of external and internal factors that influence the use of TM practices, the awareness of TM in different types of organisations and national contexts is weak (McDonnell *et al.,* 2010). The current conceptualisation of TM strongly focuses on multinational companies and large domestic organisations (McDonnell *et al.,* 2010; Oltra and Vivas-Lopez, 2013).

However, HRM and TM are becoming increasingly important in SMEs, and TM in SMEs is different from that in large organisations (Mendez, 2013).

The application of a contextual framework can be of the highest importance when analysing TM processes in SMEs. According to Krishnan and Scullion (2017), the notion of TM is not replicable to SMEs and the conceptualisation of TM as proposed for large firms needs adaptation in the SME context. Although scholars investigate TM for three decades already, their research mainly focuses on large companies, without enough attention to the characteristics of SMEs (Valverde *et al.,* 2013; Collings, 2014; Festing *et al.,* 2017; Sparrow and Makram, 2015).

There has been little research into the role of HRM and TM as it relates to SMEs (Muogbo, 2013). It is argued, therefore, that further researching exploring HRM and TM in the context of SMEs is both important and necessary (Klaas *et al.,* 2012). SMEs experience a greater degree of instability in their structural forms and management processes. Moreover, as Festing *et al. (*2017) indicate, there is need for theoretical perspectives and conceptual developments to increase understanding in TM area, and more generally to explain why TM in SMEs differs from that in large organisations. Festing *et al.* (2017) attend to three issues: the challenges of TM in SMEs in the context of the labour market, the understanding of talent in SMEs, and the differences in the TM system with regard to cultural differences in particular countries. Despite the fact that they identify such research gaps, the majority of research concerning TM studies is in large, leaving TM practices in SMEs insufficiently investigated.

SMEs do not implement solutions and best practices developed in large companies. Although scholars traced the relationship between HR and SME performance (Rauch and Hatak's 2016), there are difficulties in developing a common approach to HRM and TM activities in SMEs, which may stem from four factors. Firstly, most of these companies apply different and unique patterns of executing personnel functions as their business models and the environment in which they operate differ. Secondly, implementing HR practices for large companies may require changes in organisational structures, which can be considered too expensive for many SMEs (Patel and Cardon, 2010). Thirdly, SMEs suffer from limited resources, which results in optimising or even reducing HR processes and supportive functions, also HR departments (Razouk, 2011; Pocztowski and Pauli, 2013). Lastly, solutions developed in large companies are not suitable for SMEs, because there are no HR departments in such organisations. In research carried out by the Human Capital Institute (2011), only 57% of companies surveyed had a department formally dedicated to TM. The results of this study also showed that more than half of companies find it difficult to implement TM practices.

SMEs run standard HR processes by referring to recruitment, appraisal, training, and remuneration (Cardon and Stevens, 2004; Psychogios *et al.,* 2016), but they are organised in a different way. These processes are executed mostly by managers and owners who are not prepared to run them due to the lack of required competences. They are specialists in the main field of the firm's business, but they frequently suffer from insufficient managerial skills (Razouk, 2011; Pocztowski and Pauli, 2013). Thus, according to Nolan and Garavan (2012), SMEs are not a "scaled down" version of a large company, so processes implemented in SMEs are designed in a different manner to meet their specific needs and operating models. As a result, such enterprises may develop different TM practices, which are highly related to the context in which they operate and to the resources they have.

Due to the variety of approaches to HRM and TM that SMEs apply, they may implement TM processes that significantly differ from those suitable for large companies. Although the scope of TM activities and processes in SMEs may be similar to those implemented in large ones, this seems to be all they have in common. It would be difficult or even impossible to replicate already developed models (Festing *et al.*, 2013; Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Thus, mapping TM patterns in SMEs requires the inclusion of the environmental context, which consists of both internal and external factors (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2017; Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Moreover, as Festing *et al.* (2013), Skuza *et al.* (2013), and Valverde *et al.* (2013) indicate that, the approach to TM in SMEs may differ with regard to country-specific cultural context.

While designing TM in SMEs, we should account for some specified practices by referring to the uniqueness of undertaken actions and initiatives (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Moreover, the approach to TM may vary in accordance with the stage of SME growth (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). The importance of particular resources at consecutive stages can change, which means that the share of investments in human capital can differ (Pauli, 2015). Moreover, as concluded by Valverde *et al.* (2013), many SME owners are unaware of the concept of TM, even though they undertake actions that can be regarded as part of TM programmes or initiatives. The authors observe a tendency among SMEs to defer the formalisation of the concept of TM (Valverde *et al.*, 2013).

Examining the academic literature on TM demonstrates that the field ignores theoretical breakthroughs in TM practices and methods in recent years (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Considering this, it is important that this topic is covered extensively. Moreover, there are a number of areas and questions that need to be explored in order to bridge existing gaps in the literature. Thus, the purpose of this study is to bridge the gap by investigating HR and TM practices and strategies in SMEs in a turbulent context. This study emphasises the significance of theoretical work in HR and TM and associated practices, particularly in UK SMEs during a turbulent time. Therefore, the question is: what is TM, and how does it apply in business organisations, especially SMEs, during turbulent times? This thesis begins with a brief overview of the current views on HR, talent and TM in SMEs. Then, the methodology and findings of the empirical study are presented and discussed. The thesis concludes with a summary and the study's limitations and suggestions for further research.

1.4 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

The purpose of this study is to uncover gaps in empirical studies on the concept of HR and TM and explore the application of TM practices within the SME business during a period of uncertainty (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19).

1.4.1 Research Aims and Objectives

1) To explore the application and concept of TM in SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19).

2) To explore the gaps in the current literature and contribute to a better theoretical understanding of HR and TM practices of SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19).

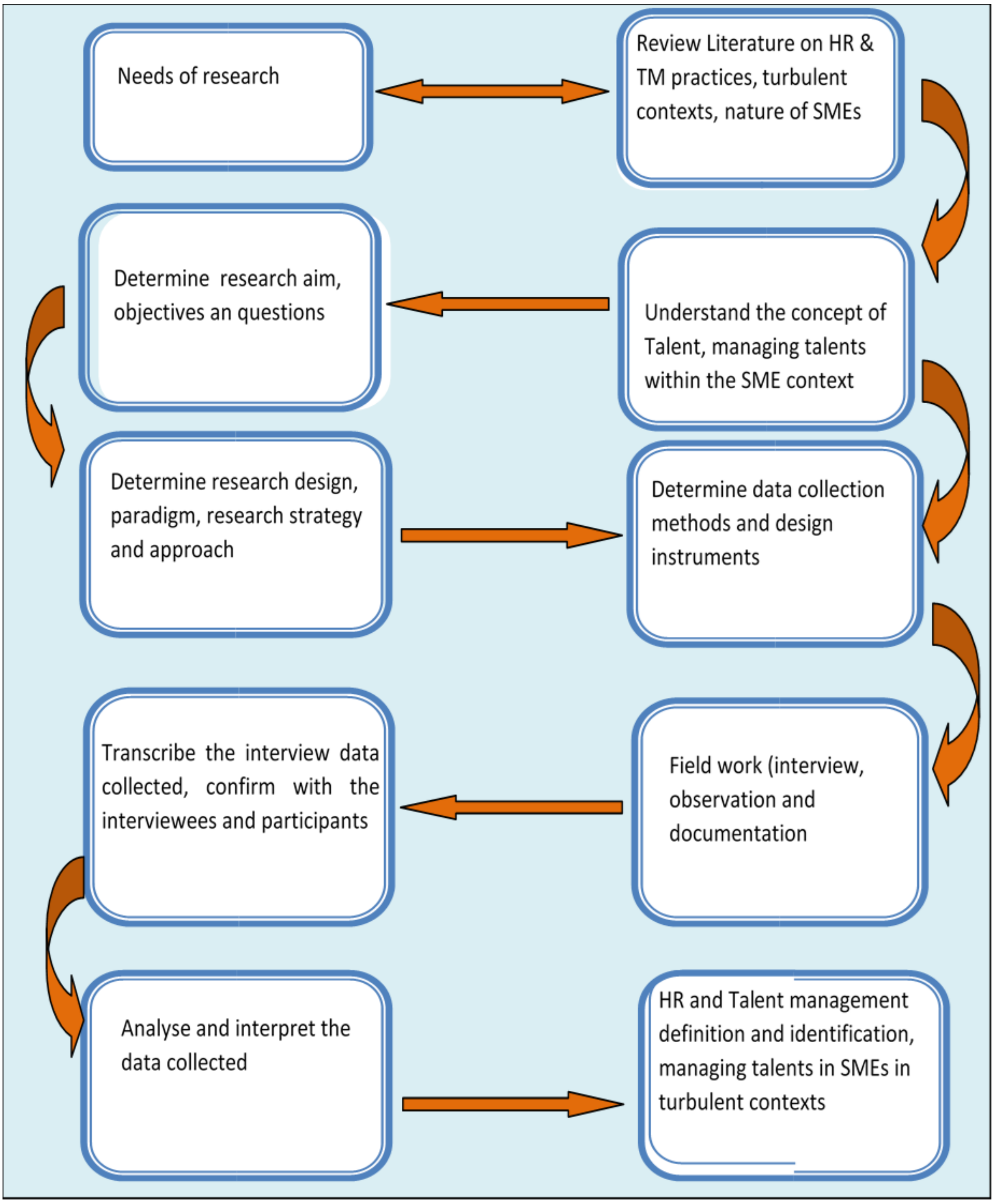
1.4.2 Research Questions

1. To what extent will Brexit and Covid-19 impact TM within SMEs in the UK?
2. How do owners in SMEs in the UK perceive the influence of turbulent events (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19) on managing talents?
3. How do managers in SMEs in the UK perceive the influence of turbulent events (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19) on managing talents?
4. How do employees in SMEs in the UK perceive the influence of turbulent events (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19) on managing?

1.5 Methodological Approach

As Figure 1.5 shows, the first stage of this study involved gathering secondary data from various sources, including company websites, employee handbooks, and articles, on HRM and TM practices in SMEs, HRM in a turbulent environment, and managing people in the SME context. Additional secondary data sources included books and journals, which aided in developing a thorough understanding of the various variables affecting the UK economy's turbulent nature and informality. Following this study stage, a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews with owners, managers, and employees of two (2) SME case companies are conducted. When used with documentation method (Bowen, 2009), this approach generates rich data that paints a complete picture of SMEs' employee-employer relations. The information gleaned from these interviews aids in the comprehension of HR and TM practices in the SME sector in a turbulent environment. Transcripts of interviews are then analysed using coding and thematic analysis.

Figure: 1.5 Methodological Approach



(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

As described in Chapter 5, the thesis employs a case study approach. Case studies investigate phenomena in a realistic environment by integrating numerous sources to compare theory and reality (Najeeb, 2014). The case studies in this thesis focused on Engineering and Construction SMEs that meet the OECD and EU definition of an 'SME,' classified as a business with between 10 and 250 employees (European Commission, 2003). This study examines various factors, including the relationships between managers and employees and their institutional environments. This study surveyed owners, managers, and employees of SMEs in the UK. The reason for focusing on SMEs is that the majority lack dedicated HR departments (Psychogios *et al.*, 2016). Hence, owners and managers make strategic decisions when it comes to HRM.

1.6 Contribution of the Research

The study is significant because it managed to develop and propose a dual conceptual framework (*i.e.*, integrated institutional resource-based view model) towards HRM and TM in solving management issues in SMEs in the UK in the phase of uncertainties like Brexit and Covid-19. Also, this research resulted in the introduction of various practices and strategies to better manage talent in the SME context. These strategies in the form of recommendations are solutions to better acquire and retain talent in the SME business sector to reduce talent gaps and challenges. The strategies as outcomes can act as guidelines to HR practitioners and various managers on how to better attract and retain talent efficiently and effectively organisations, most especially SMEs in the UK during a time of turbulence.

This thesis contributes to the debate on TM by addressing three (3) main research gaps raised in the literature. Firstly, (a) by presenting data gathered from two (2) selected case SMEs in the UK (*i.e.,* Engineering and Construction), the study provides detailed information concerning TM practices in SMEs: the current state of TM in the UK SMEs. Specifically, the study explores the extent to which SME organisations in the UK engage in TM. Secondly, (b) by conducting analysis and developing a theoretical model of TM in SMEs, the study refers to the lack of conceptual frameworks of TM in SMEs. The findings are grounded in empirical research and are built on the basis of identified actions undertaken by SMEs: the applicability of the notion of TM in the SME context. The TM practices are possibly different in SMEs mostly due to distinct structural and organisational factors (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). This thesis discusses alternative approaches to TM – and presents a dual conceptual framework of understanding the concepts of TM approaches in SMEs, which may widen the theoretical discussion about the boundaries of the phenomenon. Thirdly, (c) the study responds to the call for more context specific research. The growing complexity and unpredictability of the environment in which SMEs operate generate a unique set of organisational, coordination, and management challenges (Morley and Collings, 2004; Tatoglu *et al.,* 2016; Morley and Heraty, 2021). This is mainly because company activities operate in many countries and employ diverse national origins (Scullion and Linehan, 2005). Hence, TM enables SME companies to develop the basic skill sets to remain competitive. This was the impetus for this study, which resulted in exploratory research of TM practices in SME operating businesses in the UK during turbulent times like Brexit and Covid-19. These constraints and uncertainties provide a shred of compelling research evidence to dismantle these inherent limitations and gaps on TM as a management practice and as a component of HRM. Moreover, this presents the

SME owner/manager and employee perspectives while mapping HR and TM practices. Such a viewpoint is rarely investigated, as most research assumes the perspective of the HR manager or specialist.

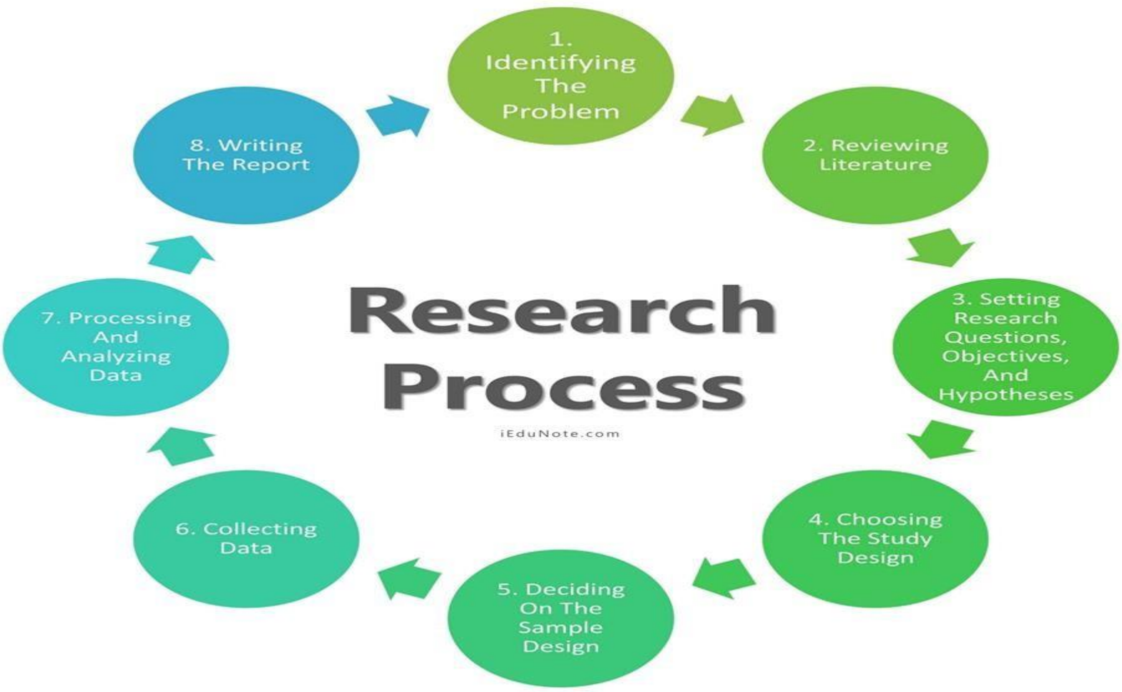
While solving the problem, the researcher provides this study as a proactive scholarly tool in solving challenges faced in the SME sector in relation to managing talents. This is essentially important as this brings on board effective measures in the attraction and retention of talent which significantly improve organisational and environmental competitiveness. The study provides recommendations to several aspects into which the research was investigating. It is hoped that these will help to ensure that various stakeholders (*i.e.*, owners, managers and employees) concerned will take proactive and practical measures in decision making. They may also discuss with one another effectively in areas involving HRM and TM in the context of attracting, developing and retention of talent.

It is imperative that HR departments set the stage for success by attracting, developing and retaining capable employees. There is a need for organisations to establish TM practices, strategies and new approaches to find, develop, motivate and retain highly skilled and talented employees. The current study assist HR and line managers, in particular, with the necessary information and strategic talent plan to identify people whose talent retention is critical. Moreover, the study ensures that strategic, talent driven organisations endeavouring to win the talent war within a competitive global economy, adopt a long term, integrated and systematic view of their talent, and the supply and demand in the market. It is hoped that this study will assist organisations in identifying TM strategies and processes and practices that can be used to attract, select, develop, evaluate and retain talent during unstable environments. Furthermore, it is believed that this study will motivate other researchers to further investigate areas that are not covered in this work. The study was valuable as it represented an assessment of the current HR and TM practices at the participating SMEs in the UK in turbulent contexts and could be used as a baseline for future improvements. The primary data collected from the cases studies could be meaningful to them itself, while the generalisation of the results to other or similar SMEs could benefit them in general and in different settings.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into the following eight (8) chapters: (as seen from the research process in figure 1.7).

Figure: 1.7 Outline of the Thesis



Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter summarises and introduces the start of the research. Then, the rationale for studying HRM and TM in the SME sector in uncertain times (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19) is addressed, followed by the study's aims, objectives, questions, methodological approach, and contribution. Finally, the outline of the thesis is elaborated.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Underpinnings and Contexts

The chapter begins with an introduction. The theoretical underpinnings include ideas related to HR and TM practices in SMEs. A dual and integrated conceptual framework is utilised to represent the themes and constructs and drive the research forward. Finally, a summary of this chapter is provided.

Chapter 3 & 4: Research Literature Review

The literature review chapter focuses on three (3) primary themes. First, SMEs in the UK, HRM and TM in SMEs in the UK (see Chapter 3), and HRM and TM in SMEs in the UK in turbulent environments (see Chapter 4). It starts with definitions of SMEs' importance and role in job creation and GDP contribution to the economy. Next, the chapter delves into the opportunities and challenges that SMEs confront. Following that, it assesses the literature on HRM, TM practices in SMEs, and the discussion over the formalisation and informalisation of SMEs. Next, TM processes, practices, and challenges are reviewed and addressed through a three-pronged approach: talent identification, attraction, development, and retention. Finally, a chapter summary is provided.

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology chapter follow the literature review, thoroughly examining the study's methodological issues and the techniques necessary to address the research questions and objectives. It begins with the research paradigm. Next, the methodology is explained in detail, with examples of methods used to conduct fieldwork and collect the desired data. Next, the research design, sampling strategy, overview of the participants, justification for the purposive sampling approach, data collection approach, presentation of data sources, and discussion of reliability, validity, and ethical issues are discussed in detail. This chapter also includes critical information about the researchers' overall approach and how practical issues were addressed during fieldwork. Finally, this chapter is summarised.

Chapter 6: Research Data Findings and Analysis

This chapter discusses the results, analysis, and techniques used to create themes from qualitative data. First, it presents interviews and data analysed using thematic analysis and NVivo 12 software. It then delves into the qualitative results obtained via semi-structured interviews and documentation method. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Chapter 7: Discussion of Research Data Findings

This chapter examines the study's results and links them to theory and literature. In addition, the research's contributions to the literature and practice are discussed in this chapter. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the research's aim and objectives, this part provides the study's findings and suggestions. Furthermore, this part addresses the study's shortcomings as well as future research recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

The employment landscape evolves as organisations confront demographic and economic challenges such as increasing life expectancy, decreasing birth rates and increased human capital mobility (Beechler and Woodward, 2009: Schuler *et al.,* 2011: Santana and Valle-Cabrera, 2021). In addition, the capacity to recruit, motivate and retain people will become more complex as turnover costs rise (Meyskens *et al.,* 2009: Collings and Scullion, 2012). The growing difficulty in identifying the right talents in the labour market is causing TM problems related to the futureproofing of an organisation's human capital pool. In addition, the difficulties are creating a workforce that can keep up with technological advances and the varying expectations of the job relationship among baby boomers, generations X and Y (Pelster *et al.,* 2013). These skills shortages underscore the necessity for organisations to adopt TM strategic initiatives (Al Ariss *et al.,* 2014).

Sparrow *et al*. (2014) emphasise the need to reconsider the knowledge of the conceptualisation and application of TM as attracting and keeping talent becomes more complex. Because of economic development, demographic changes, personnel characteristics, and changing attitudes and ideas about work, TM practices are critical in the corporate environment (Doh *et al.,* 2014). The thesis adds to the theoretical knowledge of HR and TM practices in UK SMEs in a volatile environment. It sheds light on how institutional and resource-based theory may be combined to understand HR and TM practices in UK SMEs in unstable and challenging settings (Sparrow *et al.,* 2014). To the researcher's knowledge, this is the very first investigation into the topic to examine HR and TM practices in SMEs in the UK in light of the economic uncertainty (*i.e.*, Brexit and Covid-19). Finally, it examines the reasons for adopting and implementing TM practices in two case study organisations in the SME sector.

2.2 HRM & TM Models and Theories

According to HRM scholars, there has been a foundation for developing HRM theory, namely human capital theory, transaction cost theory, institutional theory, resource dependence theory, agency theory, and resource-based view (Festing, 2012). These have made a significant contribution to aid the development of the HRM field (Khan, 2011). In addition, these theories have generally been used to understand the determinants of HR practices and explain how internal and external organisational contexts influence HRM policies and practices (Schuler and Jackson, 2005; Kramar, 2014: Cooke, 2018: Dickmann, 2021). The two (2) theoretical perspectives that underpin the relationships depicted in the research model – the resource-based view (RBV) and institutional theory – are discussed below:

2.2.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource based view (RBV) is a way of viewing the firm and consecutively of imminent strategy. The RBV was popularized by Hamel and Prahalad in their book "Competing for the Future" (1996). RBV considers the firm as a bundle and collection of resources (Ferreira *et al.*, 2011). These resources, and the way that they are combined, make firms different from one another, enable them to provide products and services to the market and in turn allow a firm gain competitive advantage (Saridakis *et al.*, 2017). Firms assert that people, whether they are technology specialists, customer service professionals, or visionary managers, are the basis of their competitive edge.

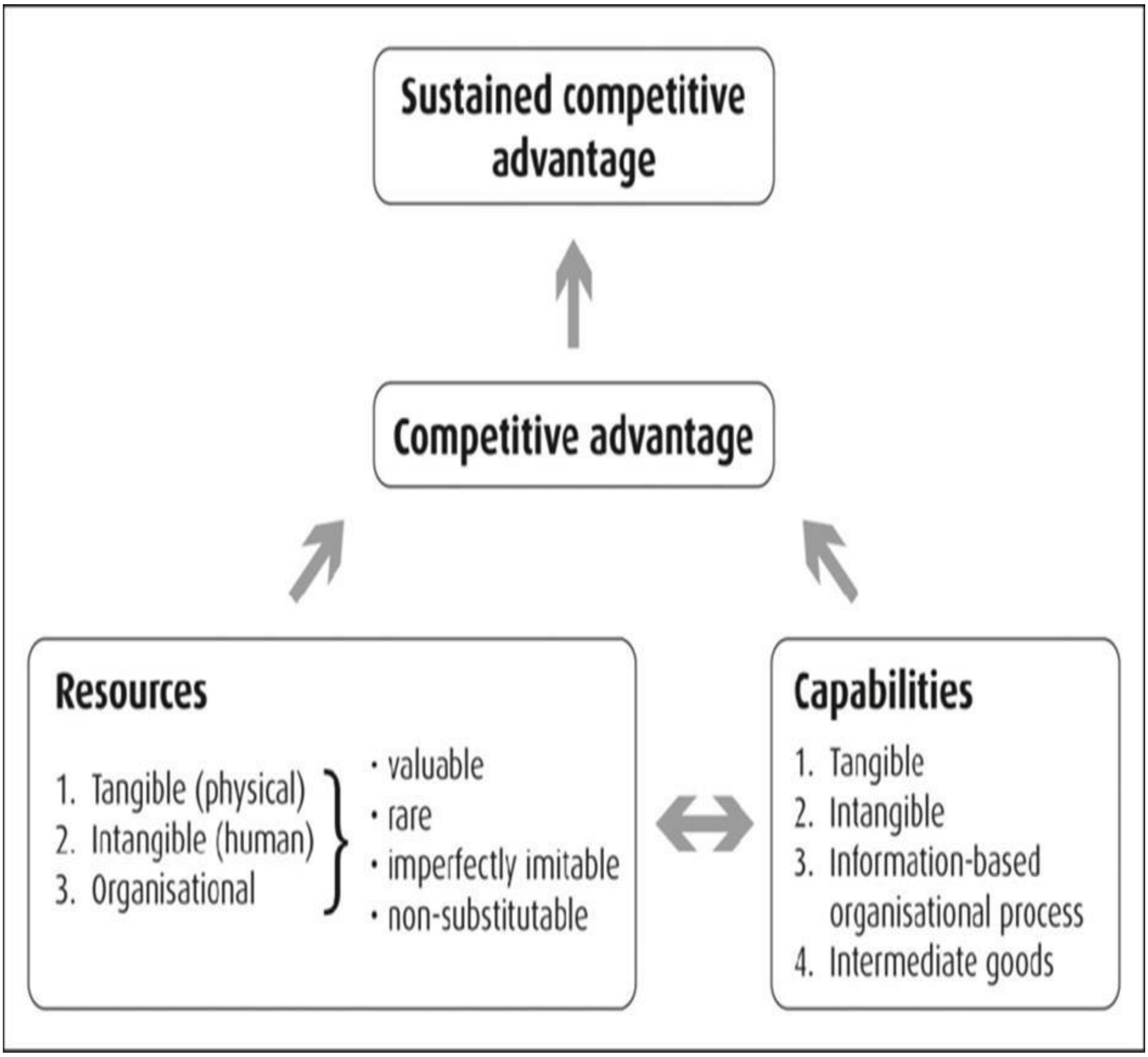
At a period of unprecedented technological advancement, HR paradoxically determines success or failure. The RBV takes an ‘inside-out’ view or firm-specific perspective on why organisations succeed or fail in the market place (Dicksen, 1996: Madhani, 2010: Chigara, 2021). As shown in the figure 2.2.1, resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991) make it possible for businesses to develop and maintain competitive advantages, to utilize these resources and competitive advantages for superior performance (Kabue and Kilika, 2016: Baia *et al.*, 2020). Resources that cannot be easily transferred or purchased, that require an extended learning curve or a major change in the organisation climate and culture, are more likely to be unique to the organisation and, therefore, more difficult to imitate by competitors.

According to Barney valuable resource must enable a firm to do things and behave in ways that lead to high sales, low costs, high margins, or in others ways add financial value to the firm (Barney, 1986: Madhani, 2010: Anning-Dorson, 2021). Barney also emphasized that resources are valuable when they enable a firm to conceive or implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness (Barney, 1991: Barney *et al.*, 2012). RBV helps managers of firms to understand why competencies can be perceived as a firms’ most important asset and, at the same time, to appreciate how those assets can be used to improve business performance (Brahma and Chakraborty, 2011). RBV of the firm accepts that attributes related to past experiences, organisational culture and competencies are critical for the success of the firm (Hamel and Prahalad, 1996: Madhani, 2010: Coleman *et al.*, 2013).

The resource-based perspective of business has been accepted among SHRM academics and literature (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2015). This is due to its popularity in more extensive strategic literature and its ability to define the relationship between HRM and economic performance (Wright and Haggerty, 2003: Paauwe and Farndale, 2012: Kaufman, 2015: Chang *et al.,* 2021). Because the resource-based perspective asserts that a firm's competitive advantage stems from the internal resources it manages (Barney, 1991: Brahma and Chakraborty, 2011: Barney *et al.,* 2011). RBV establishes a valid basis for HRM scholars to claim that people and human resources contribute to overall firm performance and impact strategy formulation (Allen and Wright, 2006: Kaufman, 2015). In addition, the RBV demonstrates the critical nature of developing a valuable collection of resources and combining them in novel and dynamic ways to achieve business success (Ambrosini, 2007: Kim *et al.*, 2015).

According to the resource-based approach, HR systems contribute to sustained competitive advantage (Barney and Mackey, 2016). This is by developing firm-specific competencies that result in complex social interactions ingrained in a firm's history and culture and generate tacit organisational knowledge (Wright and McMahan, 1992: Paauwe and Farndale, 2017). Furthermore, RBV implies that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage by implementing strategies. This capitalises on their internal strengths through responding to environmental opportunities while mitigating external threats and avoiding internal weakness (Barney, 1991: West *et al.*, 2015). Hence, to establish a competitive edge, the resources accessible to businesses must be varied amongst competitors. These resources are not simply attainable. Thus, the heterogeneity of units as far as HR is concerned contributes to competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Chadwick and Flinchbaugh 2021). Also, businesses may leverage their human capital to achieve a competitive edge (Pfeffer, 1994).

Figure: 2.2.1 The Resource-Based View Model



(Source: Barney, 1991)

A company achieves a competitive advantage by acquiring and developing, integrating, and successfully utilising its physical, human, and organisational resources in ways that are difficult to replicate (Barney, 1991: Madhani, 2012: Ferreira and Fernandes, 2017). Therefore, companies should seek sources of competitive advantage, both physical and intellectual. The critical ideas of RBV are that resources that are valued, scarce, unique, and unreplaceable, will provide a competitive advantage (Ferreira *et al.*, 2022). In this context, 'value' is defined as resources that enable the organisation to capitalise on opportunities or mitigate dangers (Newbert, 2008: Lengnick-Hall, 2011). 'Rarity' is defined as a resource unavailable to a substantial portion of an organisation's existing or prospective rivals (Barney, 1991: Cardeal and Antonio, 2012). The term 'imitation' refers to the difficulties other businesses have in replicating the resources for their use (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2010). Finally, 'non-substitutability' implies that rivals will be unable to reproduce the gain through more resources (Barney, 1991: Madhani, 2010: Jenkins, 2014). When all these criteria are satisfied, the business or organisation is considered to possess resources capable of sustaining a competitive edge over time (Allen and Wright, 2007: Liu, 2013).

Despite widespread popularity, the RBV has been criticised. Priem and Butler (2001) state that RBV is not a viable theory. Their argument is centred on two critical points (Priem and Butler, 2001: Priem *et al.*, 2013: Kaufman, 2015). First, they demonstrate that the RBV is tautological, implying that its critical statements are factually accurate and immune to empirical proof. In other words, the opposing idea that companies have a competitive advantage is irrational in the absence of substantial resources. Their second significant critique of RBV as a theory is that it has a limited capacity for a prescription (Priem and Butler, 2001: Barney and Mackey, 2016). Priem and Butler (2001) highlight four limitations on the application of RBV theory:

1. The theory's characteristics of resources that may create and maintain strategic advantage are not susceptible to management manipulation.
2. The context in which the concept applies is not defined.
3. The definition of resources is all-inclusive.
4. Furthermore, the idea is static rather than dynamic.

Numerous aspects of RBV must be addressed, including its contributions and limits. It emphasises an organisation's internal strength, implying that it may be used to accomplish desired objectives (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003: Delery and Gupta, 2016). Additionally, it is asserted that RBV exposes a great deal about SHRM philosophy (Armstrong, 2009: Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014: Armstrong and Taylor 2020). It strengthens the case for HR's strategic role. It emphasises the critical significance of HRM strategies in creating human capital and, ultimately, supporting organisations' growth (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; Katou, 2012). As such, it can serve as a theoretical framework for SHRM research. In addition, it demonstrates the rationale of investing in workers through systematic HRM techniques and further encourages human resource development.

RBV has been criticised for failing to account for an organisation's external environment (Boxall and Purcell, 2011: Paauwe and Boon, 2018). For example, Boxall and Purcell (2011) point out that specific organisations have intrinsic advantages worldwide. They live in a moderately sophisticated civilisation with modern technologies and a well-educated workforce (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). RBV overestimates the individuality of organisations within a single industry and commonalities between sectors (Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Gelens *et al.*, 2013). Hamel and Prahalad (1994) pronounce that the similarities may be due to a necessary competence that is more likely a need than a source of competitive advantage (Yunis *et al.*, 2013. Finally, the coherence of the resource description must be questioned. Nanda (1996), for example, contends that it is understood as a company's strengths and strategic resources (Feldman, 2020).

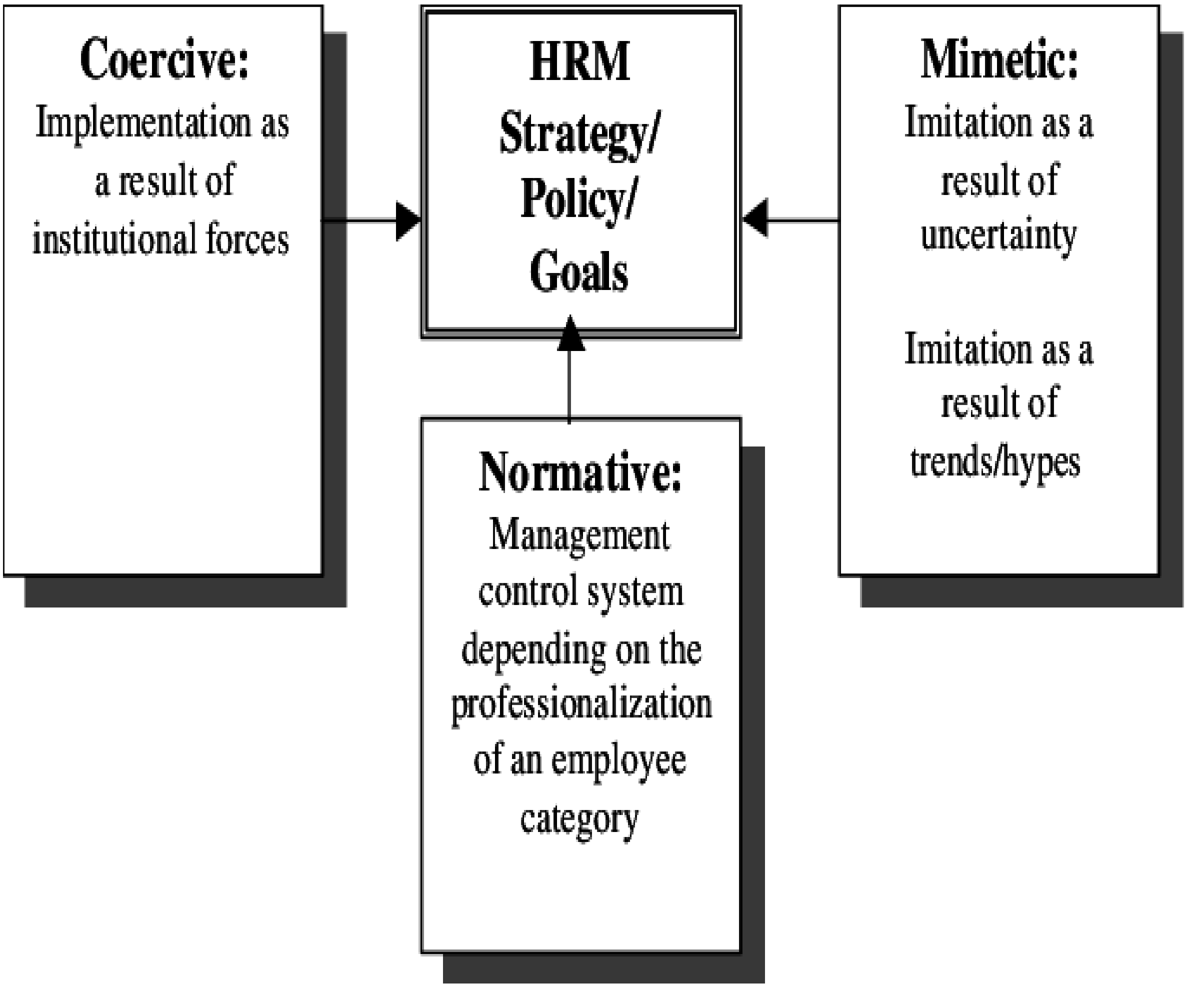
Despite these criticisms, even critics agree that the RBV has had a significant impact on SHRM research (Kaufman, 2015). Thus, an effort to emphasise the internal components of the organisation in analysing competitive advantage has been helpful (Priem and Butler, 2001: Guest *et al.*, 2012). As a result, RBV has made significant contributions to SHRM research and, more specifically, HRM research (Wright *et al.*, 2001: Delery and Roumpi, 2017). According to Wright *et al.* (2001), the RBV has played an essential role in the growth of HRM discipline and served as a backdrop for most SHRM theories (Delery, 1998; Colbert, 2004: Boxall, 2014). This is mainly because the RBV has shifted the focus of strategy literature away from external factors (such as industry position). And internal business resources as sources of competitive advantage (Wright *et al.*, 2001; Kaufman, 2015).

The growing recognition of internal resources has given HR's contention that people are critical to a company's success as sources of competitive advantage (Kaufman, 2015). For this reason, there has been an ongoing effort to root SHRM from a resource-based viewpoint conceptually. Wright *et al.* (2001) contend that HR strategies on value, imitability and substitutability cannot offer a long-term competitive advantage as competitors may easily duplicate (Brahma and Chakraborty, 2011; Miller, 2019). Instead, the human capital pool has a higher potential to serve as a source of long-term competitive advantage. Hence, for a human capital pool to provide a competitive advantage, it must have high skill levels and a desire to participate in productive behaviour (Wright *et al.*, 2001; Wright and McMahan, 2011; Delery and Roumpi, 2017).

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

According to Paauwe and Boselie (2003), the new institutionalism is a useful theoretical lens for viewing the process of shaping HRM in different contexts (Najeeb, 2014). It has implications around HRM for conceptual modelling and proposal development. It highlights the significance of the organisation's engagement with its environment (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; Paauwe and Farndale, 2012). The argument is founded on short assessments of SHRM criticisms of the resource-based approach, which has been the dominant position in HRM for the past decade. The most common critique of resource-based theory is its failure to account for contextual and institutional context (Evans and Davis, 2005; Evans *et al.*, 2016). Paauwe and Boselie (2003), on the other hand, is of the view that the new intuitionalism adequately accounts for likely institutional differences, which may help in understanding HR practices across institutional contexts (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013. Paauwe and Boselie (2005) and Harney and Dundon (2005) are two examples of scholars that have incorporated the idea in their study (2006).

Figure: 2.2.2 The Institutional Theory Model



(Source: Paauwe and Boselie, 2003)

According to current institutionalism, society's common ideas and expectations influence how organisations should be organised and what procedures, practices, activities, and regulations should be in place (Tempel and Walgenbach, 2007; Rocha and Granerud, 2011). As organisations operate within the constraints imposed by institutional structures, they must follow a specific structure or set of processes. This does not necessarily relate to strategic goals but is acceptable (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Sparrow and Cooper, 2014.). A fundamental premise of contemporary institutionalism is that organisations must conform to institutional norms (Tempel and Walgenbach, 2007; Gray *et al.,* 2015). It is emphasised that an organisation's survival and performance are dependent on its compliance with institutional criteria (Oliver, 1997; Ahmad, 2015). Organisations would become more homogenous due to this (Tempel and Walgenbach, 2007). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe this homogeneity as 'isomorphism' mechanisms: coercive (*i.e.*, political influence and the problem of legitimacy), mimetic (*i.e.,* standard responses to uncertainty), and normative (*i.e.,* professionalisation) (DiMaggio and Powell, 2012 ; Martínez-Ferrero and García-Sánchez, 2017) (as seen in the figure 2.2.2 above).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state that organisations in the same field often have the same organisational structure, culture, and output (DiMaggio and Powell, 2012). Legal companies, for example, are structured as professional partnerships, and business schools provide courses and curriculum that are similar. Isomorphism is a constraining mechanism that leads one unit in a population to resemble other units exposed to the same environmental circumstances (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). The three ways by which organisations in related areas become similar are summarised below, along with examples of how these variables may influence HRM policies and practices:

a. ***Coercive Isomorphism***: is the consequence of regulatory and political pressures. According to institutional theory, the external legal and regulatory environment has an impact on organisational structures (Thornton *et al.,* 2012). In the context of HRM, coercive isomorphism may relate to the impact of the government, labour laws, and labour unions (Bartram, 2011). For example, organisations must change their hiring practices to comply with laws regulating equal employment opportunity, health and safety, and the national minimum wage (Arrowsmith *et al.,* 2003; Parker *et al.,* 2022). For that reason, organisations within the same industrial sector are becoming more homogeneous in terms of HR policies and processes to comply with the same regulatory and external restrictions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Chapman *et al.*, 2018).

b. ***Mimetic Isomorphism:*** Uncertainty-related responses cause this. When confronted with uncertainty or when such processes seem more legitimate or successful, organisations mimic their competitors' techniques (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012). For example, companies may use high-performance work system methods such as rigorous training and performance-based pay in connection to HRM to cope with unexpected circumstances or remain competitive (Paauwe and Farndale, 2017).

c. ***Normative Isomorphism:*** is associated with the professionalisation of employee groups (DiMaggio and Powell, 2012). Members of the same profession may help to create and spread consistent organisational behaviour and structure. Employees in the same occupation often share norms and values shaped by their formal education and the professional conventions formed via professional networking (Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). Accounting, for example, has traditionally been an institutionalised profession regulated by several certifications and regulatory frameworks (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003). These competent people usually occupy equivalent positions inside

> organisations; they bring their professional standards and ideals and encourage similar organisational behaviour. This has the potential to significantly affect the management control system (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; (Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). Similarly, when HR practitioners get similar specialised education and participation in similar trade associations, HR practices may become increasingly comparable across organisations in an industry.

For example, a study of 158 MNC subsidiaries identified considerable differences in host country training, performance assessment and promotion processes, most notably between the United States and Russia, due to the different institutional contexts of the two nations (Bjorkman *et al.*, 2007; Budhwar *et al.*, 2017). For the most part, the institutional theory focuses on how organisations' choices and actions are influenced by institutional elements (Oliver, 1997; Björkman and Gooderham, 2012). As Wright and McMahan (1992) suggest, institutionalisation may help understand the drivers of HRM practices and can serve as a conceptual foundation for IHRM research (Björkman, 2006; Wright and Ulrich, 2017). Furthermore, in contrast to RBV's concentration on internal factors, it places greater attention on the external surroundings. In addition, it is useful in comparisons of HRM practices between countries (ibid, 2006; Horwitz *et al.,* 2015).

There is an ideological contradiction between RBV and new institutionalism (Mellahi *et al.*, 2016). According to the former, organisations can gain from differentiation because of their different internal resources and cost-effective tactics to attain strategic objectives (Chapman *et al.,* 2018). When it comes to institutionalism, organisations are compelled to conform to institutional standards to make intelligent decisions because of the external constraints that force them to be homogenous in their structure, strategy, policies, and practices (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; Raynard *et al.*, 2015). Using a combined strategy that emphasises both resource and institutional capital shows that they can coexist in a healthy environment (Oliver, 1997; Doh *et al.*, 2017). In a highly institutionalised society, competitive advantage and long-term performance result from their ability to adapt more effectively and adequately to institutional components than their rivals (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; Guest *et al.*, 2012).

2.3 Study's Proposed Theoretical Framework (*i.e.*, integrated institutional resource-based view)

Scase (1996) argues that cumulative theory development is constrained by insufficient evidence and empirically particular theories. Attempts at research have concentrated only on the determinants and features of HRM and TM in SMEs, at the expense of a more holistic view that considers the entire domain of HRM in context (Arthur and Hendry, 1992; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021). The theoretical framework given in this research (as seen in figure 2.3) is an attempt to provide a more comprehensive lens through which the factors and practices of HRM and TM in SMEs are at a moment of uncertainty (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19). The framework considers the complex interaction of variables that may affect HRM and TM in an SME setting (Duberley and Walley, 1995). The theoretical foundation animates critiques at mainstream HRM and TM models while also offering a solid foundation for understanding how and why organisations have chosen various parts of HRM and TM. This is not a unique concept; instead, it builds on strategy and labour relations (Kochan *et al.*, 1986).

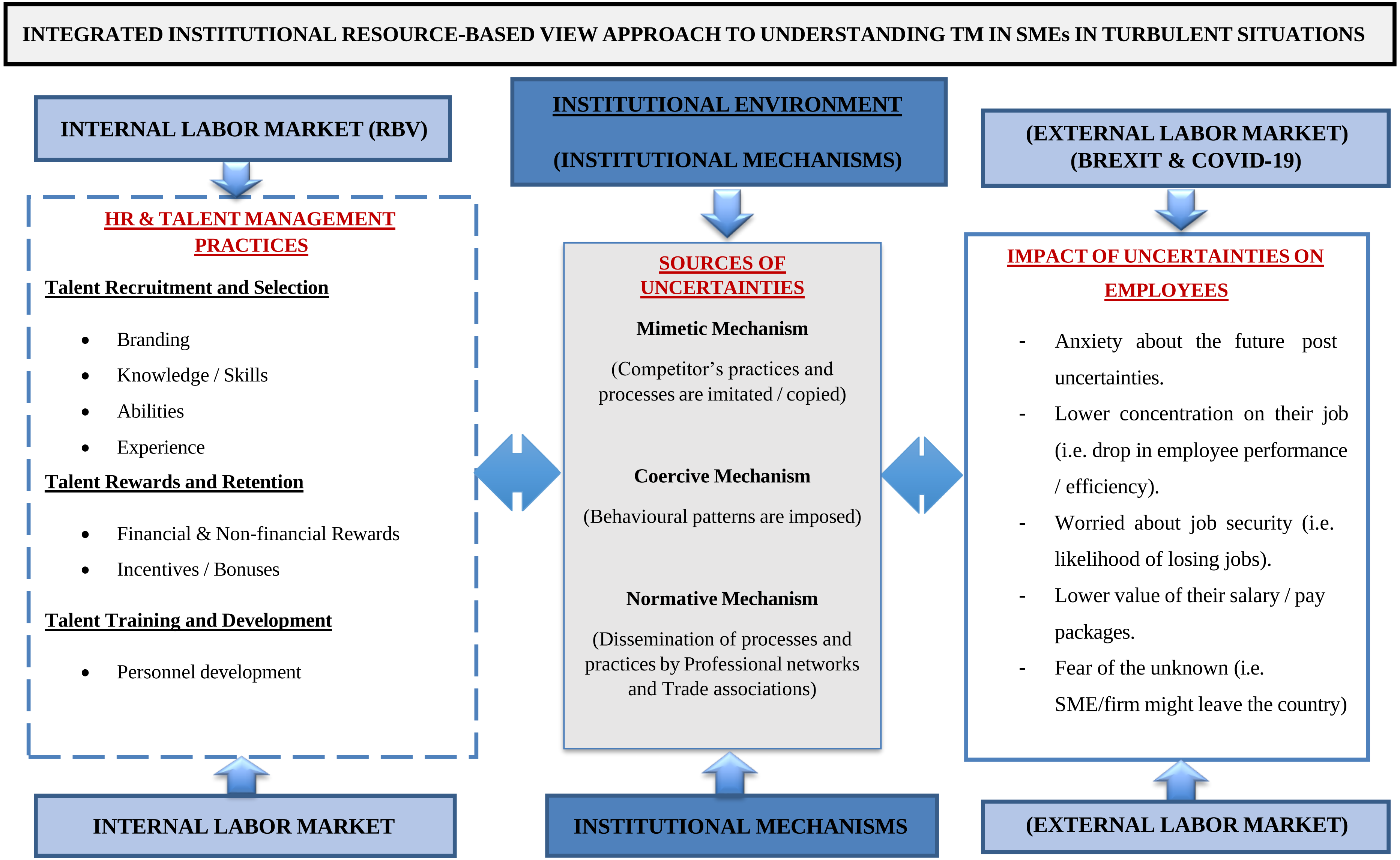
Like previous methods, these approaches emphasise the relevance of integrated institutional resource-based and environmental factors, strategic choice, and the role of values and ideologies in creating HRM strategies. This method of modelling recalls prior work by Lewin *et al.* (1988). The paradigm enables a shift away from rational and planned approaches to HRM and TM toward emergent processes that incorporate both market and institutional variables. It is critical to highlight that the framework emphasises the influence of external structural variables on HRM parameters. It implies that the basic form HRM and TM adopt is likely to rely on firm-specific reactions. Thus, the study captures difficulties and builds a more holistic picture of why HRM and TM in SMEs have been described as having a high degree of heterogeneity and complexity (Cassell *et al.*, 2002; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021). The theoretical framework's validity is derived from the fact that it visually shows and summarises prior research efforts in this field.

Specifically, the framework demonstrates how company size interacts with elements such as labour and product market forces, ownership, managerial style and relationships with customers and suppliers to shape HRM. While these determinants are identical to those impacting large businesses, given SMEs' closeness to the external environment, these factors influence small enterprises in ways that differentiate them from large firms (McMahon, 1995; Nolan and Garavan, 2016). Furthermore, research in SMEs has revealed that people's concerns generally take precedence since they are critical to preserving their competitive edge (Brand and Bax, 2002; Burke, 2011).

SMEs have constraints in terms of time, money, and experience, which is believed to impede the implementation of advanced management methods, hiring HR professionals, and the growth of unions (Storey, 1994; Nolan and Garavan, 2016.). In addition, due to its resource limits, SMEs frequently spend more time adapting to turbulence than they forecast it (Weaven *et al.*, 2021). Thus, SMEs are lauded for their direct and informal approach to HRM. Even when formalisation occurs, it is typically with small organisations' informal, organic management style (Bacon *et al.*, 1996; Edwards and Ram, 2019). From a methodological standpoint, it has been claimed that researchers should study and investigate the entire organisation rather than isolated components (d'Amboise and Muldowney, 1988; Harney, 2021).

This section explains why the current investigation is necessary. First, it is necessary to understand the shape HRM and TM take in SMEs and why they take that form to develop knowledge. Therefore, explaining the type and structure of HR and TM methods applied in the sampled SMEs. Second, following this level of study, the function of external structural variables in moulding the parameters of HRM and TM decisions should be considered before assuming the role of internal influences in deciding the actual shape HRM and TM take. Notably, while operationalising the framework, the emphasis is on comprehension and explanation rather than prediction (Truss, 2002).

Figure: 2.3 Study's Proposed Theoretical Framework


INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCE-BASED VIEW APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING TM IN SMEs IN TURBULENT SITUATIONS
INTERNAL LABOR MARKET (RBV)
INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT
(INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS)
(EXTERNAL LABOR MARKET) (BREXIT & COVID-19)
HR & TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
Talent Recruitment and Selection
Branding
Knowledge / Skills
Abilities
Experience
Talent Rewards and Retention
Financial & Non-financial Rewards
Incentives / Bonuses
Talent Training and Development
Personnel development
SOURCES OF UNCERTAINTIES
Mimetic Mechanism
(Competitor's practices and processes are imitated / copied)
Coercive Mechanism
(Behavioural patterns are imposed)
Normative Mechanism
(Dissemination of processes and practices by Professional networks and Trade associations)
IMPACT OF UNCERTAINTIES ON EMPLOYEES
- Anxiety about the future post uncertainties.
- Lower concentration on their job (i.e. drop in employee performance / efficiency).
- Worried about job security (i.e. likelihood of losing jobs).
- Lower value of their salary / pay packages.
- Fear of the unknown (i.e. SME/firm might leave the country)
INTERNAL LABOR MARKET
INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS
(EXTERNAL LABOR MARKET)

2.4 The rationale for adopting a dual theoretical framework

Organisations are defined as complex assemblages of activities, goals, and values (March, 1981; Scott, 2013). For instance, management has reasons for engaging in HR and TM operations. In addition, individuals being talent managed may have their interpretations of being part of a talent pool (Björkman *et al.*, 2013). In this way, a single theoretical lens is insufficient to adequately convey the intricacies inherent in HR and TM approaches (MacDougall *et al.*, 2014). Beech *et al.* (2005) state that adopting a single perspective indicates that the situation is unique; it can only be viewed from a single vantage point. However, TM in globally functioning businesses is far from straightforward; it is complex (Sheehan *et al.*, 2018). From the definition of the two interrelated notions of talent and TM, there is no one ideal way to establish or implement initiatives to implement the practices.

Besides, TM has two primary stakeholders: employers and employees, each of whom has a distinct set of interests; this complexity necessitates a multi-perspective approach (Thunnissen, 2015). Hence, the complexity inherent in TM includes interactions with individuals from many countries and cultural backgrounds. Glegg *et al.* (2008) propound that when people come to work, they do not abandon their non-work identities; everyone has a complicated personal and everyday cultural existence. In other words, TM as a process of HRM is a complex organisational practice that necessitates a multi-perspective study (Thunnissen, 2015). Furthermore, analysing a challenging people management practice necessitates a scenario-based reading of the circumstance. Without a doubt, the two theoretical lenses help to clarify the TM process from the employer-employee perspective (Raymond *et al.*, 2013).

2.5 Conclusion

The two theories mentioned in this chapter serve as an interpretive framework for analysing the findings from the case studies. However, this is only one critical part of the study's methodology and design.

CHAPTER THREE

HRM AND TM IN SMEs

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct a literature review in numerous areas relating to the study's goals. A literature review summarises research on a particular subject (Creswell, 2014). This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for further inquiry using current research on three core topics described in two (2) chapters. The first theme concerns SMEs. SMEs' significance and current struggles are highlighted and emphasised to bring attention to their inherent features and the crucial need of providing them with support for their growth. It critically examines the origins, definitions, models, theories, and practices of HRM and TM in SMEs. The review discusses TM theory and conceptual frameworks. The practices and processes of TM in SMEs are reviewed and addressed, including talent attraction, development, and retention. The second theme focuses on HRM and TM practices in SMEs in the UK operating in turbulent environments. This chapter explains the logic behind the critical concept of HR and TM practices during a difficult time.

3.2 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

3.2.1 Definition and Classification of SMEs

The definitions of SMEs in the literature differ significantly. Furthermore, definitions differ between various countries, organisations, and, in some cases, across individual countries (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). As a result, there is no one universal definition of an SME. Some studies examine SMEs in terms of finance and total income, whilst others look at the number of workers as a distinguishing factor for SMEs. For example, the IFC, MIGA, and WBG have all established a definition of SMEs based on the number of workers, assets, and annual sales (IFC, 2009). On the other hand, the OECD definition is based on the number of workers and annual turnover (OECD, 2019). In contrast, the EU definition is based on headcount, turnover, or balance sheet total (European Commission, 2003). For a quick reference and more detailed delineation between micro, small and medium sized enterprises see figure 3.2.1 below.

Figure: 3.2.1 Definition and Categorisation of SMEs

Company category	Employees	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

(Source: European Commission, 2003)

The World Bank defines SMEs as businesses with less than 300 workers, assets, and less than $15 million in sales (World Bank, 2013). The OECD defines an SME as an organisation with fewer than 250 workers and an annual revenue or balance sheet of less than $13.1 million (OECD, 2019). The EU defines SME as an organisation with up to 250 employees which makes between €10 and €50 million in annual turnover, or €10 to €43 million in the balance sheet total/assets (European Commission, 2009).

SMEs play a critical role in the economies of many nations due to their substantial contributions to national revenue, employment, exports, innovation, and development activities (Pandya, 2012). Kachembere (2011) reports that SMEs are critical for economic growth and sustainable development at the grassroots level. SMEs contribute significantly to job generation. SMEs constitute the backbone of developed and emerging economies, supporting economic growth, and stabilising during downturns (Varum and Rocha, 2013). They are increasingly viewed as vital contributors to the economy, producing revenue and creating jobs (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Thus, they are viewed as a critical component of economies' growth and productivity (Mason and Brown, 2013).

The EU and other international organisations such as the World Bank, the WTO, and the UN frequently use 'SMEs.' SME owners are driven to expand their firms, foster innovation, and compete in a wide variety of economic sectors (Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018). Why and how this is true is a matter that many countries' developmental policy circles have yet to examine properly. The literature has devoted substantial emphasis to the role of SMEs in employment generation (Harney and Dundon, 2006; Harney and Nolan, 2014). SMEs are widely recognised as the primary engines of economic growth by both governments and practitioners. They assist in the development of the business sector and foster collaboration. In most economies, mainly developed ones such as the US and the UK, SMEs account for considerably over half of total employment, sales, and GDP contribution (Eze *et al.*, 2016). Each year, SMEs are created, but many fail to survive a decade after their creation (Beaver, 2002; Simpson *et al.*, 2012). Numerous variables contribute to the brevity with which small businesses survive. Several important factors contribute to their incapacity to compete against large companies both inside and outside their areas.

Table: 3.2.1 SME Composition in Europe

	Micro	Small	Medium	SMEs	Large	Total
Number of enterprises (1000)	18788	1402	220	20409	43	20452
Share in total (%)	92	7	1	> 99	< 1	100
Number of persons employed (1000)	38890	27062	21957	87909	42895	130805
Share in total (%)	30	21	17	67	33	100
Profit (Billion)	1251	1132	1070	3453	2537	5990
Share in total (%)	21	19	18	58	42	100
Including rounded estimates based on non-confidential data from the year 2007; SMEs (1-249 persons employed); micro-enterprises (1-9 persons employed); small enterprises (10-49 persons employed); medium-sized enterprises (50-249 persons employed); large enterprises (250 or more persons employed)						

(Source: EIM Annual Report on SMEs, 2009)

Large companies frequently garner more government attention and overshadow the critical role of SMEs in developing the economy in which they operate. SMEs are defined in the European economy (as shown in Table 3.2.1) as businesses with less than 250 workers. Nevertheless, SMEs are the backbone of the European economy, accounting for 99% of all businesses and two out of every three jobs (Ceranic and

Popovic, 2009; Varum and Rocha, 2013). Also, SMEs account for 67% of employment and 58% of overall earnings (De Kok *et al.*, 2011; Storey, 2016).

3.2.2 Characteristics of SMEs

While the research demonstrates that SMEs are distinct (De Kok, 2003; De Kok et al., 2011), it also demonstrates that SMEs as a group share some traits that differentiate them from their larger counterparts. For example, SMEs are defined by the employer's dominating position (De Kok, 2003), which makes them less focused on expansion. In addition, they place a high premium on teamwork, informal working practices, operate without full-time supervisors, and frequently lack expertise within the manufacturing process (Jameson, 2000; de Kok and Uhlaner, 2001). Research shows that SMEs' owners and individual workers have more informal personal interactions than in large corporations (Kitching and Marlow, 2013). Also, unpredictability is a primary feature that distinguishes SMEs from large businesses. While big businesses are characterised by internal uncertainty, SMEs are characterised by external uncertainty (Westhead and Storey, 1996; Lai *et al.*, 2016) due to their lack of market power.

3.2.3 Importance of SMEs

There is widespread consensus that SMEs are critical for attaining decent and productive employment since they account for two-thirds of all jobs globally and generate new jobs (ILO, 2015). The significance of SMEs is considerably greater in developing, transition, and crisis economies (World Bank, 2013). However, their socioeconomic situation is markedly different from developed economies regarding the institutional framework, norms, resources, and infrastructure (Psychogios *et al.*, 2016).

SMEs contribute to every area and industry – from agriculture to manufacturing and services – and create employment quicker than more significant firms. In addition, they contribute to the expansion of productive capability and the absorption of appropriate resources at all levels of the economy, allowing economic systems to be more flexible and allowing collaboration between small and large businesses (Subhan *et al.*, 2013).

Figure: 3.2.3 Estimated number of businesses in the UK private sector and their associated employment and turnover, by the size of business, the start of 2020

	Businesses	Employment *thousands*	Turnover[1] *£ millions*
All businesses	5,980,520	27,732	4,346,969
SMEs (0-249 employees)	5,972,685	16,836	2,270,229
Small businesses (0-49 employees)	5,936,545	13,302	1,576,540
With no employees[2]	4,567,775	4,966	315,627
All employers	1,412,745	22,766	4,031,341
of which:			
1-9 employees	1,156,925	4,196	615,251
10-49 employees	211,845	4,140	645,662
50-249 employees	36,140	3,534	693,689
250 or more employees	7,835	10,896	2,076,740

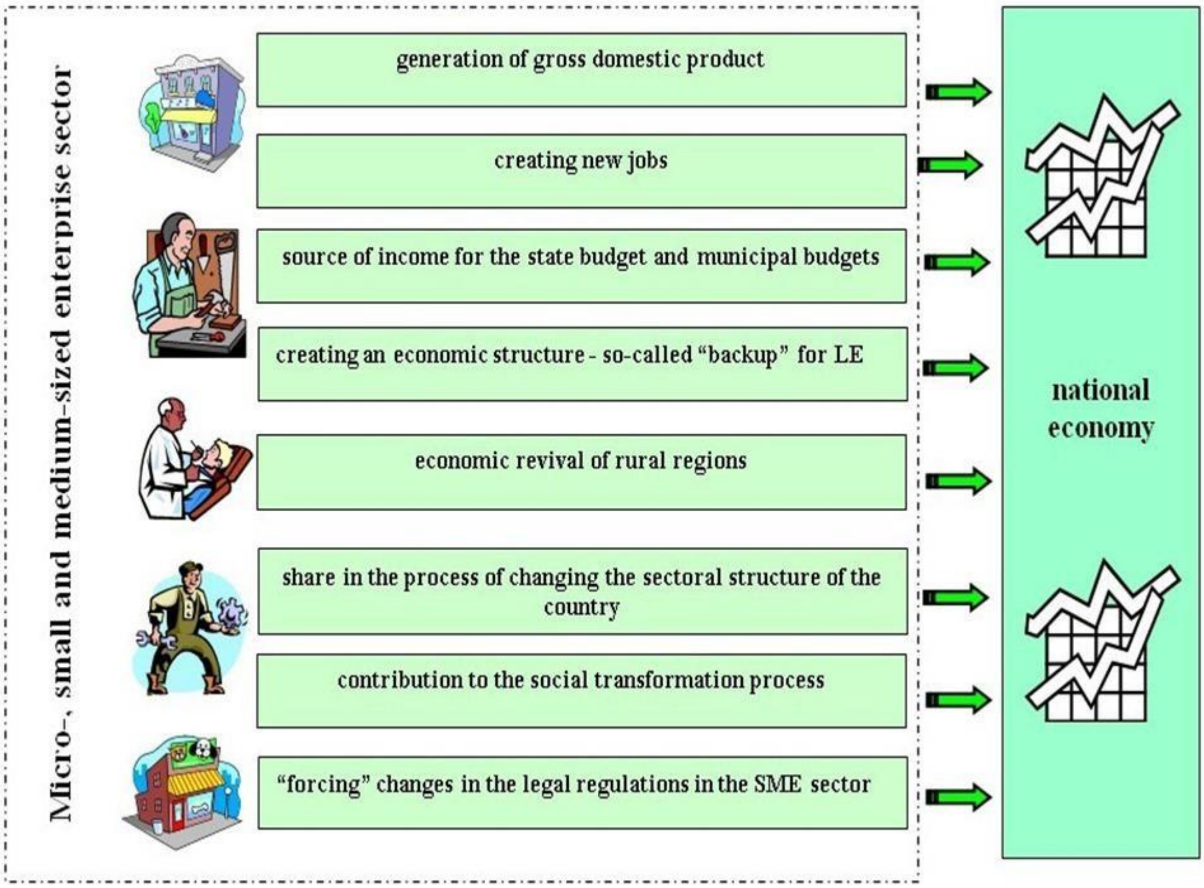
1. Total turnover figures exclude Section K (financial and insurance activities) where turnover is not available on a comparable basis.

2. "With no employees" comprises sole proprietorships and partnerships with only a self-employed owner manager(s) and companies with one employee, assumed to be a working proprietor.

(Source: Business Population Estimates for the UK: Statistical Release – Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2020)

Additionally, SMEs contribute to economic growth by producing jobs, expanding rural and urban labour forces, and bringing sustainability and innovation to the whole economy (Subhan *et al.*, 2013). SMEs substantially impact income distribution, tax revenue, employment, family income stability, and resource use effectiveness (as shown in figure 3.2.3 above). SMEs account for 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 70% of total employment in low-income nations. They account for 70% of GDP and 95% of total employment in middle-income nations (Subhan *et al.*, 2013). In general, SMEs create productive jobs and produce revenue in both emerging and merging economies (as seen in figure 3.2.3 below).

Figure: 3.2.3 The role of SMEs in the national economy



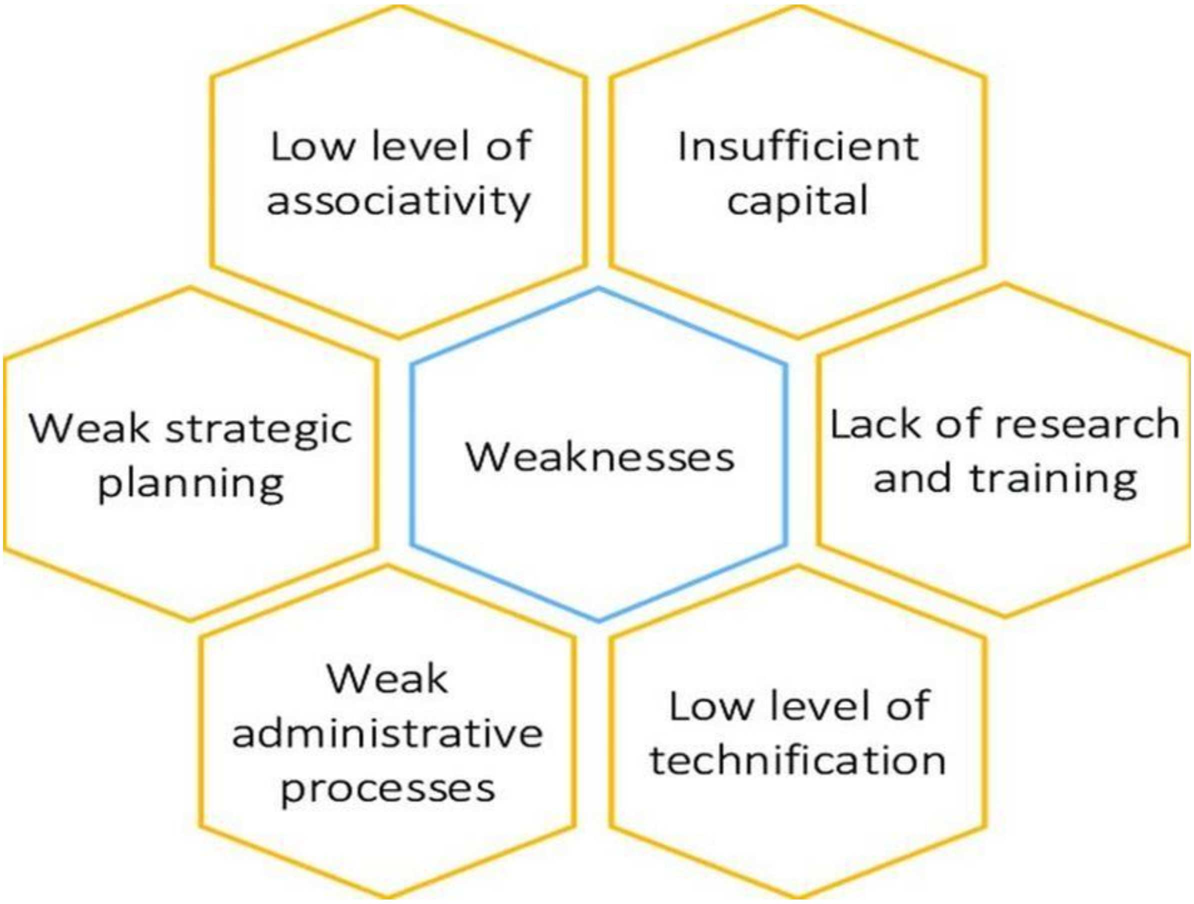
(Source: Wach, 2004)

3.2.4 Constraints and Challenges of SMEs

Despite their ability to contribute to the global economy, SMEs face various obstacles (Newberry, 2006). According to the EIU (2009), a lack of financial resources and investment capital is one of the most critical hurdles to development for small businesses in emerging, transition, and crisis economies (Herbane, 2010; Smallbone *et al.*, 2012; Eggers, 2020). Recent worldwide economic events, such as the 2008 global financial crisis and the 2009–2010 Eurozone crisis, have influenced the economy of SMEs (Harrison and Baldock, 2015; Cowling *et al*., 2018). On a worldwide scale, SMEs have competed against other SMEs and huge MNCs. As a result of internationalisation, small businesses have become more inventive to maintain their competitive edge (Boermans and Roelfsema, 2016; Saridakis *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, they must think more creatively about cost-cutting and efficiency-enhancing measures. Simultaneously, they face a conundrum about their capacity to spend on R & D.

According to a recent poll, around 3% of SME businesses engage in new technology and product research and development. By contrast, more than 80% of them advocate for technology produced by larger corporations (Khazragui, 2011). Due to a lack of resources and technical developments, the latter influences their internationalisation process. These issues jeopardise the viability of SMEs, resulting in high failure rates in a wide range of economies worldwide, both developed and developing (Switzer and Huang, 2007). Thus, various management methods to assist SME development and expansion in developed countries have emerged (Newberry, 2006). SMEs in developing, transitional, and crisis economies are subjected to a combination of these techniques. However, much research has thrown doubt on their relevance in SMEs, particularly in non-Western cultures (Psychogios *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, much of the business literature contains shocking data on the inability of SMEs to successfully fulfil their role as the backbone of their economies (McEvoy, 1984).

Figure: 3.2.4 Challenges of SMEs



Despite a broad range of economic reforms implemented in most countries to improve the operational efficiency of this sector, they continue to confront several limitations and difficulties that act as roadblocks to their point of operation (see above figure 3.2.4). First, there is a shortage of money to support their activities, leaving them susceptible to external shocks from global market rivalry brought on by liberalised trade (Arthur, 2007). Second, SMEs do not invest time and effort in establishing connections and collaborations with NGOs, governments, and other organisations, making it challenging to influence government policy development affecting their businesses. Third, they must compete with big companies for raw supplies and labour, yet their insufficient funding makes them less marketable (Arthur, 2007). Fourth, they also lack access to current market knowledge due to their incapacity to research, limiting their ability to discover and capitalise on new possibilities (Arthur, 2007).

SMEs are also more likely to struggle with formal monitoring and evaluation requirements to enhance their operations. They find it challenging to spend significantly on such activities due to their financial inability (UNIDO, 2002). Additionally, SMEs' inability to fund operations restricts their expansion, which results in the underutilisation of most of their equipment and staff, depriving them of scale economies. Consequently, a lack of economies of scale may result in a high per-unit cost of their products and services on the global market, leading to their lack of competitiveness in global marketplaces. While big companies have an easier time gaining direct access to foreign markets, SMEs face significant barriers due to the high cost of intermediation for smaller initiatives.

According to preliminary data, uncertainty affects SMEs because they have fewer resources and are less resilient to unanticipated shocks or turbulence (Ghosal and Ye, 2015). Uncertainty has been demonstrated to significantly impact a business's decision-making processes (Baker *et al.*, 2016). Due to financial and human resource restrictions, SMEs cannot participate in the contingency planning necessary to properly deal with uncertainties and unanticipated events such as Brexit and Covid-19. While SMEs have expanded their prospects over the previous decade, they continue to confront several obstacles, most notably in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. Due to a lack of institutional support and resources, it is difficult to capitalise on future possibilities.

Human resources are critical for SMEs operating in unstable environments because they provide the necessary competitive advantage through their expertise and experience, particularly when they lack the financial resources to invest significantly in developing new technologies and innovations. Throughout the preceding decades, SMEs expanded at a breakneck pace. However, due to the enormous pressures brought about by globalisation and substantial multinational firms, an increasing number of such enterprises are now fighting for existence (Mulhern and Stewart, 2003). Due to a lack of resources, notably financial and human capital, SMEs are more susceptible throughout the development stages (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Given the significance of SMEs to the national economy, it is unfortunate that HRM and TM practices receive less attention in SME research (Burke, 2011), much more so during a turbulent time.

3.3 Human Resource Management in SMEs

HRM within an organisation is concerned with the recruitment, management, and direction of people to ensure the most effective and efficient human resources to accomplish organisational goals (Opatha, 2010; Armstrong, 2010; Stone *et al.*, 2020). HRM is a component of business management that focuses on the human element. It is mainly accountable for recruiting, selecting, training, evaluating, and rewarding workers to maximise their contribution to their performance (Stredwick, 2013; Ahammad, 2017; Stone *et al.*, 2020). According to Stone (2005), HRM is defined as the effective use of people to accomplish the organisation's strategic business goals and ensure individual workers' satisfaction (Dartey-Baah and Harlley, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2015; Stone *et al.*, 2020). This concept implies that an organisation's objectives are contingent upon the productivity of its employees.

HRM has been defined as the process of recruiting, training, evaluating, compensating employees, supervising workers, and responding to their labour relations, health and safety, and fairness concerns (Dessler, 2005; Mathis *et al.*, 2016; Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). According to Storey (2007), HRM may provide a company with a competitive advantage. A corporation or organisation may have superior infrastructure and significant financial resources. Nevertheless, none of them can contribute ideally to effectiveness unless a competent human resource operates them. As a result, every business must carefully choose and develop each employee to maintain a competitive edge (Lawler III, 2010; Porter, 2011). By integrating HRM techniques into the organisation's goals and objectives, these may be linked. Multiple HR functions may need to be examined to assess HR practices properly (Guest, 2011; Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015). The significance of these procedures varies according to the size of the organisation. Dessler and Fishe (2008) developed one of the most comprehensive and frequently used HR practice metrics. HRM techniques are multifaceted, with four critical components: recruiting and selection, HR development, employee performance assessment, and employee compensation management.

Given the economic significance of SME workers, it is not very reassuring to see that SMEs get little attention when it comes to HRM research. Most of the studies on HRM are based on big companies. As Woodhams and Lupton (2006) note, conventional HR literature pays little attention to the unique circumstances of SMEs, as shown by a severe lack of research on HR practices in SMEs. However, interest in HRM activities has grown among SME businesses (Cardon and Stevens, 2004, Patel and Cardon, 2010). One could argue that these are a one-of-a-kind example because the HR practices were recently acquired. The circumstances under which they evolved differ markedly from those in the market economies where they originated.

In today's environment, effective management of an organisation's human resources is critical for survival (Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011). The efficacy of an organisation (Huselid, 1995) and its capacity to maintain a competitive edge are contingent on whether HRM strategies are well-conceived and executed (Pfeffer, 1994). Human potential in a business is usually far more difficult to replicate than the business's plant, equipment, or goods (Flanagan and Despanade, 1996; Purce, 2014). As a result, the nature and well-being of an organisation's workers may become its primary asset in carving out a lucrative niche in the market. Because small businesses rely on human capital, HRM practices are critical (Marlow and Patton, 1993; Boxall and Purcell, 2011; Sheehan, 2014). According to research, poor and ineffective management of workers in small businesses results in low productivity and high turnover rates (Croucher *et al.*, 2013), making it one of the main reasons for small company failure (McEvoy, 1984; Ghosh *et al.*, 2013).

HRM's overarching aim is to guarantee that the business succeeds through its employees (Schuler and Jackson, 2014). HRM seeks to improve an organisation's effectiveness and organisational skills (Cania, 2014), which are defined as the capacity of the organisation to accomplish its objectives while maximising the use of available resources. According to some writers, HRM systems may help companies develop organisational skills to learn and capitalise on new possibilities (Garavan *et al.*, 2016). The overarching goal of HRM is to develop and maintain a qualified and content workforce that contributes to the organisation's success (Opatha, 2010; Arulrajah and Opatha, 2016). As a result, a highly qualified, motivated, and satisfied workforce is critical to the success of SMEs.

An efficient HRM system enables organisations to recruit and employ qualified individuals and keep their knowledge, abilities, and attitudes current. As a result, individuals develop the ability to execute the tasks assigned to them. On the other side, a sound HRM system enables an organisation to maintain a competitive staff. This means that the HRM system contributes to employee motivation. A motivated staff is a happy workforce, which helps the business in many ways. For instance, if employees are satisfied, they will always contribute to the organisation's success by providing high-quality services. If a product or service is of high quality, consumers will purchase it and become satisfied customers. If an organisation's consumers are pleased, they become loyal customers, boosting their propensity to purchase more in the future and favourably influencing others to become new customers via word of mouth.

Excellent service is a critical element of determining whether a prospective client selects a specific business or whether current customers remain or go (Schneider and Bowen, 2010). The best perceptions of service given by a friend or family impact the business selection process. Thus, a negative perception of service will drive consumers to competitors. Customer service excellence provides all businesses with a sustainable and long-term competitive edge (Peppers and Rogers, 2016; Srivastava *et al.,* 2013). However, it will be difficult to replicate and outperform rivals in the near term. Good service cannot be achieved overnight; it requires months, if not years, of investment in training and commitment (Cook, 2010).

The majority of HRM research is centred on large corporations (Dunn *et al.*, 2008; Hargis and Bradley, 2011). Indeed, it is assumed that larger organisations' people management methods may be applied to SMEs (Harney and Nolan, 2014). However, there is currently no evidence on how HRM is applied in such organisations (Varum and Rocha, 2013). HRM's main aim is to create and keep an efficient workforce capable of fulfilling the needs of the business (Mayhew, 2014). In addition, HRM may offer a competitive advantage for SMEs since experienced and motivated employees are valuable resources, with a significant effect on overall performance (Mayhew, 2014).

McEvoy (1984) asserts that good HRM is critical to the success of small companies (McEvoy and Buller, 2013). Hornsby and Kuratko (1999) argue that SMEs must establish excellent HRM and continually improve it as they expand (Zakaria *et al.*, 2011). It was shown that businesses that prioritise training and development, performance evaluations, recruiting, and establishing competitive pay levels outperformed those not (Carlson *et al.*, 2006; Moake *et al.*, 2021). According to other research, such involvement in HRM practices may assist SMEs to enhance their financial performance and productivity, resulting in increased revenue growth and profit and a substantial decrease in employee turnover (Collins and Allen, 2006).

Businesses with effective HRM strategies are likely to have reduced absenteeism, lower employee turnover rates, and improved skill development and retention, resulting in increased returns and profitability (Asadii, 2012). Human resources should be utilised to provide a competitive edge for the company (Delery and Roumpi, 2017). It should be evaluated due to its relative lack of material or financial resources; SMEs often rely on above-average dedicated, motivated, and qualified workers. Human resources availability is necessary for long-term organisational performance, including expansion and competitiveness (Behrends, 2007; Nolan and Garavan, 2016). Hence, HRM must ensure that the appropriate workers are recruited to fulfil those needs and the necessary support systems to guarantee worker productivity. However, it is well established that SMEs globally depend on less formal HRM methods (Psychogios *et al.*, 2016). This is for three reasons.

To begin, most SMEs cannot afford to invest in HRM (Harney and Nolan, 2014). This implies they are unable to sustain and grow HRM departments handled by HR professionals and specialists (Bryson and Forth, 2018). Instead, they choose to outsource specific HR tasks or to implement techniques via more informal structures. Second, the owner’s dominating position inside these businesses influences how HRM is used. The owner is ultimately responsible for HRM choices (Psychogios *et al.*, 2016).

Third, within these organisations, SME owners establish an informal environment. For example, SMEs depend primarily on word of mouth and referrals for selection rather than on formal and well-documented procedures (Psychogios and Garev, 2012).

Additionally, many companies lack official job descriptions. Employee relations in SMEs vary significantly from those in more prominent companies (Allen *et al.*, 2013). For example, trade unions and collective bargaining are uncommon among SMEs. Rather than that, the firm’s culture is shaped by its owners, who convey organisational goals directly to workers. This results in a more casual and adaptable work atmosphere. However, HRM development is not uniform across all SMEs, particularly in developing, transitional, or crisis environments (Fuschetti and Pollack, 2011). In this regard, this research aims to map the present HRM and TM practices in SMEs in the UK operating in unstable environments.

While SMEs may lack the resources necessary to adopt advanced HRM practices, they must nevertheless adhere to HRM to keep workers happy and productive (Saru, 2007; Nolan, 2017). Furthermore, there is substantial evidence that SMEs cannot ignore HRM practices if they want to succeed and develop (Sheehan, 2014), even if not all HRM strategies are appropriate for every SME owing to the sector’s heterogeneity (de Kok, 2003). Therefore, there is a need for further study in this area of management to identify more successful and efficient methods in ensuring the survival and development of SMEs in specific settings, particularly stormy ones (Lai *et al.*, 2016. Kravariti *et al.*, 2021). This is where this study aspires to contribute. Prior to beginning this study, this researcher educated herself on different areas of HRM. This information inspired the interview questions and the creation of the theoretical framework. Thus, the interview questions and analysis were influenced by an awareness of these critical components of HRM.

3.4 Talent Management: A Critical Review

3.4.1 Definition of Talent

Tansley *et al.* (2006) note that TM needs HR professionals and their clients to define talent, referred to as 'the talented', and their usual background (Ansar and Baloch, 2018). Before learning about TM, defining the term 'talent' is essential because it will impact how talents and TM approaches are encouraged (Thunnissen and Van Arensbergen, 2015). It is widely acknowledged that the importance of TM has grown than any other element affecting an organisation's performance in the future (Buckingham and Vosburgh, 2001; Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014) and that it remains scarce (Frank *et al.*, 2004; Vaiman and Collings, 2013). However, proponents of such ideas have difficulty defining exceptionally talented workers (see Definitions: Talent in figure 3.4.1 below).

Different organisations place a higher value on defining talent in their terms than on adopting a universal or mandated definition (CIPD, 2007; McDonnell and Collings, 2011). As a result, their talent acquisition strategies vary. For example, as Bill Gates famously said, *"if Microsoft was to lose its twenty most excellent people, I can tell you that the company would become insignificant" (*Gates and Lowe, 1998). As a result, finding a one-size-fits-all approach to recruiting the right talent for any organisation is challenging (Nyamubarwa and Chipunza, 2019). Organisational cultures differ from one another, and each job requires a different set of skills (Cook and Yanow, 2011).

Duttagupta (2005) discovered, for example,

- *Microsoft UK focuses on the top 10% of its performance across all roles and levels with its A-list.*

- *Philips is modernising its culture and recruiting new people to help define its goal of being a high-growth technology business.*

Figure: 3.4.1 Definition of Talent

(Source: Stahl *et al.*, 2012)

Despite the wide range of approaches to the idea, many perceptions of 'talent' may have standard features and fall into similar patterns (Dries, 2013). Among the most critical viewpoints are the two (2): Exclusive and Inclusive approaches (Dries, 2013; Al Ariss *et al.,* 2014). A somewhat restricted interpretation of the term is used in the first strand (*i.e.,* exclusive approach): individuals who can significantly impact the present and future success of the firm (Morton, 2006; Cappelli and Keller, 2014). Scholars and professionals from several fields have this opinion. According to Wall and Aijala (2004), "critical talent" is a term used to describe groups and people that account for a significant amount of a company's business performance and provide significantly more than the industry average in terms of value to consumers and shareholders (Avedon and Scholes, 2010). Iles (2008) said that an organisation's most valuable asset is its human capital because of its ability to perform business/operational-critical functions. Employees are classified according to their existing or prospective contribution to the company's success, and Berger (2004) defines talent as "super keepers" by using this categorization system.

Human capital, according to Fishman (1998), is the most valuable corporate resource (Wright and McMahan, 2011). These individuals are clever, sophisticated business professionals who are technologically fluent, internationally astute, and operationally adaptable in their work. According to the characteristics of talent provided above, individuals with exceptional competence and skill provide a company with a competitive advantage by driving the company ahead (Tansley, 2011). In other words, people cannot be classified as "talented" in this way since the criteria for identifying people with special abilities are different for everyone in terms of their present, previous performance and competence. As a result, this method of appreciating talent considers both the short- and long-term implications of a situation. As Branham (2005) proposed, the Pareto Principle of Factor Sparsity goes a step further in this regard (in other words, 20% of the labour contributes 80% of the value).

The fact that TM is a long-term strategic and comprehensive approach means that the definition of talent should encompass characteristics linked to performance and potential (Ashton and Morton, 2005; Festing *et al.,* 2013). Mucha (2004) states that performance is evaluated considering predetermined goals and evaluations of one's prior work, which may not hint at future growth and development (Pollitt, 2013). As opposed to this, one's potential is about anticipating what a worker may be capable of in the future. Possibilities are forward-looking, and they include predictions about an employee's potential for future accomplishments in the organisation (Maisel and Cokins, 2013). In this way, comments influence the mix of observations, judgments, and conversations, and it is more difficult to judge since future contributions must be inferred from present evidence.

TM strategy, in its simplest form, refers to both performance and potential (McDonnell, 2011). For example, TM is concerned with coordinating the construction of potential identification procedures with the alignment of current performance assessment systems. Thus, the exclusive approach demonstrates a proclivity for asserting that talent is not tied to rank or position (Stokes *et al.,* 2016). There may be two sets of talents: those already in place and those who could succeed or replace them in the future (Stahl *et al.,* 2012). Using segmentation as a foundation, this approach to defining talent prioritises some subsets of the workforce above others and are handled differently (Schuler, 2015; Bonneton *et al.*, 2020).

Segmentation is essential to TM (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017). In the absence of segmentation, managers would see all workers as equally valued regardless of their level of competency and potential or whether they performed well or had the potential to succeed. It might lead to high costs for attracting, employing, training, developing, and rewarding personnel. Because of this, it is only fair and necessary to provide limited resources and tasks to the most promising employees for further development. Hence, there must be no exploitation or disregard of other workers to succeed (Walker, 2002). This viewpoint is demonstrated by the contentious classification of people who consistently go above and beyond what is expected of them by the organisation - super keepers (A), individuals who surpass expectations in the workplace – keepers(B), people who satisfy the demands of the organisation - solid citizens(C) and individuals who fall short of meeting the expectations of their employers - misfits(D) (Walker, 2002).

Instead of taking an 'exclusive' perspective to talent, which focuses primarily on the most gifted individuals, the "inclusive approach" argues that everyone has inherent skill (Swailes *et al.*, 2014). Similar to the wider debate around the definition of “talent management”, there are many definitions of what constitutes inclusive approach to TM or inclusion in the context of TM (Festing *et al.,* 2015). Inclusive approaches suggest that TM should apply to all workers. All employees of an organisation are seen as possessing strengths that can potentially create added value for the organisation

(Festing *et al.,* 2015). Is based on the assumption that all employees have valuable qualities or talents that can be productively applied to organisations and that too much emphasis on top players is damaging to the wider morale and can be detrimental to the company's success (Stahl *et al.* 2012).

According to this theory, every individual in an ideal optimum organisation has a specific job and, as a result, is a source of competitive advantage; hence, every person should be considered as a source of value (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). Inclusive approach can be defined as the recognition that all employees have the talent together with constant assessment and their employment being in the positions that are most suitable and that offer the greatest potential through participation for employees that possess these talents (Swailes *et al.* 2014). Festing *et al.* (2015) propose that TM can be considered inclusive when it supports all talented employees equally to contribute fully and effectively to the organisation, independent of their gender, ethnicity, social status, disability, etc. Therefore inclusive TM is seen as an approach that not only taps into a full range of skills, competencies and talents in an organisation but also results in greater inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups (Lenton, 2021; Tarique, 2021).

The goal of inclusive approach is to highlight the best in all employees, allowing them to fully utilise their potential at work (Shore *et al.,* 2018). It also means that the aim is to invest in a number of different talents (Meyers, 2015). It is important to mention that inclusive approach also recognises the possibility that employees may have talents that are not suitable for a particular organisation. In such cases, organisations must facilitate finding another, more suitable job place (Swailes *et al.* 2014), so that their talents are not wasted. Inclusive TM strategy promotes employee well-being, learning, and activity through the opportunity for employees to fully realise their potential (Meyers, 2015). This strategy is particularly appropriate for organisations that seek to promote health and well-being by prioritising cooperation rather than competition.

The practical implication of these two approaches concerns the investment of scarce resources: Is development for everyone, or should the firm differentially invest in certain individuals or jobs? Inclusive approaches seem to have developed more recently, possibly in response to the more egalitarian concepts in the air during the 1960s and 1970s (Cappelli and Keller, 2014), as well as workplace regulations requiring equal treatment of employees in areas such as retirement policies and health benefits. Exclusive approach has a longer history, no doubt inspired by the practices in the military where hierarchical arrangements are assumed (Cappelli and Keller, 2014). Each of these approaches have advantages and disadvantages. A perfectly suitable approach for one company will not be suitable for another. Therefore, selecting a specific TM approach should include not only assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy, but also complying with the contextual factors such as the organisation's size, culture, values, mission, and strategy (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017). In addition, it is important to evaluate the TM approach not only in the context of the organisation but also in the context of the industry, or even national context (Thunnissen 2016).

Whether TM should have an inclusive or exclusive stance has been a significant point of contention (Thunnissen 2016), as Stainton (2005) noted. It may be possible to adopt a more inclusive approach by acknowledging that everyone is competent and able to demonstrate their talents, allowing everyone to be evaluated for consideration and development (Swailes *et al.,* 2014). Everybody may go through the same process of identifying and developing their talents. A vital component of this argument is that opportunities are critical since ability can only be exhibited when given a chance. While employees may possess certain qualities, they may not be permitted to demonstrate them on the job. Thus, Stainton (2005) adds weight to the argument by emphasising the importance of providing people with the opportunity to show their abilities. It is vital to continue to create chances for everyone to learn, develop, and strive to reach their full potential (Walker, 2002; Burke and Noumair, 2015).

While talent may be classified as valuable, uncommon, and difficult to replicate, the specific definitions remain ambiguous (Collings, 2014). The term "great talent" has no universal meaning. (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). An organisation's talent objectives are determined by its business strategy, firm type or size, and general competitive climate (Ingham, 2006; Alkhafaji and Nelson, 2013). Thus, talent criteria should be customised for each organisation (Towers Perrin, 2004; Al Ariss *et al.*, 2014). Each organisation should be encouraged to identify the exact talent profile most suited to its needs (Michaels *et al.,* 2001; Farndale *et al.,* 2014). In the process of talent identification, prioritizing candidates who have specific educational backgrounds, work histories, and inner personality features becomes crucial when conducting an in-depth and concise examination of critical areas of organisational culture. The examination of the literature on understanding talent concludes that there is no one definition of talent (Collings *et* *al.*, 2015). One point of view takes a step further, claiming that identifying exceptional management skills is complex; a distinctive talent is challenging to describe (Tulgan, 2001; Tansley, 2011).

3.5 Talent Management Process

When evaluating a firm's efficacy, various resources, including money, personnel, and machinery, may be utilised to accomplish this. The most essential of these resources is people (Kehinde, 2012). They were referred to as a production factor and were known as the organisation's human resources. They are now given greater weight since they are talent working inside the business (Kehinde, 2012). This notion is derived from the intellectual capital theory, which defines intellectual capital as a pool of knowledge flows accessible to an organisation. When combined with physical resources like money and other assets like property, these intangible resources make up the organisation's market value or total worth (Armstrong, 2011). Initially, the behavioural components of talent were emphasised, and talent was linked to will and drive (Tansely, 2011). Those regarded as talented showed exceptional mental and physical abilities beginning in the 19th century (Tansely, 2011).

In the 1930s, the term 'talent scout' was used to describe someone looking for a new athletic or acting talent. The fundamentals of TM became clear. Initially, the attention to talent was emphasised in music, science, and sports (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.,* 2013). Management is the art of achieving results using people and processes. The argument is that if management is competent and the employees under their supervision are talented, this might significantly increase effectiveness. (Davies *et al.,* 2007). Having the proper skill set and managing that talent offers businesses a competitive edge (He *et al.*, 2011). During the years 2000-2008, most of the results from the TM study indicated a talent shortage (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Even though there was a significant unemployment rate, the Deloitte research report of 2008 was positive. New technology, quickly changing company structures, and market globalisation have boosted the demand for highly trained workers (Deloitte, 2008).

The rise of TM may be traced back to the early years of 2000. 'McKinsey,' a management consulting company, states that businesses are facing a 'war for talents', characterised by challenges in hiring workers owing to a tight labour market (Hartmann *et al.*, 2010). TM has existed for some time and has taken on several guises. This has been since McKinsey originally affixed the label 'The War for Talent' to their study on the scarce supply of talented senior executives and garnered media attention, as evidenced by Fortune Magazine's May 2000 front cover feature (Stumpf and Tymon, 2001). The subject of TM has grown in significance, garnering attention in both the literature and corporate practices. It has been stated that it is more important than ever for organisational development. It is quickly becoming a top priority for organisations worldwide (Hartmann *et al.*, 2010). From a holistic perspective, it is an age-old notion.

Nowadays, TM is one of the most critical issues organisations face; according to the Human Capital Institute, workforce management's single most significant challenge is creating or maintaining their companies' ability to compete for talent. According to research, demand for skilled labourers will increase in the next few years, while supply will decline (Foster, 2014). Furthermore, there is no disputing that technological advancements and globalisation have changed our lives by boosting talent competition. Thus, organisations' potential growth worldwide relies on their ability to ensure that the right people with the right skills are in the right place at the right time and working on the right tasks. Because of these reasons, TM has climbed to the top of the list of SHRM issues, gaining prominence in all organisations (Fowler, 2016). TM entails placing the appropriate people in the correct positions. It guarantees that workers use their talents to the greatest extent possible for the organisation's development. Because TM is a relatively new topic for organisations in both the public and private sectors, most have prioritised hiring the appropriate people. TM has been related to employees' effective identification, development, and retention (Baheshtiffar, 2011).

TM includes methods for identifying, attracting, retaining, and developing talent (as shown below in talent management process in figure 3.5). Because organisations can effectively identify and retain essential skills, TM is critical. Furthermore, talent identification and development assist organisations in identifying workers who can take on leadership positions in the future. This strategy focuses on creating and sustaining talent pools with solid leadership abilities (Baheshtiffar, 2011). In organisations, TM is restricted to recruiting the best people and continual sourcing, employing, developing, retaining, and promoting them while satisfying its objectives. For example, suppose an organisation wants to hire its competition's top talent. In that case, it must attract that individual and give them something significantly superior to what the competitor provides in exchange for coming to work for the organisation. Hiring them does not address the problem; the primary objective is to get work done through them. Thus, TM is a comprehensive process that manages the entry and exit of employees.

Figure: 3.5 Talent Management Process

Attracting, recruiting, keeping, and compensating exceptional employees is a central theme in TM research. By contrast, research on talented individuals is primarily concerned with the idea of talent and the behaviour of high achievers (Mcdonnell *et al.*, 2017). Lewis and Heckman (2006) identify three main ways of interpreting TM within these two types of literature. The first stream regards TM as a new term for standard HRM practices with relatively few distinctions; hence, TM=HRM. The second stream focuses on talent pools and views TM as a means of ensuring an organisation's adequate talent flow. The third identified perspective is more generic, focusing on talent and performance levels rather than on organisational boundaries or specific jobs (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). Finally, Collings and Mellahi (2009) introduce the fourth stream to the mix, focusing on important positions rather than talent itself. An evaluation and review of the literature suggests that a rather appropriate approach to retaining workers is to create a TM pool and encourage them to do so by establishing goals that align with their objectives. However, when reviewing the literature on TM, it becomes clear that there is a disturbing lack of clarity on its definition and breadth of the subject matter in question since TM appears to imply various things to various people. As seen in table 3.5, for instance.

Table: 3.5 Definitions of TM by researchers / practitioners

A	**Definitions of TM from the perspectives of academics**	**Source**
	An intentional and conscientious effort to recruit, develop and retain employees who have the aptitude and ability to satisfy the organisation's present and future requirements. To be successful in today's dynamic and complicated working environment, individuals and organisations must evolve. Creating and maintaining a healthy, people-centred organisational culture is part of this process.	(Stockley, 2005)
	All aspects of an organisation’s ability to attract and retain talented employees must be managed feasibly. Its goal is to guarantee that the appropriate individuals are placed in the right roles at the right time based on strategic business goals.	(Duttagupta, 2005)
	Talent management may be defined as a process of identifying, developing, and retaining individuals that are exceptionally useful to an organisation—either because of their high potential for the future or because they are performing business/operation-critical jobs.	(Iles, 2008)
B	**Definitions of TM in the management consultancy literature**	**Source**
	Making sure there are always enough high-performing employees to keep a company running smoothly. Workplace productivity and methods for recruiting, training, maintaining, and employing people with the necessary competencies to satisfy current and future strategic business demands are part of this strategy.	(Vurv, retrieved in 2007)
	TM is a realistic approach to managing performance, potential, and capacity as a long-term transformation endeavour. With TM, high-potential and high-performing employees may be identified, nurtured, and used for strategic purposes and recruiting across the whole HR cycle, resulting in better working conditions for employees.	(CRF workshop, 2005)
	TM is a comprehensive collection of procedures, programmes, and technology for developing, deploying, and connecting essential personnel and skillsets to drive business goals.	(Sistonen, 2005)

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Meanwhile, the workforce's ageing issue, combined with a scarcity of younger talent, will create a significant vacuum in the labour market. All the current debates regarding talent shortages and population ageing issues suggest that organisations should reconsider their approach to TM if they have not already. TM is one of the most pressing issues businesses confront since recruiting and keeping important workers is essential to success and competition (Collings *et al.*, 2018). TM requires hard effort and commitment, and just recruiting competent people is insufficient. Successful TM entails having competent staff and completing a succession plan without gaps that would cost the business money if an employee were to leave.

According to Clark (2009), TM is the process of developing and identifying all available talent, exceptionally high potential talent for future initiatives, jobs, and assignments. TM is another more revealing definition as a dynamic, continuous process of methodically finding, evaluating, and developing people for future vital positions to guarantee organisational continuity and optimum performance (Heidke, 2006). The TM approach is centred on developing leaders and workers to ensure the organisation's continued success (Gay and Sims, 2006). TM has become an increasingly debated topic around HRM theory and practice (Mcdonnell *et al.*, 2017). The fundamental assumption that distinguishes TM from conventional HRM practices is that the approaches necessary to manage high-performing, talented people in critical roles are qualitatively distinct from conventional HRM processes (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). Also, traditional HRM practices are designed to serve the whole workforce.

TM refers to the whole process of recruitment, learning, and training, pay, employee performance management, and succession planning. According to Clark (2009), institutions' most critical strategic challenge is managing employee talent. Most organisations fail to reinvent their employee value proposition, which leads to difficulties recruiting, retaining, and developing the best people (Ernst and Young, 2010).TM is concerned with identifying, obtaining, retaining, and developing talented individuals. It serves as the foundation for achieving organisational goals. Appropriate TM, which specifies individual capabilities, training and development, and career management, enables the organisation to perform well and its strategic goals. The TM literature is classified into two subfields: TM and talented individuals (Mcdonnell *et al.*, 2017).

By contrast, TM concentrates on workers who are deemed to have a strategic role in the organisation's success and influence it (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). This thesis applies and synthesises theories from the second and fourth research classes to provide a comprehensive framework for studying the TM process within a TM system. First, TM encompasses the activities and processes associated with the methodical identification of essential roles that contribute to an organisation's long-term competitive advantage. This description is consistent with the widely held belief that when assessing the placement of talent resources, a greater emphasis should be placed on strategic positions rather than non-strategic jobs (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2007; Minbaeva and Collings, 2013).

The second aspect of the definition defines what it means to establish a talent pool to fill crucial jobs with talent resources capable of resulting in sustained competitive advantage (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). By addressing the ongoing competitive advantage that results from successful TM, this section of the definition hints at the relationship between TM and the resource-based paradigm (Barney, 1991). The third part of the definition emphasises the importance of a well-designed HR architecture that fills critical roles and develops and manages a talent pool. In a nutshell, TM is the capacity of an organisation to discover and develop talent from the talent pool via the pipeline (Jooss *et al*., 2021).

The most critical factor in establishing corporate success is identifying talent to accomplish this goal (Collings, 2014). Attracting people and strategically deploying them within the organisation is the next phase. It must be borne in mind that placing a candidate in an inappropriate position might exacerbate difficulties regardless of their qualifications, skills, abilities, and competencies. Regardless of how great they are, placing them in the wrong place destroys the company's primary objective. If a corporation cannot place the industry's most excellent personnel where they should be, the TM process is flawed. Specific organisations may view the entire procedure as highly unethical, particularly at the conclusion (who loses their high-worth employee). However, in this cutthroat environment, the entire premise sounds reasonable when survival is a significant concern. Every organisation requires the best employees to thrive and remain competitive. Talent is the most crucial aspect that propels an organisation forward and propels it to greater heights, and so cannot be compromised in any way. It is hardly hyperbole to assert that TM is a never-ending battle for talent!

3.6 Talent Management Practices in SMEs

According to the TM literature, TM practices may be classified as follows: recruiting, attraction and selection, training and development, retention, and performance management of talent. Thus, based on the findings of the qualitative phase of this study, the constructs of TM practices are identified as attraction & identification, development, and retention of talent. It began with the Personnel Department in the 1970s and 1980s, responsible for all administrative and personnel functions. By the mid-1980s, businesses had expanded into a corporation, necessitating acquiring additional resources while recognising the importance of developing and training present personnel and planning the workforce. These events contributed to the evolution and creation of the HRM concept, or HR for short.

In the 1990s, the HR Department began to participate in all strategic decisions, evolving into more than a business function; it was viewed as a business partner, formulating and implementing all strategic decisions. As a result, the term ‘Personnel’ was replaced with ‘Human Resources’ to elevate human capital to a strategic asset. In the latter part of the 1990s, the war for talent was declared. The primary foundations for TM were established through an effective and efficient recruitment process, employee development programmes, reinforcement of the company’s culture and values, and identification of potential and successors through appropriate training (Tubey *et al.*, 2015). As a result, TM has evolved into the business’s focal point. A sound business strategy should include a plan and a process for developing its staff to achieve current objectives. As a result, the organisation develops a competitive edge. It sustains its business by monitoring the recruitment pipeline, developing and training talent, and evaluating employee performance (Filmer, 2012).

TM is gaining popularity in many organisations and has emerged as a major HR challenge for various businesses across various industries (Scullion *et al.*, 2016). The TM literature places a premium on multinational corporations worldwide (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013). SMEs have received less attention, particularly during a period of economic uncertainty. As a result, additional research is required to close this gap, particularly given the UK's primarily SME-based economy. Nevertheless, SMEs are increasingly being recognised as substantial contributors to the global economy and significant employment creators. First, it is necessary to recognise that managing human capital in small businesses is distinct from big, established international corporations (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). Due to their size, poor visibility, and lack of resources to establish formal TM systems or policies. Coordination of conventional TM policies and procedures with the informal culture prevalent in most SMEs is a challenge.

Indeed, smaller businesses tend to be more relaxed, less organised, and managed in a less bureaucratic manner (Dundon and Wilkinson, 2009). Timming (2011) argues that SMEs are inherently less likely to adopt informal staffing practices and policies. Numerous reasons contribute to this, including organisational culture, resource constraints, industry or sectoral characteristics, and a lack of awareness among owners and managers about the critical nature of SHRM practices and impact on company success. These behaviours differ depending on the size and kind of organisation

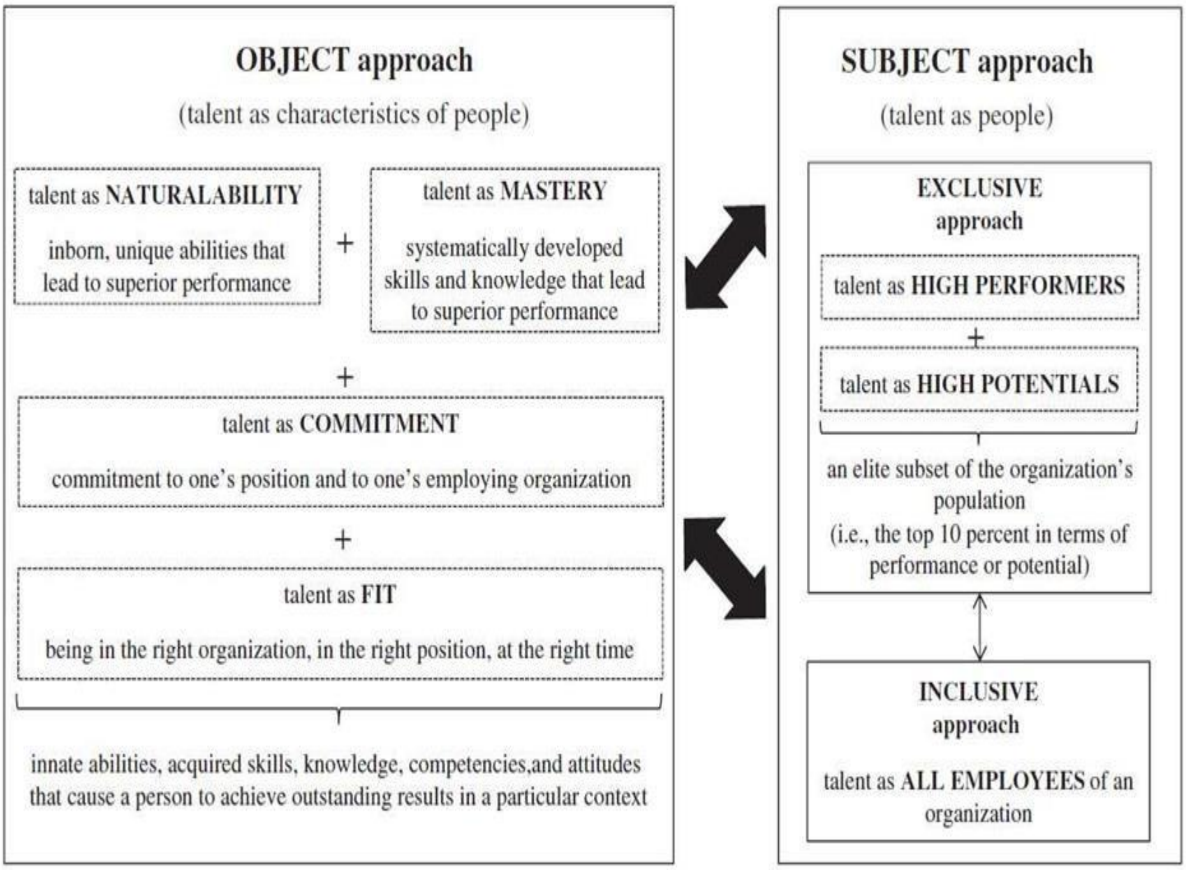
(Festing *et al.,* 2013). SMEs do not engage in TM activities such as recruiting and retaining young talents, training and development, and employee career and succession planning, perhaps owing to their smaller size or resource constraints, resulting in the lack of established TM practices and policies. Alonso and O'Neill (2009) confirm that, for example, in SME hospitality operations in a college town, only a few have developed initiatives to combat employee turnover and related problems, such as providing a friendly environment, flexibility, and training opportunities.

Nonetheless, Timming (2011) claims that SMEs are not inherently inclined to adopt standard personnel practices. Numerous factors are at work, including industry or sectoral peculiarities, organisational culture, resource scarcity, and a lack of understanding among owners-managers about strategic management practices impact organisational performance. This highlights some difficulties in researching TM practices in SMEs, primarily because they are labelled as a homogeneous group. Additionally, control in SMEs is based on the supervisory authority of the owner-manager (Bridge *et al.,* 2003). Festing *et al.* (2013) questioned 700 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and owners/founders of SMEs in Germany to ascertain their attitudes and perspectives on TM.

According to questionnaire data, roughly 40% of examined businesses had CEOs or owners in control of recruiting, indicating their predominance in hiring choices (Festing *et al*., 2013). This demonstrates the critical role of the owner-manager in developing a comprehensive TM strategy. Thus, it is necessary to examine the breadth and complexity of TM practices used by owner-managers regarded as a critical component of a company’s talent pool (Nolan and Garavan, 2016). Festing *et al.* (2013) discover that these practices varied by organisation size and type, with more significant industry, service, and retail-oriented SMEs reporting more excellent investment in TM activities such as early talent identification, employee training, and development as succession and career planning. This may signify that the risk associated with a small size or resource constraints resulted in the lack of formalised human resources or technology management procedures.

Priority must be given to the HR domains that are considered most important in terms of resource allocation. As a result, talent acquisition and development may be pushed aside in favour of operational priorities such as marketing or finance (Stokes *et al.*, 2016). A few conclusions may be made from the current body of knowledge about TM practices in SMEs. First, it seems as if SMEs lack the strategic advantage that more prominent, more established organisations possess when adopting formalised TM processes. Additionally, despite the concept’s high relevance, there seems to be a dearth of knowledge of TM’s terms and rhetoric among owner-managers. For instance, managers often lack clarity about whom they refer to when they speak of talent (Valverde *et al.*, 2013). This pertains to one of the critical issues arising from previous research endeavours: the degree to which skill is recognised as inclusive (Schuler *et al.*, 2011). On the one hand, the whole approach sees talent as a small pool of high-potential, high-performing people strategically valuable to an organisation. On the other hand, the inclusive strategy is predicated on the assumption that most workers can contribute to an organisation’s success (see figure 3.6 below).

Figure 3.6: Meaning of Talent



(Source: Gallardo-Gallardo *et al*., 2013)

The exclusive strategy is predicated on the assumption that investing in workers with critical and valued skills results in higher profits and productivity. Due to resource limitations, an exclusive view on TM and development is undoubtedly a more cost-effective option in SMEs. As Krishnan and Scullion (2017) note, by concentrating on essential individuals, the danger of weakening the morale of the rest of the workforce is not recognised as talent. However, it may not fit into the casual work culture that is a significant source of employment for SMEs. However, as stated before, this indicates that SMEs may use both inclusive and exclusive strategies. A lack of knowledge of the TM idea and the absence of formalised TM practices does not always imply that owners or founders of SMEs lack people management and development plans. Even when TM methods are casual, they may be successful, as Valverde *et al.* (2013) research shows.

The findings of this study stated that some small company owners might be ignorant of the long-term implications of failing to properly manage and develop outstanding employees (Alonso and O'Neill, 2009). Contrary to what the literature suggests, it was pointed out that recruiting labour was not an issue due to the large pool of available employees. Low levels of employee involvement and discipline, on the other hand, have been recognised as significant problems for these organisations. This suggests that the lack of a plan TM approach may impact the organisations' day-to-day operations. Valverde *et al.* (2013) found numerous TM-related features in Spanish medium-sized businesses. While managers were unfamiliar with the term TM, it was noted that many of these organisations already used TM practices. This may imply that significant research on TM has been conducted on organisations that actively pursue more formalised TM practices as part of the sampling procedure. However, many SMEs struggle to strike a balance between formal TM practices and the informal culture of these organisations (Jameson, 2000).

Nonetheless, it is anticipated that a properly structured and more systematic TM may help an organisation's performance significantly. The concept of TM is adapted to the settings of SMEs (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Maxwell and MacLean (2008) conclude that TM has significant potential to contribute to the industry's enhancement, with purported benefits including increased productivity, improved employee engagement and commitment, enhanced skill base, decreased labour turnover, and improved employer image and brand. However, the research demonstrated that TM is about recruiting the appropriate people from the outset; again, owing to resource constraints, it is often necessary to find and employ individuals who match or exceed the role's objectives and needs (Maxwell and MacLean, 2008). Furthermore, retention would be a significant concern for other SMEs that develop talent internally due to the difficulty of replacing these skills if they leave.

It should be observed from the preceding that, given the variety of management methods across SMEs (Cassell *et al.,* 2002), a standardized approach to TM may not be suitable. Rather than that, companies should use TM practices that are most appropriate for their operations, staff, and targeted customers. Baum (2008) maintains that TM in SMEs should be interpreted differently than in other sectors, particularly when the sector emphasizes providing high-quality service to a broad range of customers (Baum, 2008). Additionally, even if the most acceptable TM practices are used, SMEs' owner-managers may encounter unique challenges, such as unstable economic environments like Brexit and Covid-19. Thus, it is anticipated that the present study would shed some empirical light on the topic area by eliciting owner-manager and employee perspectives on the factors that influence the adoption of TM practices, with a particular emphasis on the SME sector during times of turmoil.

3.7 Challenges of Talent Management Practices in SMEs

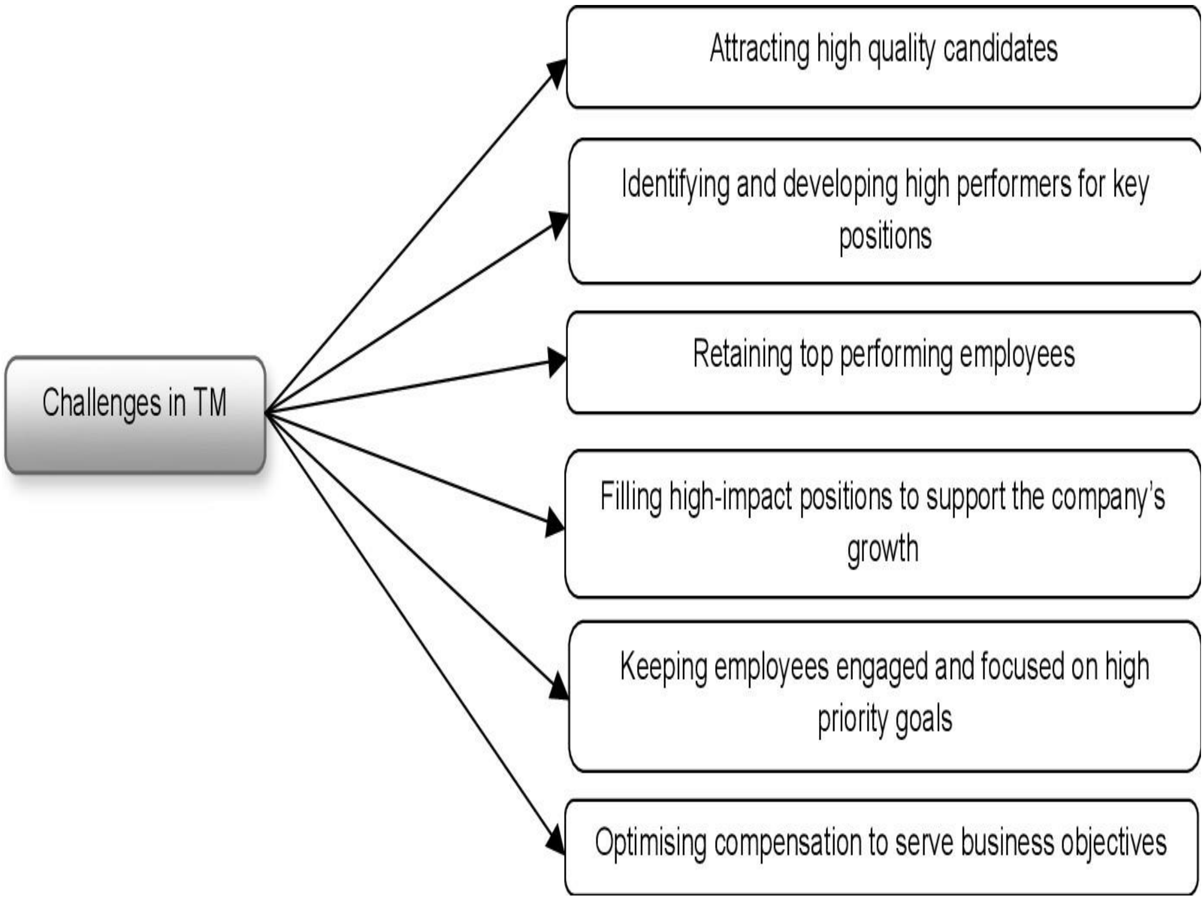
Handy *et al.* (1988) found that SMEs vary from their bigger counterparts in various ways, indicating that the limitations and uncertainties encountered by SMEs differ significantly from those faced by large-scale businesses. According to Stanworth and

Gray (1991), small companies face various difficulties and concerns that affect their larger counterparts. The topic of SME uniqueness has resurfaced more recently, with Stokes and Wilson (2006) focusing more specifically on SME internal processes: ‘Managing in SMEs is not like managing part of a big organisation.’ Beaver (2002), for example, argues that:

> "Management procedures in SMEs are distinct. Much of today’s theory is based on actual studies of management behaviour in big corporations. These ideas, no matter how sophisticated they are, cannot be immediately applied to SMEs. While similar abilities are required in many organisations, the contextualisation of these talents to suit the needs of the SME operating environment is unique" (Beaver, 2002, p. 60)

Given these distinctions, it is fair to conclude that TM and HR practices in big corporations cannot be applied automatically to SMEs (Valverde *et al.*, 2013). When SMEs operate in developing market environments in a partnership or collaborative arrangements, their practices are likely to be more complicated and varied, necessitating creative management solutions. As stated in the preceding chapters, SMEs seem to face distinct difficulties from their bigger counterparts, owing to a lack of resources, the owner’s dominance, a propensity toward reactive management practices, or a lack of formalised procedures. As a result, TM problems (*i.e.*, recruiting and retaining talent) may arise (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). These difficulties are described in more detail below (see figure 3.7 below):

Figure 3.7: Challenges of Talent Management Practices in SMEs



(Source: Vidyeswari and Nair, 2009)

I. Talent Identification and Attraction Challenges

Identifying high potentials became an issue for most organisations, which prompted studies such as the McKinsey consultants' 'War for talent' (Michaels *et al.,* 2001). Kermally (2004) implies that skills remain in relatively limited supply despite occasional reports of layoffs. Consistent with this, Douglas *et al.* (2007) observe that despite widespread knowledge of TM, a sizable proportion of organisations continue to struggle to fill essential roles. Thus, one of the critical issues that organisations face is identifying talent (Sparrow *et al.*, 2015). Numerous variables contribute to the difficulty of recognising talented employees (Festing and Schäfer, 2014).

An organisation must have the capacity to conduct business worldwide and the skills necessary to stay up with the market's ever-changing criteria to succeed in today's global market (Alkhafaji and Nelson, 2013). However, several studies demonstrate that finding and retaining appropriate management staff to run the company's overseas operations is becoming more challenging for the organisation (Scullion and Collings, 2006; Collings and Scullion, 2012). According to a global poll of over 9,000 CEOs, recruiting and maintaining excellent staff is the most challenging part of operating a firm (Lubitsh and Smith, 2007).

Organisations seek individuals with more than potential; they seek employees who can immediately provide value (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). However, this approach to talent identification may limit the talent pool, as not every person is immediately ready to contribute value upon hire. As a result, it leaves much to be desired in terms of talent detection. For the talented and organisations, winning this ‘battle for talent’ appears to be a game of luck due to the absence of well-established methods for identifying such talent (Lahey, 2014).

Second, although TM has sparked much research (Tansley *et al.*, 2006; Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017), various perspectives on talent characteristics have arisen. According to Brown and Hesketh (2004), these characteristics include a ‘can-do attitude, the ability to create new realities, experiences, and knowledge, and a variety of thinking in creating a specific state of mind that fits organisational needs. Nevertheless, on the other hand, these traits are bizarre and discourage employers from employing talented individuals (Blass *et al.*, 2006).

Tankely *et al.* (2007) assert that an assessment panel for talent is often in charge when looking for and selecting talent inside an organisation. Human resource professionals, senior management, line managers, and subject experts compose the talent assessment panel. They also include representatives from other departments. As a result of the wide variety of processes and equipment employed, talent evaluation committees may not be used by every organisation. Competency frameworks and traditional HRM practices like performance management and HR planning may be needed to help discover potential employees inside a company. There are several ways to uncover talent, and each one is considered beneficial by a specific company (Tansley, 2011)..

When it comes to recognising high potential, HR professionals and their clients must have a common concept of talent (CIPD, 2006; Baron, 2011). First, it is critical to have a clear definition of what qualifies an individual as talented (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012). Second, there must be clarity about what distinguishes outstanding managers who can make a strategic impact (Delbridge, 2006). Third, although the research acknowledges that well-developed practices may improve organisational results, no clear theory or set of rules exists to determine which organisational pools should be targeted (Lewis and Heckerman, 2006). Because of the absence of defined guidelines, TM falls victim to power and politics in the talent selection process. As previously stated, the vagueness of the concept of talent contributes to difficulties in recognising talent. The qualities that an organisation seeks in talented people are arguably determined by how it defines talent.

Creating a favourable business image that appeals to prospective employees is known as employer branding. Using the company's brand to attract top-tier talent is a smart strategy. Successful management of corporate brands gives organisations a competitive edge in today's global market. First, however, getting the right kind of employees (Ana, 2009). One thing distinguishes high-rated companies: they give out constant and unambiguous messages about themselves, resulting in a strong talent attraction (Tanuja, 2007). An employee value proposition describes what a potential employee believes an organisation gains by hiring him or her. A company's reputation, training opportunities, work environment, and employee satisfaction all factor into how much value employees place on their jobs (Oehley, 2007).

Because different organisations operate in various industries and sectors, it is simple to create a standardised set of criteria that define individuals deemed talented. As a result, there are significant gaps in essential worker skill sets and identifying them to create tomorrow's prospective key employees today. SMEs' competitiveness, economic success, and growth are all dependent on attracting the right workers (Festing *et al.*, 2013). Recruitment and selection, on the other hand, can be difficult. According to global research conducted by ADP (2010), a top HRM service provider in Europe, SMEs' most significant HR difficulty is finding competent personnel to fill important positions. One factor could be that SMEs frequently lack an effective strategy and competent HR resources for recruiting (Heneman and Berkley, 1999). In addition, compared to major corporations, they are perceived as having less visibility in the labour market (Cardon and Stevens, 2004). Because resources in SMEs are generally poor and limited, only simple and inexpensive methods of attracting, selecting, and recruiting personnel are used (Heneman and Berkley, 1999).

Furthermore, Williamson (2000) expresses that SMEs may lack employer legitimacy, implying that the organisation is not perceived as a desirable employer by potential and prospective applicants or prospects. Also, their actions may not conform to the industry's standards, attitudes, beliefs, and definitions, making them appear unappealing. Another factor that makes it more difficult for SMEs to locate and identify qualified staff is that the demands of working in an SME are high. First, employees generally have multiple tasks to do in their day-to-day operations due to their small size (Cardon and Stevens, 2004), which is why SMEs prefer people with generalist rather than specialised knowledge (Festing, 2007). Second, norms, attitudes, and beliefs play an essential part in SMEs' recruitment; therefore, the person-organisation fit is critical (Williamson, 2000). As a result, these variables exacerbate the difficulty and complexity of attracting and recruiting personnel in the SME sector.

Attracting and identifying talent is a critical component of any TM system (Mcdonnell *et al.*, 2010; McDonnell *et al.*, 2011). The availability of talent in and of itself has no strategic value unless it is identified, fostered, and exploited efficiently (Mellahi and Collings, 2010; McDonnell and Collings, 2011). It implies that, even if an organisation has talented personnel, they are of little value unless they are identified and provided with the appropriate development opportunities and job matches (Deery and Jago, 2015; Thunnissen, 2016). Recruitment and selection, employer branding, employee value proposition, and employer choice are all components of talent attraction (Armstrong, 2006; Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). Recruitment and selection need organisations to employ various strategies or techniques to identify the best talent that reflects the organisation's culture and values (Armstrong, 2009; Argue, 2015).

The first task of a TM strategy is to recruit members of the talent pool. The talent pool is a collection of employees who share common characteristics and serves as a source of future senior executives (Ballesteros *et al.,* 2010; Saad and Mayouf, 2018). Internal or external sources can provide talented employees. Internal sources are ideal for building a talent pool because employees already understand business processes and quickly integrate into the new role. As a result, employee morale is boosted. On the other hand, external sources are the most important if an organisation wishes to make significant changes or revitalise its culture (Ballesteros *et al.*, 2010). Stahl *et al.* (2007) mention that successful TM practices require a high degree of internal, cultural, and strategic alignment, which results in a unique set of methodologies, drives TM excellence and contributes to organisational learning and knowledge management.

Organisations must assess how employee competencies align with their strategic objectives and the potential contribution of these workers to organisational performance (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Collings, 2014). Stahl *et al.* (2007) hold that firms that thrive at TM maintain internal consistency, complementarity, and reinforcement of their practices to attract, select, develop, evaluate, and retain talent (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). In other words, the internal fit is viewed as critical for successfully identifying and managing talent. Employer branding entails the creation of a positive image for a company that is attractive to potential workers (Sokro, 2012). Thus, branding the company recruits top talent (Chhabra and Sharma, 2014). In today's highly competitive global economy, companies that successfully manage their corporate brands gain a competitive advantage.

It is challenging to recruit the right talent without a strong brand image (Ana, 2009; Rabbi *et al.*, 2015; Mihalcea, 2017). However, top-rated businesses have one trait: they send out clear and consistent signals about themselves, which results in pull-on solid talent (Tanuja, 2007). A prospective employee's view of an organisation's worth in recruiting him or her is defined by an employee value proposition. Employees evaluate the value offered based on the job's difficulty, work atmosphere, training opportunities, flexibility, and the company's reputation (Oehley, 2007).

II. Talent Development Challenges

In an ideal business environment, organisations invest in developing their exceptional workers to become more productive quickly (Malmgren McGee and Hedström, 2016). Thus, talent development must be included in the hiring process and seen as a successful strategy for organisations seeking to enhance the quality of their highly skilled individual employees (Moayedi and Vaseghi, 2016). For a company's competitive advantage to be achieved and maintained, talent development involves transforming its employees, stakeholders, and various groups via planned and unplanned learning (Davis *et al.*, 2007). Constant and continuous upskilling of the workforce is required as organisations implement new technological, commercial, and marketing methods (Alkhafaji and Nelson, 2013; Carnevale and Smith, 2013). Effective learning and development practices begin with the workers of an organisation. This means they identify workers who need knowledge and growth, the required degree of expertise and development, and the learning length (Harburg, 2003). Organisations with superior talent development efforts thrive at listening to employee development requirements and communicating those needs to employees (Werner, 2021). In many businesses across the globe, talent development has become a critical TM effort (Festing *et al.*, 2013).

It is a deliberate strategy for specific organisations that minimises leadership gaps for key jobs while also providing top personnel with opportunities to build the skills needed for future roles. With some firms, talent development is regarded as an administrative exercise rather than a competitive advantage (Stahl *et al.*, 2012; Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). The shortcomings in the career management process are simpler to ignore during difficult economic times. However, in light of worldwide economic events, such as the 2008/2009 global financial and economic crisis and the 2009/2010 Eurozone crisis, there has never been a time when they need to uncover and nurture exceptional talent for crucial jobs was more pressing (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Farndale *et al.*, 2010; Hatum, 2010; McDonnell *et al.*, 2010; Schmidt, 2010; Schuler *et al.*, 2011; Anand *et al.*, 2012; Sparrow *et al.*, 2013; Baldwin, 2015; Caligiuri *et al.*, 2020). A company's approach to ensuring that individuals with the appropriate qualifications and expertise are accessible when required is known as talent development (Zheng *et al.*, 2001).

Investing money and launching different efforts to cultivate talent would not generate outcomes independently (Kermally, 2004; Kabwe, 2011). Kermally (2004) points out that a talent development plan should be linked with the company strategy in this context (Kabwe, 2011). Based on the identified strategic capabilities, an organisation must determine its skills to foster high-potential people (Dries *et al.*, 2012). As previously stated, the internal fit is an integral part of the TM process since it is necessary to match the organisation's development capabilities with its objectives (Boon *et al*., 2011; Thunnissen, 2016).

In summary, besides aligning high-potential individuals' growth with the organisation's goal, talented individuals' workgroups and environment are also critical elements of growing and increasing their performance (Taylor *et al.*, 2015). Iles and Preece (2006) emphasise networks, teams, and social processes as critical TM elements (Preece *et al.*, 2013; Vaiman and Collings, 2013). They contend that leadership development has been associated with a concentration on the individual rather than the social, political, and collective leadership settings, both in theory and practice. Iles (2007) makes a significant point in this regard, stating that leadership development and, by extension, TM are about building leadership & TM processes in context and developing leaders & talents as individuals (Preece *et al.,* 2013). As a result, TM plays a critical role in developing people within the organisation's framework, concentrating on strategic goals and skills (Valverde *et al*., 2013; Chakraborty and Biswas, 2019).

Another critical aspect of TM is the availability of training and development opportunities (Al Ariss *et al*., 2014). Due to limited financial and material resources, SMEs may not afford costly, high-rate formalised training programmes with external providers and organisations (Ansar and Baloch, 2018). Instead, they concentrate on informal, on-the-job training to educate their workers about the many responsibilities that they face daily (Cardon and Stevens, 2004; Cardon and Valentin, 2017). This may be a disadvantage since workers may not be able to, for example, improve their professional CV by attending or participating in training programmes. This is one of the main reasons SMEs look for talent in labour markets or business settings that are not often selected by large corporations (Storey *et al.*, 2010). Despite the significance and difficulties that SMEs face, there has been little research on TM in SMEs (Sheehan *et al*., 2018; Pauli and Pocztowski, 2019).

III. Talent Retention Challenges

Talent retention has grown in importance as an organisation's capacity to gain and sustain a competitive edge has increased (Smith, 2017). It focuses on keeping talent among an organisation's workers to ensure continued employment (Almeda, 2016). Due to intense competition for talent among top organisations across all industries, it is difficult for organisations, especially SMEs, to retain exceptional employees (Walker, 2017). This is partly owing to the economy's continuous expansion, which creates almost limitless employment possibilities for talent (Salau, 2017). Retention of talented people seeks to allow an organisation to retain valuable staff and provide a sustainable source of competitive advantage, resulting in organisational development and success (Alnaqbi, 2011).

Talent retention attempts to adopt steps that encourage workers to stay with the company for the most time possible. Because the expenses of attracting talent are considerable, talent churn is detrimental to a company's productivity. Direct expenses include turnover, replacement, and transition costs, as well as indirect costs associated with production loss, decreased performance levels, needless overtime, and poor morale (Echols, 2007). Vaiman *et al.* (2008) classify retention strategies into two categories based on their ability to meet employee expectations: extrinsic and intrinsic incentives

(Vaiman and Collings, 2014). Extrinsic incentives include monetary compensation that meets workers’ physiological requirements, while intrinsic incentives include non-monetary compensation that meets employees’ psychological needs. A financial incentive is a critical component in retaining talent (Vaiman *et al.*, 2008).

Mendez *et al.* (2011) emphasise the need to invest in staff retention to be successful. For instance, a competitive pay plan is critical for keeping workers. In addition, offering an appealing, competitive benefits package that includes life insurance, disability insurance, and flexible work hours encourages workers to commit to a company (Lockwood *et al.*, 2006). Employee retention is critical for all organisations, whether large or small, as turnover has several negative consequences (Cardy and Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Deery and Jago, 2015). This includes interruption of workflows, a decrease in customer service and quality, and the overall financial resources required to recruit and train a replacement, which frequently exceeds the annual salary of the position (Hausknecht 2017).

When an organisation discusses why workers may quit, it considers job satisfaction, organisational commitments, working climate, growth possibilities, and pay (Bryant and Allen, 2013; Dobre, 2013). While little research exists on retention in SMEs, Kuhlmann (2000) demonstrates how the external labour market views their good and negative characteristics as employers in the German context. On the plus side, SMEs are believed to foster a pleasant work atmosphere, be less anonymous, give a high level of information, and needless mobility. However, on the opposite hand, he asserts that they provide fewer career possibilities, give fewer perks and benefits, and are less progressive in terms of organisational structure, training, and development, pay, and international employment opportunities.

To retain workers, SMEs should emphasise the good elements of the relationship and work to address the bad ones (Festing 2007; Shahzad *et al.*, 2019). However, when it comes to remuneration as a retention strategy, the peculiarities of SMEs take precedence. As stated, concerning HRM in SMEs, it is often more difficult for them to provide appealing pay packages to their workers than it is for most of their larger counterparts (Cardon and Stevens 2004; Michiels, 2017; Salimi and Della Torre, 2021). Furthermore, remuneration in SMEs often varies from the reference levels used. For example, SMEs emphasise innovative and creative behaviour, the capacity and desire to take calculated risks, and cooperative connections among workers (Cardon and Stevens 2004).

In summary, this study established that talent retention is a critical focus area within people management. It is critical for maintaining a competitive advantage in a variety of organisations. Hence, a TM literature study reveals many procedures used across various industries and organisations (Thunnissen, 2016). Attraction, development, and retention are the three most prevalent TM strategies.

3.8 Conclusion

Several definitions of SME businesses were highlighted in the first section of this chapter. Some studies, for example, define SMEs in terms of finance and total sales, while others use the number of workers as a criterion. The OECD definition was the most widely recognised definition for this research since it is more generally acceptable. Following that, the significance of SMEs was addressed. While SMEs have advantages, such as leveraging human resources or investing in technology, they also confront many difficulties (Lee *et al.*, 2012). As demonstrated in this research literature, the study of TM practices in SMEs is essential and highly required in today's chaotic and challenging business climate (Baporikar, 2021).

First, since SMEs make up most businesses, they constitute the backbone of the global economy and therefore have a significant economic impact (OECD 2015). Second, because of the specific features of SMEs, such as the liability of smallness or the scarcity of resources, TM in SMEs differs from TM in big corporations (Festing 2013). As a result, businesses should be aware of the importance, possibilities, and, most crucially, difficulties of TM strategies in different settings, particularly SMEs, during tumultuous times.

It is surprising that this has not occurred yet, and that the area of TM in SMEs remains mostly unexplored (Valverde *et al.*, 2013). As a result, as summarised in this study, findings from the current study and theoretical discussions and background about HRM and TM practices in SMEs in turbulent contexts point to unique, context-specific, and exciting findings that could be useful to organisations and practitioners around the world.

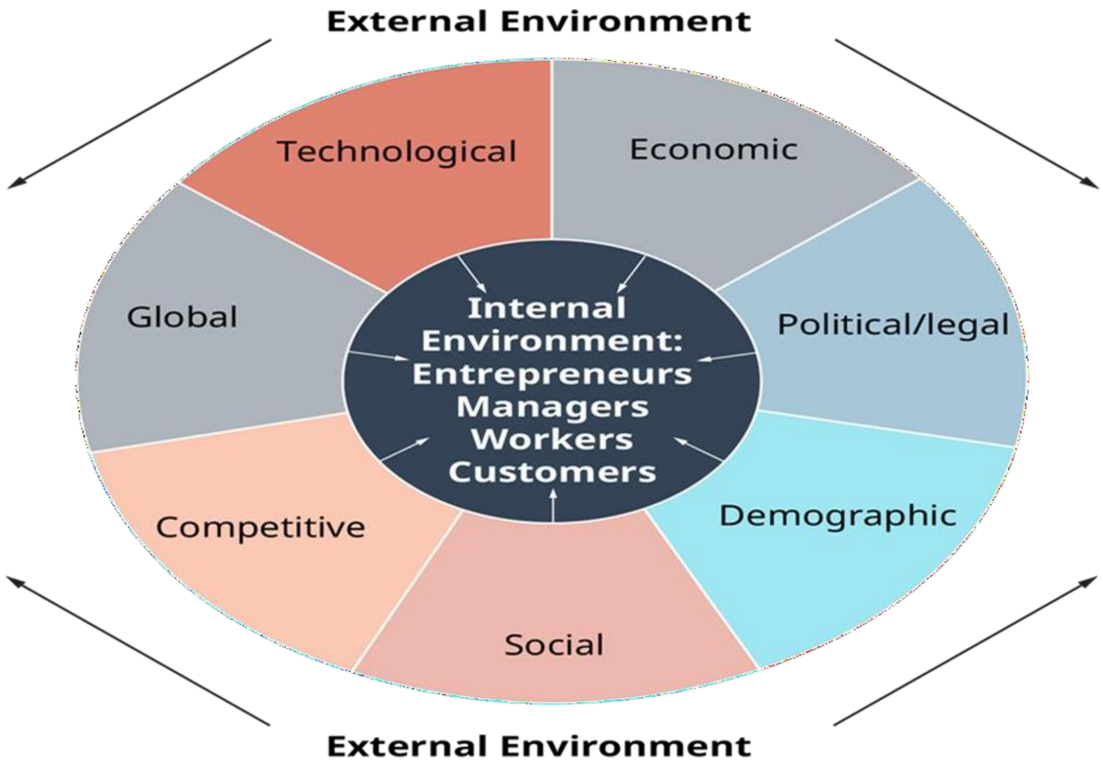
CHAPTER FOUR

HRM AND TM IN SMEs IN UK IN TURBULENT CONTEXTS

4.1 Introduction

Organisations that survive and flourish in tumultuous settings have acquired the ability to make quick and effective choices without full knowledge. The term ‘turbulence’ denotes environmental discontinuities (Barrows and Neely, 2011). For example, turbulence in physics refers to the random fluctuations of fluids unsystematic as molecules and atoms engage in continuous chaotic flow when supplied with external energy. As a result, irregular patterns emerge, posing a threat to the overall stability of the system. In the business world, the continuous turbulence of socioeconomic, cultural, and political variables (as shown in figure 4.1) correlates to the environment in which organisations work (Psychogios and Garev, 2012).

Figure 4.1: Components of Business environment



Turbulence in the business environment may be defined as rapid changes in external or internal settings that influence company performance and provide a competitive edge over competitors (Teece and Leih, 2016). Since the pre-industrial period, when development was gradual but pre-determined and change was predictable, the business environment in which organisations operate today has altered dramatically. Organisations and industries operate in generally stable settings, and their responses to change are predicated on extrapolation aspects (Bunker and Alban, 2012; Barnett and O'Hagan, 2020). Past success nearly definitely ensured future success, a supposition that no longer exists today (Kipley *et al.,* 2012). Turbulence is a novel change phenomenon that has emerged due to the evolution of change to various degrees of variability (Gray, 2018). Numerous studies in strategic management have linked this phenomenon to environmental dynamism, which is characterised by three variables: uncertainty, complexity, and unpredictability (Ansell *et al*., 2017).

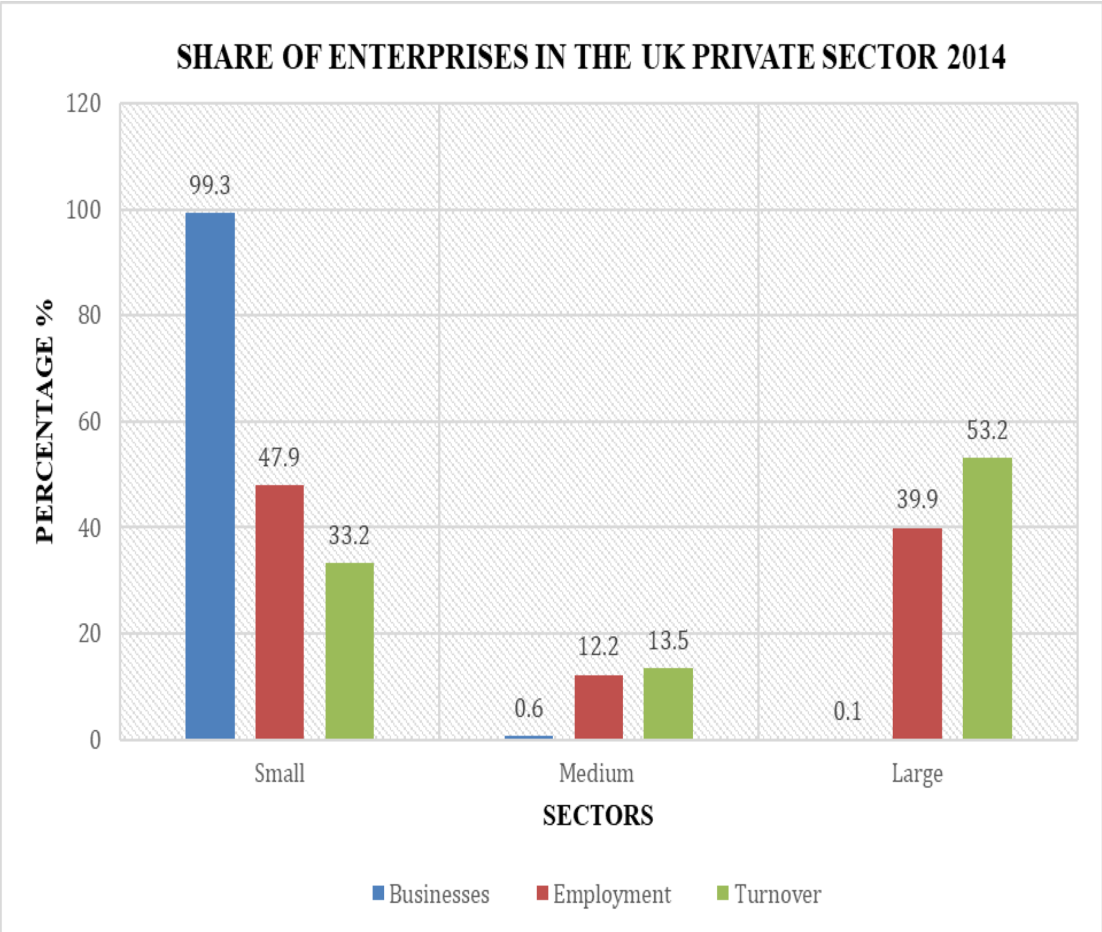
4.2 Research Context and Turbulent Environment

4.2.1 SMEs in the UK

Small companies have been recognised as critical to the UK economy's development and stability (Malay 2012). SMEs are self-contained, unaffiliated companies with less than a specified number of workers (Mason, 2015). This number fluctuates depending on the country. In the UK, where statistics are based on employment definition, SMEs are classified as companies with less than 250 workers, domestic and international. Sections 382 and 465 of the Companies Act, 2006 define SME for accounting purposes in the UK (Government of UK – Companies Act, 2006). A small company has a revenue of less than £6.5 million, a balance sheet total of less than £3.26 million, and less than 50 employees. A medium-sized company has up to £25.9 million in sales, a balance sheet value of up to £12.9 million, and less than 250 employees (BIS 2016).

i. In 2013, the UK had 4.9 million firms, with almost 99% of them being SMEs.
ii. In 2013, SME businesses employed 14,424,000 people in the UK.
iii. The European Commission's SME Performance Review states that SMEs generate a Gross Value Added of €473 billion or 49.8% of the UK economy.

Figure: 4.2.1 Share of Enterprises in the UK Private Sector 2014



(Source: BIS, Business Population Estimates 2014)

In 2014, there were 5.2 million SMEs in the UK (as shown in table 4.2.1 below), accounting for more than 99% of all businesses (Ward and Rhodes, 2014; Rhodes, 2017) . Microbusinesses are those with less than nine employees. Although most UK businesses employ less than ten people, they account for only 33% of employment and 19% turnover (Mason *et al*., 2011; Cowling *et al*., 2015). Large enterprises with more than 250 employees accounted for less than 0.1% of businesses but 40% of jobs and 53% of turnover (Holmes, 2018). The UK is a strong supporter of SMEs, with most firms falling into the small, medium-sized, and microbusiness categories (Cowling *et al*., 2012).

Table: 4.2.1 Business Statistics, UK private sector 2014

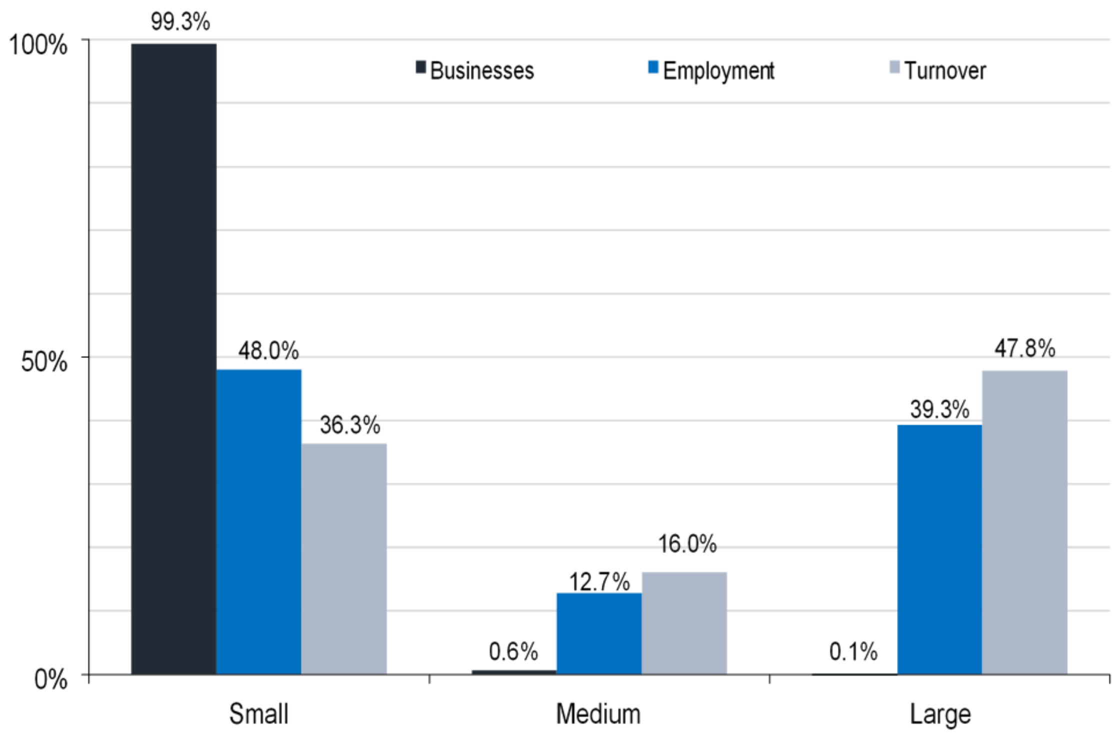
	Number of Enterprises			**Employees**	**Turnover**
	2013 (000s)	**2014 (000s)**	**% Change**	**2014 (000s)**	**2014 (£ billions)**
Micro (0 - 9 employees)	4,671	5,010	7%	8,276	655
Small (10 - 49 employees)	186	195	5%	3,807	515
Medium (50 - 249 employees)	30	31	3%	3,075	477
Total SMEs (0 - 250 employees)	**4,887**	**5,236**	**7%**	**15,158**	**1,647**
Large (250 + employees)	6	7	17%	10,070	1,874
Total (all businesses)	**4,895**	**5,243**	**7%**	**25,228**	**3,521**
SMEs as % of total	99.8%	99.9%	-	60%	47%
Micro as % of total	95%	96%	-	33%	19%

(Source: BIS, Business Population Estimates 2014)

SMEs account for around three-fifths of the workforce and create nearly half of private-sector income in the UK.

- At the start of the 2020 calendar year, SMEs employed 16.8 million people (61% of the total), with a £2.3 trillion (52%) turnover.
- Small businesses employed 13.3 million people (48%) and generated £1.6 trillion in revenue (36%).
- Medium-sized businesses employed 3.5 million people (13%) and generated £0.7 trillion in revenue (16%).
- Large corporations employed 10.9 million people (39%) and generated £2.1 trillion in revenue (48%) (See figure 4.2.1 below).

Figure: 4.2.1 Contribution of different sized businesses to the total population, employment, and turnover, start of 2020



(Source: Business Population Estimates for the UK: Statistical Release – Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2020)

4.2.2 Overview of Turbulent Environment

In hindsight, turbulence should not be confused with a crisis. These two occurrences are sometimes used interchangeably, although they are not equivalent in meaning. A crisis is defined by a feeling of urgency, danger, and uncertainty, while turbulence is defined as a persistent element (Ansell *et al.*, 2017). For example, the US had an economic collapse in 2007/2008 because of a mortgage-related financial crisis (Helleiner, 2011). The financial crisis was unanticipated and unforeseen, but the economic collapse is a continuous element that continues to be a danger to organisational success or failure ten years later (Purves *et al.*, 2016). This seems to confirm Cameron and Kim's (1987) thesis that environmental volatility is the most significant issue confronting contemporary organisations. Kipley *et al.* (2012) contend that environmental turbulence is the degree of change and complexity in an industry's environment that external causes may cause.

Globalisation, economic insecurity, technological convergence, and political and civil upheaval have all rocked the industries' foundations (Steger, 2017). As Van den Bekerom *et al.* (2016) put it, these environmental shocks have increased the complexities in business environments, as the greater the amount of change in environmental factors or the greater the number of environmental factors that must be considered, the greater the level of environmental turbulence. Furthermore, Kipley *et al*. (2012) argue that when changes in the regulatory, social-economic, technical, and environmental realms co-occur, turbulence and uncertainty arises.

In the words of Kipley *et al*. (2012), environmental turbulence refers to the degree of change and complexity present in an industry's surrounding environment. Khandwalla (1977) states that environmental turbulence might be defined as a dynamic, unpredictable and fluctuating environment in which a change in their properties characterises the components (Beckett, 2015). With increasing external volatility, strategic problems that put the organisation's capacity to design and implement its plan to the test are becoming more frequent. (Perrot 2011). Therefore to withstand the turbulence, the level must guide the kind of reaction. For example, an organisation may react by making operational adjustments but minimal strategic changes (Perrot 2011).

According to Ansoff and McDonnell (1990), for a firm to get the highest return on investment, the aggressiveness of its strategy must be matched to the volatility of the external environment (Ansoff *et al.*, 2018). Navigating through the complexities of today's business environment is a challenging task for top managers and leaders. The first intuitive response is to cut costs and lock the company until things get better. Every downturn, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to call into question the status quo. Managers and employees must recognise that the organisation cannot continue to function in the same manner as it has in the past. Resistance to change and complacency are reduced during a recession, enabling managers to leverage the energy created by these events to make significant changes to the organisation's strategy, structure, and culture (KPMG 2009). Organisations operate in a hostile environment where they must master the art of survival in order to thrive. An organisation's environment is comprised of elements and situations, some of which are outside the company's control and have an impact on the company's strategic decisions and competitiveness. The extent to which the organisation comprehends its surroundings is a significant step forward.

Businesses must be aware of these elements to take advantage of chances, convert them into possibilities, and decrease the dangers that might jeopardise the organisation's long-term viability. Therefore, managers should design plans compatible with or match internal strengths and external opportunities (Mintzberg *et al.,* 2009; Wilden *et al.*, 2013). According to Karake (1997), managers are confronted with environmental changes and complexity due to the introduction of new technology, rapidly changing economic and political trends, shifts in cultural values, and consumer expectations. According to Rigby (2001), when environmental circumstances change rapidly, top executives must renounce using a one–size–fits–all strategy that was widespread during tough times and adopt a tailored approach (Kotter *et al.,* 2021).

As Karake (1997) points out, management is faced with a difficult task: maintaining a careful watch on external conditions while creating and implementing effective coping strategies. As a result, notifying top executives is critical to ensuring successful adaptation. In his book, Rigby (2001) believes that top managers must constantly evaluate three aspects of their company content: the source and amount of turbulence in their industry, their strategic position within their sector, and the soundness of their financial position. As history has shown, the speed of the corporate environment has increased as a result of the lessons learned (Rigby 2001). Recent events, such as the global financial crisis, shifting political leadership, and growing firm spending have brought a slew of challenges to business executives operating in the twenty-first century. External issues such as uncertainty and limits may be substantial causes of stress when it comes to organisations (Balint *et al.,* 2011). While a wide variety of environmental variables touches some organisations, others are impacted by a few (Pearce and Robinson 2008).

Economic circumstances are constantly shifting; interest rates vary; consumer tastes and preferences shift; new government rules are implemented; new technologies are introduced and developed. Turbulence is created by all of these changes (Perrot 2011). In order to operate effectively in turbulent environments, organisations must continually foresee and forecast future changes and develop techniques for dealing with shifting environmental conditions (Karake 1997). Because of this, organisations are required to gather knowledge about their surroundings to deal with unpredictable and dynamic situations. As the intensity of turbulence increases, more information is required in order to manoeuvre effectively. As the most famous line of reasoning goes, top executives of firms functioning in extremely tumultuous settings are compelled to make plans for unpredictability and change based on a large amount of data collected over time. Executives at businesses functioning in low-turbulence settings, on the other hand, need the least amount of organisational planning (Miller and Friensen 1983; Miller, 2011).

According to Miller and Friensen (1983), it is necessary to assess a changing environment more thoroughly and persistently to provide executives with an appropriate level of expertise (Miller, 2011). The unpredictable nature of turbulence often leads to organisations' inability to react or anticipate their competitors to behave (Caldart and Ricart 2006; Caldart *et al.,* 2019). In most cases, once one company responds to environmental shocks, the others follow suit, causing ripple effects that create environmental instability (Mason 2007; Dubey *et al.,* 2021). As a result, most organisations postpone their reaction to different external variables as they arise (Beirman, 2020). In today's world, most changes are new, the costs of coping with the changes are substantial, and the pace of change is quick and complex to predict (Kipley *et al.,* 2012). Because of the increased volatility in the environment, many organisations' plans nowadays become outdated even before they are executed (Ansell *et al.,* 2017). Rapidly changing external circumstances and numerous factors require management teams to interpret such changes more correctly and respond more forcefully than in stable settings (Alkhafaji and Nelson, 2013).

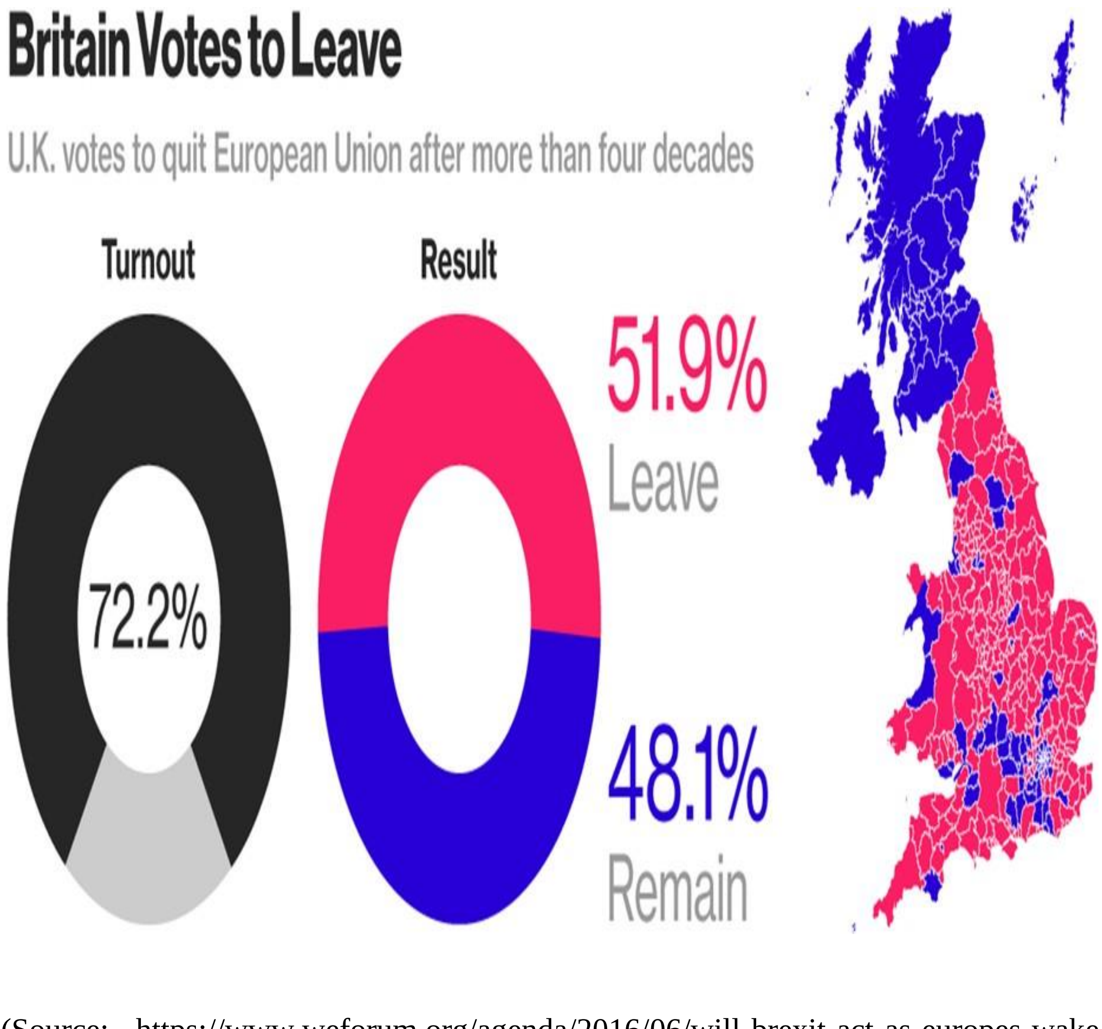
4.3 Turbulent Contexts

4.3.1 Brexit

In 2015, the UK Conservative Party advocated for a referendum. On Friday, June 24, 2016, British people awoke to the startling news that 'Brexit' had become a reality after the vote (Bailey and Budd, 2017). It was an extraordinary political occurrence with possibly seismic economic ramifications. Brexit was the abbreviation for the UK's departure from the EU, the economic and policy union to which it had been a member since 1973 (Smith, 2017). The 'Leave' campaign got 51.9% of the vote, or 17.4 million votes, in the June 2016 referendum, while the 'Remain' campaign received 48.1% or 16.1 million votes (See figure 4.3.1 below). The participation rate was 72.2% (Curtice, 2017). Leaving the EU was a complicated process.

Following the people's decision, Former UK Prime Minister Theresa May filed the Article 50 withdrawal notice to the EU on March 29, 2017 (Allen, 2018). She drafted a departure deal with the EU outlining their future relationship, but a divided Parliament blocked it. As a result, Boris Johnson took over as the next Prime Minister of the UK in July 2019. Johnson's Conservative Party subsequently won a majority in a royally mandated general election on December 12, 2019, allowing him to secure Parliament's ratification of the exit deal he negotiated with the EU (Pant, 2019). The Agreement Act got the required legislative Royal Assent on January 23, 2020, which is when the Queen officially agreed to turn the measure into law. On January 31, 2020, the UK formally left the EU; however, a transition phase began on December 31, 2020. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was signed on December 24, 2020 (and signed on December 30).

Figure 4.3.1: UK's vote to leave the EU by turnouts



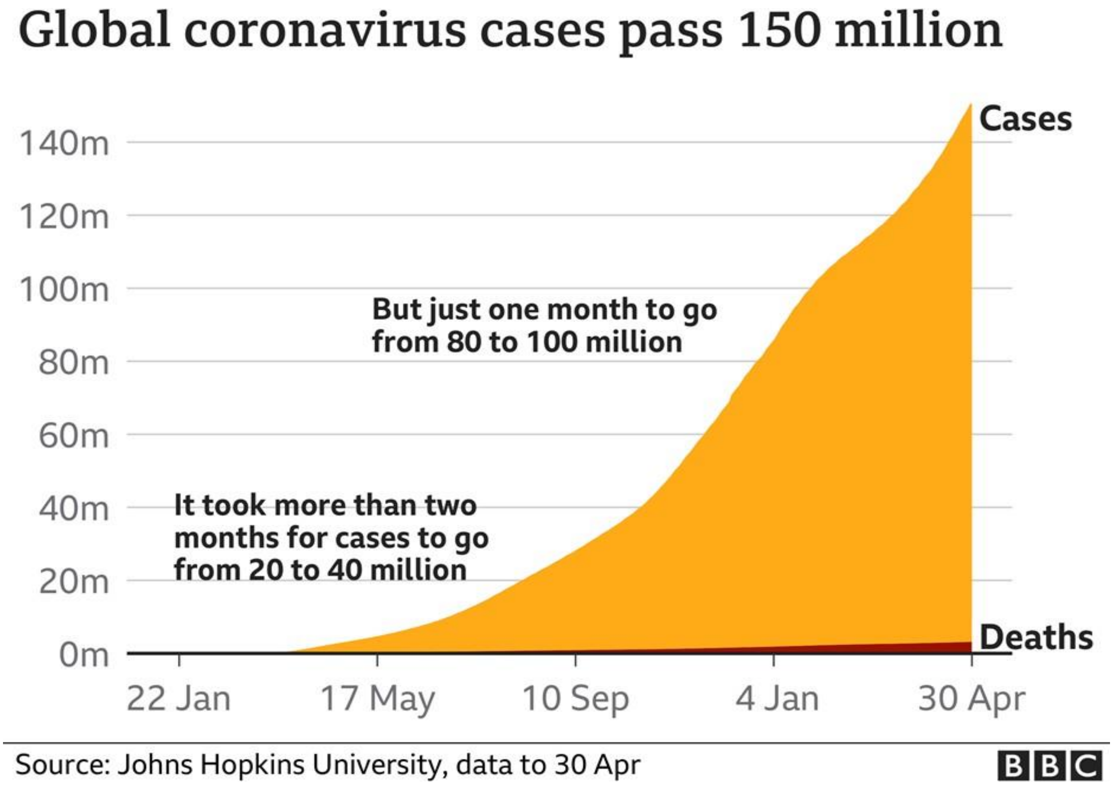
(Source: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/will-brexit-act-as-europes-wake-up-call)

4.3.2 Covid-19

‘Coronavirus, also known as Covid-19, is an infectious illness caused by a virus (Moore 2020). The virus was discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan and spread fast over the globe. The disease is very infectious (Shereen *et al.,* 2020). Many people infected with the virus had respiratory issues, but they did not need therapy to recover from their illness. Serious diseases are more likely to strike the elderly and those suffering from medical disorders such as heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, and cancer. (WHO 2020). The lethal illness is spreading at an unprecedented rate nearly everywhere on the globe. Governments were concerned about the infection’s decrease. As a precaution, countries were placed under lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus. As a result, companies and economical operations were affected, reducing available human and economic resources such as labour, materials, transportation, and so on (Craven *et al.,* 2020). Many companies were forced to close as a result, and their performance suffered as well.

Some businesses were compelled to lay off staff, while others were forced to reduce the number of hours that they worked (Edgecliffe 2020). In addition, the government announced a lockdown, border and airport closures, mobility restrictions, market closures, and social isolation, all of which curtailed products and services that serve as the backbone of SMEs's operations and on which they rely for smooth, regular operations, as well as other measures. Moreover, limits on the movement of people, goods, and services result in significant losses for businesses and industries such as aviation, entertainment, hospitality, and sports in various countries. As a result, an estimated total loss of more than $4 trillion was incurred worldwide (Ozili, 2020).

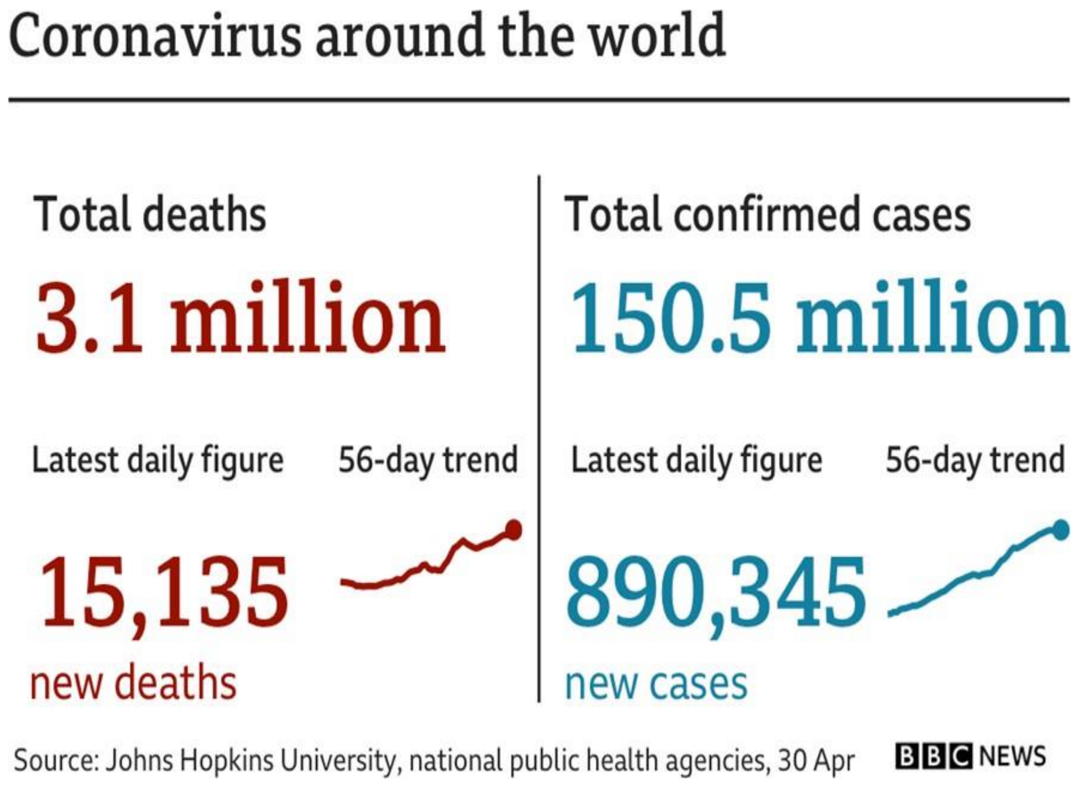
Figure 4.3.2: Covid '19 infections statistics globally



(Source: Johns Hopkins University, national public health agencies – data to 20 Sept. 2021 - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-51235105)

Despite the demand from public health authorities to undertake preventive measures in the case of such an emergency, business organisations were not prepared for the pandemic, except for large corporations, who were able to take a bold action plan against the pandemic (Rebmann *et al.*, 2013). The worldwide pandemic wreaked havoc on the global economy, destroying the economy and business while affecting the health system, social movements, workers, and job prospects (as shown in figure 4.3.2 below). Environmental shock exposes SMEs to a higher degree of strategic uncertainty, which impacts SMEs' regular operations and, in some instances, threatens their existence (Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki 2011). Many nations across the globe are experiencing unprecedented difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNDP 2020). The UK is no exception.

Figure 4.3.2: Covid '19 confirmed cases globally



(Source: Johns Hopkins University, national public health agencies – data to 20 Sept. 2021 - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-51235105)

The overwhelming competing challenges raised by COVID-19 have forced UK SMEs to take steps to maintain their existence, such as reducing working hours, dismissal, halting some business operations, temporarily closing, and increasing the existing inequalities and vulnerabilities among societies. This was reflected in its impact on the operations of SMEs throughout the world. The Covid-19 pandemic had a catastrophic impact on people and material resources, and it is one of the most significant occurrences in history. The pandemic spread without hindrance worldwide, and it was the worst to hit the global economy since the Great Depression (WHO, 2020). As of July 28th, 2020, the number of confirmed cases worldwide was 16,301,736, with 650,069 casualties (Akanni and Gabriel, 2020). Furthermore, WHO (2020) said that the pandemic would cause the most significant economic slump in history. The global economy is expected to lose money via three channels: the supply chain, demand, and the financial market: these channels harm companies, household spending, and international commerce.

4.3.3 Turbulent Contexts influences in SMEs in the UK

i. <u>Brexit</u>

The referendum decision in June 2016 to leave the EU (*i.e.,* Brexit) has exacerbated business uncertainty in the UK (Bloom *et al.,* 2017). Brexit has the potential to significantly alter the laws regulating how UK companies do business both locally and globally due to its highly complicated, disputed, and uncertain character (Jessop 2017). Many economists have previously focused their attention on the macroeconomic implications of Brexit, such as the impact of Brexit on future GDP, trade, and inflation (OECD 2016). However, the research concentrates on how Brexit would affect their ability to compete in their respective industries (Dhingra *et al.,* 2017b). Industries in the UK dominated by large foreign corporations with a complex cross-country supply chain, such as automotive manufacturing, have seen a 75% decline in fixed capital investment over the last two years, with a significant portion of the decline attributed to uncertainty surrounding Brexit (Financial Times 2017a). According to a BMW representative, ambiguity is a significant hindrance to making long-term business choices. (Financial Times 2017b).

While this evidence is useful for large businesses and policymakers monitoring the effects of Brexit, it lacks the information needed to determine the anticipated effect on small businesses. Often referred to as the "backbone" of the modern economy, the UK's 5.5 million SMEs makeup 99.9% of all firms and employ 60% of the private sector workforce (European Commission 2016). With more than 2 million employment generated since 2010, SMEs account for 73% of all net private-sector job growth in the UK (Nesta 2017). However, SMEs may find it challenging to participate or implement contingency planning necessary to deal effectively with unforeseen events such as Brexit due to financial and HR constraints. For example, the Confederation of British Industry reported that while larger companies are more likely to be involved in Brexit scenario preparation, smaller businesses are less likely to do so.

Additionally, the extent to which Brexit impacts the success of SMEs is likely to be dependent on more than just the parameters of any deal agreed between the UK and the EU. In addition, their geographical location, industrial sector, and company focus, particularly when it comes to internationalisation, should be considered. While SMEs are critically important to the economy, the vast majority of them are run by resource-constrained entrepreneurs and managers who are limited in their ability to plan for contingencies in the future, causing these businesses to struggle to deal with higher levels of unpredictability (Gupta *et al.,* 2004). Because of a shortage of data, empirical evidence on the impact of Brexit on UK SMEs is mainly on ad hoc, small-scale surveys commissioned by financial intermediaries, trade groups, and other representative organisations (Brown *et al.*, 2018).

One thousand and one SMEs in the UK were polled. The results revealed that opinions toward Brexit are equally divided, with 25% of companies responding positively and 29% responding negatively (Aldermore, 2017). Medium-sized firms (43% of those polled) were more optimistic about the effect of Brexit than large corporations (37%). Another poll of firms in the UK revealed that small businesses were more optimistic about the effect of Brexit on exports than their bigger counterparts, according to the results (Bloom *et al.*, 2017). According to the Boston Consulting Group research, more than half of UK SMEs had no preparations for change. However, according to the study's results, 25% had done some internal planning, and roughly 20% actively implemented changes in preparation for Brexit (AFME 2017).

Another research by the Financial Services Bureau indicated that EU personnel were employed by a quarter of all small businesses in Scotland (FSB Scotland, 2017). One of the essential sources of concern for these companies was the possible effect of Brexit on labour supply. The data suggest that the opaque and unclear character of the Brexit process is a primary source of anxiety for SMEs in the UK, but this is not conclusive (FSB, 2017). However, because Brexit's impact is diverse and is expected to remain over time, more comprehensive empirical research about the anticipated consequences for SMEs is necessary (Brown *et al.*, 2019).. Because of its highly complicated, disputed, and ambiguous character, Brexit has the potential to fundamentally alter the laws that regulate how businesses in the UK conduct their activities both domestically and internationally (Jessop, 2017).

Researchers from a wide range of disciplines, including economics, entrepreneurship, corporate finance, organisational theory, and strategic management, have all looked at the critical role uncertainty plays in influencing how organisations make choices in their respective fields (Baker *et al.*, 2016). Research suggests that uncertainty may impact SMEs due to their lower ability to withstand unexpected shocks (Ghosal and Ye 2015). However, it is projected that the impact of uncertainty would vary across SMEs depending on their size and strategic direction and their governance structure and geographical location (Brown *et al.*, 2019). It is thus critical from both a management and policy perspective to understand the effect of Brexit on SMEs and how this will influence future strategic choices (Barron and Boutary, 2020).

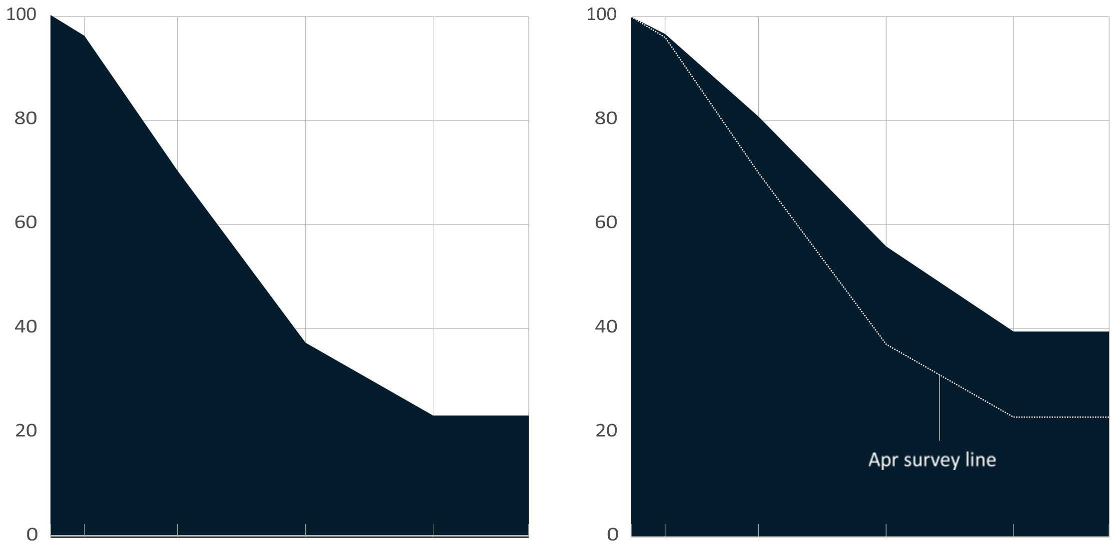
ii. <u>Covid-19</u>

The year 2020 will undoubtedly provide unprecedented problems for SMEs throughout the UK, with some referring to it as an "annus horribillis" for firms (ERC 2020). Even though Brexit discussions are continuing, the year started with the advent of a worldwide pandemic, which led to national lockdowns, frozen supply chains, and a general lack of consumer demand. According to the ERC (2020), a survey performed in the fourth quarter of 2020, over three-quarters of SMEs said that uncertainty around the pandemic hindered operating a profitable business (ERC, 2020). When consumer-facing industries like hospitality, food services, the arts, and leisure are considered, this percentage rises dramatically, with 90% and 92% of respondents characterising the pandemic as a hindrance, respectively, in these industries (Hopley 2021). A further finding of the King's Business School (KBS) poll was that around 61% of SMEs felt that the crisis jeopardised their existence (Stephan *et al.*, 2020).

Figure 4.3.3: UK SMEs feel more resilient than they did in April 2020, but more than half may be out of business in 12 months.

% of respondents

Early Apr 2020 survey (n = 504) **Early May 2020 survey** (n = 600)



May Aug Dec Apr May Aug Dec Apr 2020, 2020 2020 2021 2020 2020 2020 2021

(Source: McKinsey UK SME Survey conducted as of May 2020)

It has been challenging for SMEs in the UK. They are much more likely to operate in industries that have been hit the hardest by cash flow reductions, such as the food and hospitality industries, the performing arts, and the building and construction industries.

For example, the hotel sector created no production during the same period, while 90% of logistics, construction, and agricultural firms recorded significant income declines. Examples include: (ONS, 2020). According to the Office for National Statistics ONS (2020), in November 2020, 34% of lodging and food service firms expressed little or poor confidence in their ability to survive the following three months of operation (ONS, 2020). SMEs are less robust than their bigger counterparts, exacerbating the effect of the pandemic and making a recovery for these small firms more difficult (Juergensen *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, while the pandemic has unquestionably hindered SMEs in terms of functioning and economics, it has also prompted legislative measures that have boosted enterprises and opened the door to new possibilities for those who have survived.

National lockdowns, social distancing measures, and limitations on the movement of people and things have all impacted the way firms conduct their operations today (Ozili and Arun, 2020; Kaushik and Guleria, 2020). According to a KBS poll, 73% of firms altered their business strategy in response to the pandemic, either by inventing new goods or comprehensively repositioning themselves (Stephan *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the slowdown in the global supply chain has had a substantial influence on the productivity of businesses. Businesses who depended on imported goods endured a supply shock prior to the UK lockdowns as the virus spread around the globe (Mitha, 2020). Supply and demand were halted when the UK government enacted steps to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus in March 2020, with mobility throughout the nation severely limited.

The Business Impact COVID-19 Survey reported that March and April 2020 will see the most significant month-on-month decline in exports and imports ever recorded by the Office for National Statistics (ERC, 2020). SMEs feel these supply and demand shocks even more intensely, often having insufficient resources to cope with them. Aside from the apparent effects on supply and demand, the pandemic has considerably influenced the day-to-day operations of SMEs, particularly in developing countries. The fact is that many firms have hurried to build feasible work-from-home solutions or adapt their workplaces in order to retain some level of activity; others have been forced to confront the prospect of shutting their doors, either temporarily or permanently. These transformations have been the most challenging for historically consumer-facing companies that are less suited to work-from-home arrangements, such as the hospitality and food services industries, to navigate (ERC, 2020).

Meanwhile, two-thirds of entrepreneurs questioned by KBS said that they began working from home entirely or more often, and many firms reported that they had to make significant expenditures in order to comply with social distancing requirements (Juergensen *et al.*, 2020). Work-from-home models have been used by firms that have been successful in making a move. New technologies that allow telework or online shopping have been implemented. In reaction to the epidemic, over two-thirds of enterprises participating in the Business Futures Survey said they altered their technology use (ERC, 2020). As a consequence of this inability to react, especially in the service sector, service companies saw considerable declines in turnover compared to their manufacturing counterparts (ERC, 2020).

SMEs throughout the nation had substantial financial challenges as a result of the epidemic (Bartik *et al*., 2020). According to the Office for National Statistics, just 38% of the smallest businesses expressed strong confidence in their ability to survive the following three months in October 2020. (ONS, 2020). A decline in approximately two-thirds of SMEs' income has resulted from COVID-19, putting many businesses in a vulnerable financial position (Roper *et al.*, 2020). No matter the root reason, financial crises draw attention to the problems that SMEs' problems in obtaining capital to meet their cash-flow needs. While the economy is in a state of flux, banks typically regard SMEs as posing more risks, denying them essential financial assistance (Eggers, 2020). Many SMEs may find themselves forced to depend on turnover and savings due to this. The authors estimate that one to twelve enterprises are in danger of experiencing a severe liquidity crisis owing to a total absence of cash balances and that only four out of every ten businesses had any 'rainy day' reserves prior to the commencement of the COVID-19 lockdowns (Cowling *et al.*, 2020).

These issues have been prevalent in the in-service industries, which have seen significant decreases in turnover. More than half of firms in the foodservice industry, the arts, entertainment, and other service sectors anticipate their cash reserves to last barely six months, and 14% of all enterprises say their current operating expenditures surpass their current turnover (ERC, 2020). Moreover, a quarter of firms are anxious about defaulting on current loans, and over 30% of small businesses and 32% of medium-sized enterprises have had to lay off staff as a result (Albonico, 2020). Furthermore, many organisations have been forced to curtail or terminate their research and development activities severely, thereby putting an end to their future innovation and growth ambitions. So the COVID-19 situation has placed the majority of SMEs in danger (Warsame, 2020; Baker and Judge, 2020).

4.4 HRM and TM in SMEs in turbulent contexts

Organisations have to cope with an increasingly turbulent environment requiring often rapid adaptation (Ansoff *et al.*, 2018). With increasingly saturated markets and fierce competition in developed countries, some organisations are targeting fewer but untapped markets in emerging economies (Ghauri *et al.,* 2014; Tasavori *et al.,* 2015) where they might be faced with highly uncertain environments. With the presence of uncertain environments in the world, an important issue is how companies carry out business in such an environment (Bruton *et al.,* 2018; Rodgers *et al.,* 2019). Unpredictable changes from war, terrorism, sanctions, economic crises, or political changes in these environments create uncertainty and a more challenging situation for organisations (Wood *et al.,* 2018). Given the fiercely challenging global business environment, companies are forced to be pragmatic and strategic in order to remain competitive (Newell, 2005; Kravariti *et al.,* 2021). Such environmental conditions also make it difficult for businesses like SMEs to apply their standardised practices and become successful (Mellahi *et al.,* 2013).

To overcome this, SMEs have to develop new strategies, not just for improving their performance, but sometimes with the aim of survival (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012). One of the ways they achieve this is by optimising their talented human capital on a global scale (Carbery, 2015). Combined with the growing pressure from the economic system towards greater efficiency and often identical or at least highly similar technological processes, people become a crucial resource for organisational success. Without adequately qualified and motivated members an organisation hardly can cope with these developments. In turn, this makes the management of human resources a crucial task for the management of an organisation. In the current HRM and management thinking, this is something of a no-brainer and belongs to common wisdom in HRM, as TM is seen by many organisations as being necessary in order to gain competitive advantage (Harsch and Festing, 2020). This area has seen a worldwide renaissance of interest in the worker-workplace equation; all kinds of organisations have recognised the need to manage their workforce effectively, regardless of context-specific economic and workforce conditions (Tarique and Schuler, 2010).

The bulk of TM studies are in the context of MNCs (Stahl *et al.,* 2012), although there is currently significant interest in the SMEs context as well (Festing *et al.,* 2013). Research suggests that the conceptualisation and practice of TM in SMEs is different to that of MNCs (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). This is due to significant differences between the contexts such as the latter’s primary focus on high potentials and high performers (Cappelli and Keller, 2014). SMEs, on the other hand, are typified by an egalitarian culture, lack of stable hierarchical structures and strategic positions, and the enactment of informal and often personalised practices (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). It is therefore necessary for TM to be uniquely conceptualised in this context. In the context of SMEs, TM is viewed as a philosophy relevant for all employees but which focuses mostly on those with high potentials and in critical positions, with the aim to get talents on board, grow their optimal capabilities and retain them (Piansoongnern *et al.*, 2011).

Existing literature on TM shows that it lacks a robust theoretical and empirical basis (Nijs *et al.,* 2014). There are some theoretical perspectives that could explain how, and why, TM is pursued by organisations; these include the institutional theory, the resource-based view and the human capital theory (Khilji and Schuler, 2017). In this study, the researcher focused on integrated institutional resource-based view perspective. According to North (1990), institutions emerge because of the uncertainties inherent in human interaction, and the institutional environment affects both the official and informal rules of the game (Welter and Smallbone, 2011). Consequently, the institutional context plays a vital role in moderating entrepreneurial activity and firm-level strategic behaviour (Minniti 2008). Differences in institutional settings among countries affect the nature and embeddedness of their people management policies and practices (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003; Najeeb, 2014). Vaiman and Brewster (2015) thus argue that TM strategies need to consider the institutional context in which decisions are made.

According to Giancola (2009), studies have investigated how businesses respond to recessions or turbulent environments and how these responses impact workers' work experiences. Nevertheless, firms are encouraged to adopt methods and develop strategies that build and improve their organisational ability to survive and thrive in challenging market conditions, particularly in the face of deep and prolonged turmoil (Stefaniak *et al.*, 2012). HRM is one management function that has seen the far-reaching effects of turbulence or economic depression (CIPD 2009; Parry and Tyson, 2013). However, understanding how organisations like SMEs manage talent and HR in volatile settings like Brexit and Covid-19 is still in infancy (Malik and Sanders, 2021).

Moreover, much less is known about employment-related reactions to such circumstances across businesses of various sizes (Latham 2009; Lai *et al.,* 2016).

In an uncertain environment, employees are also affected. In such an environment, because of the possibility of fluctuations in firm revenues, companies may consider downsizing (Schenkel and Teigland, 2017). Employees' bargaining power is also impacted (Wilkinson and Wood, 2017) and they might experience a reduction in their benefits and wages (Streeck, 2009; Johnstone *et al.*, 2019). In addition, employees might feel more vulnerable and less rational in their decision-making with the resultant threats to their job security (Shoss, 2017). The possibility of all these potential changes might also lead to the development of negative emotions such as fear, worry, anxiety and stress (Subramaniam, 2018). Considering the impact of the uncertain environment like Brexit and Covid-19 in managing talents is particularly crucial as the development of solutions is to best utilise human assets (Bjorkman *et al.,* 2007; Dries, 2013) which can be a source of competitive advantage for the firm (Barney, 1991; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Collings *et al.*, 2019) in an unpredictable environment. With volatile environmental conditions impacting not only the firm but also its employees, HR departments and managers have to be proactive and take measures to prevent any potential disruptions in the workplace (Mirza, 2018). Despite the prominence of HRM, there is little understanding of HRM and TM-related strategic changes that SMEs must deploy in turbulent environments (Bader *et al.*, 2015; Wood *et al.*, 2018).

Some scholars, for example, have pointed to the emergence of institutional voids (Doh *et al.*, 2017), situations where institutional arrangements that support markets are absent, weak, or fail to accomplish the role expected of them (Mair and Marti, 2009; Stephan *et al.,* 2015), and highlighted the importance of the development of entrepreneurial orientation when dysfunctional competition exists. Despite the existence of some literature shedding light on how companies operate in a precarious environment, there is limited research investigating how firms should also develop strategies to cope with the effects of uncertainty inside their firms, especially in managing their employees (Wood *et al.*, 2018). Below, the study points to some of these HR-related findings:

In highly uncertain environments, cost reduction is a common strategy that also impacts HR departments (Schuler *et al.*, 2011). Prior studies have shown that when faced with a crisis, companies may decide to change employees' compensation packages, lay them off (Luan *et al.*, 2013), or reduce their wages, actions which are usually perceived as a breach of the psychological contract between the employer and employees (Chambel and Fortuna, 2015) and which lead to employee dissatisfaction. Moreover, in turbulent environments, more flexible, extemporaneous decisions may be needed to respond quickly which can change the previous decision-making procedures of businesses like SMEs to more a distributed, localized ones (Williams *et al.*, 2017; Wood *et al.*, 2018) that is built upon the rare knowledge acquired in such environments (Suder *et al.*, 2019). The decision-making processes of managers will also be affected (Williams *et al.*, 2017). Thus, SME managers will have to accelerate the speed of their decision-making under limited time pressure which requires having managers with better cognitive ability (Pearson and Clair, 1998; Stefaniak *et al.*, 2012).

Some scholars have also pointed out the role of communication with employees about both the uncertain environment and the strategies that the company is going to pursue to create a shared understanding among employees (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012). Prior research has also corroborated that in turbulent environments, subsidiaries may need to have a higher level of control over HRM practices to conform to the local conditions (Mellahi *et al.*, 2013). Finally, in the face of unstable environmental conditions, some scholars have highlighted the importance of the development of resilience in employees (Coutu, 2002; Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011; Tanner *et al.,* 2015). Resilience has been found to be a critical factor that supports employees in managing work-related stress and coping with challenging environmental conditions (Lamb and Cogan, 2016; Rigotti *et al.,* 2021).

According to the current research, SMEs work in a highly dynamic and changing environment, making them more susceptible to instability than larger companies (Cowling *et al.*, 2015; Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). While current research suggests that there may be a difference in HRM and TM management between SMEs and large companies (Vaiman and Collings, 2013), this is typically in times of economic stability and growth (Allen *et al.*, 2013). However, it is also helpful in delving further into such problems during an economic downturn or instability. Turbulence and economic uncertainty shocks such as Brexit and Covid-19 have distinct effects on small and big businesses (Smallbone *et al.*, 2012). Smaller businesses are anticipated to be less robust in a turbulent environment than larger firms due to their relative resource poverty, poor external environmental control, and access to financial resources (Sheehan, 2013).

Given today's challenging external environment (Brexit and Covid-19), people management is a critical business problem for small businesses. A fundamental issue in HR and TM in organisations, particularly SMEs, is the degree to which people are treated like other resources to be used and discarded rather than as a different kind of resource needing investment, growth, and nurture (Sheehan 2013). Even though studies of larger corporations dominate the literature, academics have increasingly called for additional studies at the confluence of HR, TM, and SMEs (Saridakis *et al.*, 2013). After all, many business owners must hire, assign tasks to, inspire, and keep workers who will help their company grow and thrive (Cappelli, 2015; Griffin *et al.,* 2016). However, work and people management at SMEs is done more casually and frequently without the assistance of a specialised HR department or even an HR specialist (Saridakis *et al.*, 2013).

Whether they use HR language to describe such tasks or whether their methods are formal or informal, all employers, big or little, must manage talent and HR problems. Practical HR and TM policies and practices for smaller businesses may improve their performance in critical areas such as creativity, innovation, quality, adaptability, and entrepreneurial behaviour (Hayton *et al.,* 2013). In summary, although HR and TM practices may be a bureaucratic and corporate phenomenon, they play a major role in the success or failure of high-growth entrepreneurial companies (Tanksy and Heneman 2006; Sparrow *et al.,* 2016). Thus, this research builds on the few studies that have addressed this problem (Latham 2009) and adds to the small body of information around this subject (Wickramasinghe and Perera 2012). SMEs mainly operate in a very dynamic and chaotic environment (Barrows and Neely 2011). As a result, to remain in the market, SMEs must be creative and continuously evaluate their procedures and practices (Bahri *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, the objective of this research is to bridge this gap and shed light on the application and concept of TM in SMEs in the UK during turbulent times. Brexit and Covid-19 are expected to have significant implications for entrepreneurial activity and how UK companies conduct business locally and globally due to their highly politicised and negotiated character (Balls *et al.,* 2018). Furthermore, previous research indicates that unexpected events (such as the global financial crisis, Brexit, and Covid-19) raise uncertainty, which leads to decreases and delays in intangible and intangible investments (Berg *et al.*, 2016). While there is a plethora of research about the HR strategies that SMEs adopt in stable environments (Stavrou *et al*., 2010; Boxall *et al.*, 2019), there is not much known about the successful HR and TM practices in SMEs in highly uncertain environments (Bader *et al.*, 2015; Wood *et al.,* 2018). Hence, the study aims to complement the existing understandings in the field of HRM and TM.

4.5 Overall Discussion of Study's Rationale and Gaps in Literature

In the context of SMEs (Bercu 2012), a sector that is labour intensive and largely dependent on unskilled labour, there is a rising interest in human resource management research (HRM). While TM has gained in popularity since the late 1990s, there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes "talent" in this context (Sparrow *et al.*, 2014). In particular, there is disagreement on whether TM should concentrate on all workers or just on the most promising and successful individuals (Thunnissen 2016). While there has been little consensus on the definition of talent, there has been widespread agreement on talent management methods (Tansley, 2011; Tarique and Schuler, 2012). The general idea is that TM encompasses the acquisition, selection, development, and retention of talented individuals (Stahl *et al.*, 2007; Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014).

People's employment and work practices, including the configuration and structure of labour—and hence the 'how' of working together—should be taken into consideration (Thunnissen *et al.,* 2013). Undoubtedly, one of the most notable research gaps in the SME context is the scarcity of in-depth empirical studies to understand the function of human resource management in SMEs and whether HRM plays the same role in SMEs as proven by big company study results (Nolan and Garavan, 2016; Crowley-Henry *et al.*, 2021). According to a recent literature analysis by Harney and Nolan (2013), human resource management in SMEs has recently gotten increased attention. However, despite being recognised as one of the most critical human resource roles, TM is very context-dependent (Strack 2014). In 2015, Sparrow and Makram published a paper on the subject.

When it comes to attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining key people at a start-up, practices and techniques in a small business may not be successful in a large multinational firm (Scullion *et al.*, 2014). SMEs and country-specific or global settings have previously been recognised as having distinct TM practices (Festing *et al.,* 2013). TM techniques and procedures change depending on internal and external circumstances, as seen by the examples above (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.,* 2015). The business environment has become more dynamic, unpredictable, and complex due to increased global competition, transformation into a knowledge economy, increasing importance of digitalisation, and faster changes in customer needs and markets (Teece *et al.*, 2016). As a result of increased global competition, transformation into a knowledge economy, growing importance of digitalization, and faster changes in customer needs and markets, the business environment has become more dynamic, unpredictable, and complex (Nijssen and Paauwe 2012). Internal aspects are shaped by external contextual changes connected to changing working practices and skill needs (Bhalla *et al.*, 2017). The conventional and relatively long-term training programmes with set career trajectories and competence models that are focused on a small number of human resource elites seem to be out of place in today's dynamic and unpredictable circumstances (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018).

However, although change is not a new occurrence, the pace and volatility with which it is occurring at the moment are extraordinary (Hervas-Oliver, 2013). To provide an example, the first iPhone was released barely a decade ago and signalled the beginning of a new age in communications technology. Nonetheless, cellphones and applications have become necessary in today's world, resulting in significant changes to many companies and labour procedures. We are seeing extraordinary dynamics and turbulence, and organisations must react swiftly and flexibly to keep up with the constantly changing environment (Nijssen and Paauwe 2012). HRM and TM practice in SMEs are still poorly understood, as shown by the present research (Psychogios *et al*., 2016; Harney and Alkhalaf, 2021). One of the objectives is to investigate and explain how TM can influence talent and organisations to promote a more stable economy.

When a dual conceptual framework is used as the underlying perspective of the study, the research strengthens the process in the TM discussion. This is especially important for TM in dynamic and turbulent environments, where constant effort is necessary to shape resource talent according to company strategy needs to be effective (Sparrow and Makram, 2015). As a result, the researcher employs an exploratory strategy in the empirical investigation because of his or her limited expertise in the subject topic. The work adds to the further contextualization of TM by responding to the respective calls of Sparrow and Makram (2015) and Thunnissen *et al*. (2013) in the case of competitive and uncertain contexts, respectively. The study proposes a theory- and evidence-based framework for explaining relevant relationships concerning the TM process (Harsch and Festing, 2020). It contributes to the theoretical and empirical research gap in TM identified by (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016) and its potential contribution to creating competitive advantages through the lens of an integrated institutional resource-based TM approach. This research contributes to our knowledge of this understudied setting as a consequence of this.

4.6 Conclusion

Managing talent is becoming more complex and demanding, and a few global companies, such as SMEs, are contemplating taking on the challenge (Festing *et al.*, 2013; Carrigan *et al.*, 2017). The present UK business climate reveals a slew of flaws in HR and TM procedures, as well as a lack of complete knowledge of SMEs' skills, competencies, critical workforces, and top talent. In this tumultuous era, the need for SMEs to be flexible is more urgent, as it has fuelled an increase in employee loyalty, pushing workers to put their job search on wait for the time being (Stringer, 2016).

When excellent talent perceives that market circumstances are improving, they will inevitably become more receptive to career moves (Bryant and Allen, 2013). Talent strategy is just as essential as any other aspect of an organisation's overall strategy (Schuler *et al*., 2011; Werner, 2021). Unfortunately, the harsh reality of volatility in the environment, such as Brexit and Covid-19, implies that organisations such as SMEs do not have the talent planning and management skills to meet the difficulties ahead (Rashid and Ratten, 2021; Kravariti *et al.*, 2021). Innovative organisations will be on the lookout for qualified and talented employees who, in good times, may have been difficult or costly to recruit but are now accessible due to staff cutbacks in other organisations (Manimala and Bhati, 2011; Trost, 2014).

The actual use of a TM approach requires consistency and regularity. As a result, it is simple to conclude that organisations that can unite their workers have a greater chance of thriving during and after a time of turmoil (Collins and Hansen, 2011). Effective TM, on the other hand, is not just a question of encouragement. It is more important than ever for organisations, particularly SMEs, to have a long-term perspective on HR and TM initiatives and take proactive measures to establish retention plans (Sheehan *et al*., 2018; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2019).

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

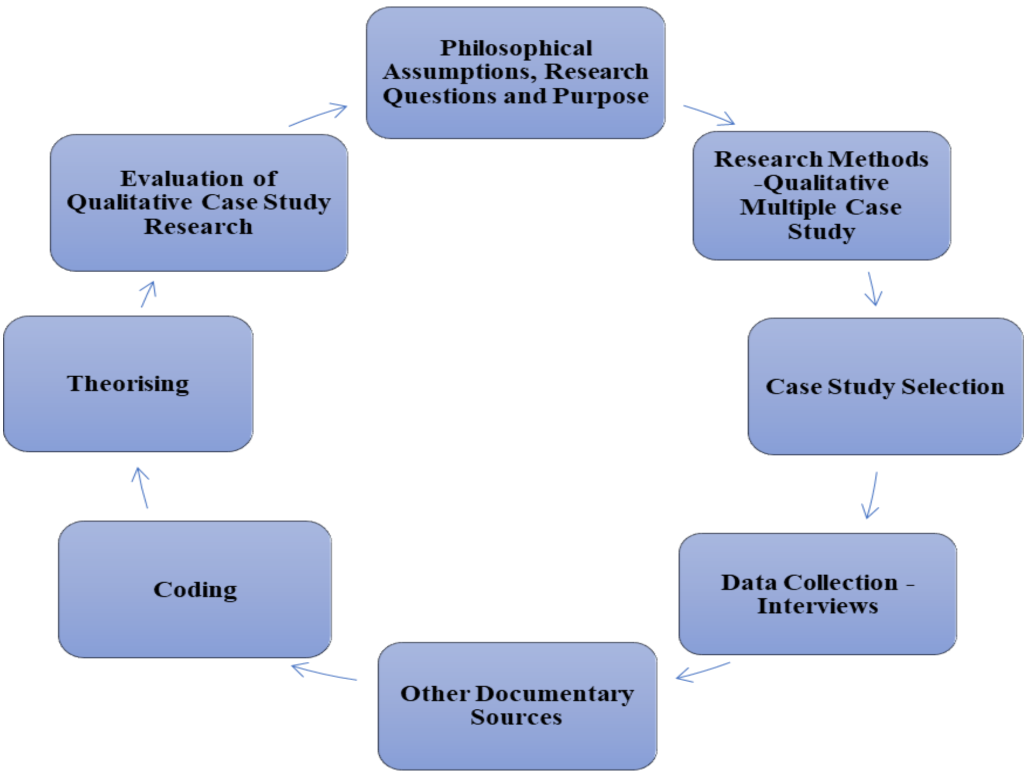
The purpose of research is to elucidate. This may seem to be a deceptively easy idea, yet it entails a complex interaction of philosophy, theory, skill, knowledge, commitment, and good fortune. Saunders *et al.* (2009) describe research as the systematic pursuit of knowledge by individuals. This indicates that research is conducted based on logical connections rather than simply preconceptions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, methodology refers to acquiring information; it encompasses generating and testing ideas and connecting theoretical views and a research issue. Unfortunately, there are several instances in which researchers confuse methodology with research methodologies since the two terms are commonly used interchangeably when talking about the rationale and constraints of research methodologies.

Research Methodology connects existing literature analysis with field research, bringing together the components that form a cohesive and relevant collection of results. A significant issue for management research is the need to achieve not just "relevance" but also "rigour" in the theoretical approach, design, and implementation (Myers 2013). As Chapter 3 demonstrates, there has been a growing interest in the HR professional role and professionalisation of HR. However, HR and TM work is conducted with little reliance on primary and empirical data (Marchington 2015). The purpose of this study is to ascertain stakeholders' (*i.e.*, owners, managers, and employees) perceptions of the impact of turbulent contexts such as Brexit and Covid-

19 on HR and TM retention practices and the applicability and concept of TM practice in UK SMEs.

It is claimed that the methodology and methods used in research are defined by the study's objectives, goals, and questions (Noor 2008). The relationships between research questions and methods are critical for ensuring that the questions can be addressed accurately and appropriately. The methodology for doing the research is determined by the type and context of the study's goals (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). As such, this chapter attempts to understand and use the research methodology (as show in figure 5.1 below) to address the research questions.

Figure 5.1: Overview of the Study's Design and Methodology



(Source: Adapted from Myers, 2013)

It was essential to do primary research, which was accomplished via a qualitative inquiry. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The research was exploratory and inquiring, consistent with an approach that fosters familiarity and comprehension of the social environment. It was not intended to test hypotheses or to ascertain the veracity of any notion. As a result, it may be generally non-positivistic and inductive, but it may include a deductive aspect when relevant literature inspires the investigation.

The following material discusses the nature of the research investigation; philosophical debates surrounding research that underpin the study based on appropriate methodology literature; pertinent theoretical perspectives; the methodological strategy; research method and design issues; sampling procedures and the data collection process; and the rationale for using an interview and case study approach by elaborating on the strengths and weaknesses of these and other alternative methods. Overall, the study focused on a triangle examination of HRM and TM practices at a tumultuous time for SME businesses, thus filling an important gap in the current literature.

5.2 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Stance

Creating a piece of social research is a methodical process that involves several phases, beginning with establishing a researcher's worldview, identifying problems, developing a logical framework, and choosing suitable tools to address the concerns (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). A paradigm is a theoretical framework that encompasses all of the numerous ideas and methods frequently employed in the investigation process (Blaikie, 2010). Because it has numerous connotations, the word paradigm is often causes misunderstood (Saunders *et al.,* 2011). Methodological frameworks help researchers connect the dots between research questions and their answers and between the study's goals and its results (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). The researcher may develop a specific step-by-step approach that allows him or her to establish a relationship between the research goals, questions, analysis, and conclusions.

In this approach, research paradigms represent a method of thinking about the process of performing scientific investigation. It is not precisely a technique but rather a mindset that informs how research is carried out in general. The individual researcher's mental model, way of seeing things, perceptions of reality, and ideas about reality serve as the foundation for his or her research paradigm and philosophical framework. Due to their role in generating dependable results, researchers are encouraged to express their personal opinions and values in their study findings. A range of research theories may assist the researcher in determining the most proper location for a study to be conducted. When faced with several theoretical perspectives and philosophical stances, the researcher's task is to choose and defend the most appropriate philosophy or theoretical viewpoint (Gray 2009).

Saunders *et al*. (2007) define research philosophy as concerned with the acquisition and nature of knowledge acquisition. The concept of a ‘researcher’s worldview' relates to how an individual sees the world. It is founded on their values, beliefs, and morality (Morgan 2007). Different academics and methodologists have distinguished them using a variety of parameters. Among others, Creswell and Clark (2011) classified research paradigms according to their ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how to know something), and technique (how to find out things practically). These traits contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how a researcher views information, her relationship with it, and the approach or strategy used to acquire it (Creswell and Clark 2011). Thus, two philosophical perspectives on the nature of knowledge exist: ontological and epistemological (table 5.2.1 shows the research paradigms).

Table 5.2: Research Paradigms and Worldviews

Basic beliefs	Positivist	Interpretivism	Design science research	Critical social theory
Ontology	One reality; knowable; probabilistic	Multiple realities	Multiple, contextually situated alternative world-states, sociotechnologically aided	Reality as it is socially constructed; power; discourse
Epistemology	An objective, dispassionate, detached observer of truth.	Subjective, *i.e.*, values and knowledge emerge from the researcher-participant interaction.	Making knowledge: Objectively constrained construction within a context. Iterative circumscription reveals meaning.	Suspicious; political; the observer creates different versions
Methodology	Observation, quantitative, statistical	Participation is qualitative, hermeneutical, dialectical.	Developmentally. Measure artefacts' impacts on the composite system.	Textual analysis; discourse analysis; deconstruction.
Axiology	Prediction; universal and beautiful truth	Understanding: situated and description	Control; creation; progress (*i.e.*, improvement); understanding	Contextual understanding. inquiry is value bound; researcher's values affect the study

(Source: Adebesin *et al.*, 2011)

According to Blaikie (1993), Ontology is primarily defined as the study of being, which comprises addressing concerns about the nature of existence and the nature of reality. Thus, it is primarily concerned with whether social entities can and should be regarded as objective entities with a reality distinct from social actors or should be regarded as social constructions based on their perceptions and actions. These positions are referred to as objectivism and constructivism, respectively (Bryman and Bell 2003). According to objectivism, sociological phenomena and their meanings exist irrespective of social actors and actions (Bryman and Bell 2003). The researcher chooses not to conduct an objective examination of TM for two primary reasons.

For a start, the phenomenon of TM is interpreted differently by various organisations in the corporate world. First, the meaning is derived from the thoughts and divergent experiences of management and personnel. Thus, it is required to examine social phenomena rather than physical ones. Second, the notion of TM is socially formed by senior management with the primary goal of boosting individual performance with the intended outcome of increased corporate productivity. Numerous authors emphasise the unquestionable usefulness of skill as a competitive weapon in this situation (Lewis and Heckman 2006). Given this context, it is unquestionably evident that TM is a notion that cannot be considered irrespective of the social players involved.

Epistemology is concerned with concepts about what constitutes knowledge: the established and well-defined standards rather than beliefs (Blaikie 2001). There are two major epistemologies within the social sciences regarding what constitutes knowledge: positivism and interpretivism. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), positivism defines knowledge as observable truths that exist independently of the intellect; theoretical ideas that are not immediately observable are not deemed authentically scientific. Instead, the researcher assumes the role of a natural scientist (Saunders *et al.*, 2000), analysing valueless data. Furthermore, positivism emphasises a highly organised technique to allow replication which is defined by quantitative, objectivist, or experimentalist methodologies (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

Although the conceptualisation of TM is not directly observable, knowledge about it may be gleaned through corporate records, statements made by management involved in planning and implementing activities, and statements made by people who have gone through the process. Thus, using natural science approaches to TM activities may not give a particularly relevant understanding, as an in-depth examination of the notion in practice is necessary. The second epistemological stance is interpretivism. This holds that the social sciences' subject matter, humans, and their institutions, is essentially distinct from the scientific sciences (Bryman and Bell 2003). This is because the meanings of phenomena under examination are generated from the researcher's interpretations of individuals' lived experiences.

Hence, the positivist paradigm's objective is to provide universally recognised rules based on observable facts independent of the mind. The positivist paradigm is judged inadequate for this research since the researcher believes that the phenomena under inquiry may not be regarded authentically scientific. TM as an organisational technique is concerned with natural qualities that may not be readily visible or replicable since talent is individual and is thought to be a malleable phenomenon. As previously said, the notion is inextricably linked to the mind since it is the result of management thinking in search of increased productivity and competitive advantage.

Thus, the researcher creates a world view by comprehending the studied people' perspectives and experiences. Whereas positivism is concerned with creating generally recognised laws, interpretivism is concerned with comprehending an idea in its context. By rebuilding and reinterpreting management and talented persons, the current study intends to advance the knowledge of TM in the context of SMEs. The researcher is viewed as an insider in this technique, as data for this study were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with owners, managers, and workers. Most writers on research techniques recognise that neither approach is superior. As such, the option is determined by the nature of the investigation (Blaikie 2001). Given the nature of the phenomena under consideration, this thesis takes an interpretive approach.

5.2.1 The rationale for adopting Interpretivism philosophical approach

Five reasons justify the use of interpretivism. To begin, in the business world, the word TM is used in several ways. TM's definition, scope, and overall goals are all a little hazy (Lewis and Heckman 2006). The interpretivist method is placed on the identification of subjective meanings and social phenomena, as well as directing attention to (a) the situation's complexity, (b) the reality that supports the situation, and (c) the subjective meanings that drive actions (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). Given this context, the lack of clarity around the idea of TM necessitates the development of a research approach that allows for an in-depth evaluation of the subjective components of the phenomenon under investigation. Second, the researcher may explore in detail the lived experiences of those who take part in TM via interpretivist approaches. According to Bryman (1998), Interpretivism allows researchers to be more dedicated to the natural environment while simultaneously promoting the construction of knowledge based on the viewpoints of study participants (Bryman, 1998). As a result, conducting in-depth interviews with research informants indicates that the researcher may also join the social milieu in which he or she is interested to better understand the participants' experiences with the phenomena under investigation (Shaw, 1999).

Thirdly, since the researcher employs an interpretivist technique to elucidate the meanings of individual experiences, the findings are interpretive (Creswell, 2007). This research does not merely describe TM; it examines TM practices in SMEs critically. Hence, interpretation plays a critical role in this study. Since interpretivism is a qualitative method, it lends itself to studying previous empirical and conceptual research to understand current advances in TM better. Additionally, it may provide information on evolutionary processes and aid in assimilating new ideas that lead to new theories (Easterby-Smith *et al*., 2001). Thus, the interpretivist method will uncover existing practices in TM in SMEs and shed light on the expectations of talented managed personnel. Finally, TM research relies on semi-structured in-depth interviews, observations, and secondary sources of information such as business documents to understand the phenomenon. This allows for investigating things like people, events, and surroundings that are not immediately apparent (Bogdan and Taylor 1975).

5.3 Research Approaches

Apart from selecting a philosophical research paradigm, determining an acceptable research approach is vital when conducting research. In social science, deductive and inductive approaches are two primary modes of inquiry (Saunders *et al*., 2012). Before collecting data from the field, the researcher should conduct literature searches and develop a study framework or subject for investigation. (Martin *et al*., 2005). As a result, deciding on a research strategy is required (Brotherton 2008). Researchers often use either inductive or deductive research approaches (see table 5.3 below). The former is more often associated with qualitative research. No hypotheses are tested for the study; the latter is associated with quantitative studies.

Table 5.3: Deduction and Induction Research Approaches

Deduction	**Induction**
Collects Quantitative data	Collects Qualitative Data
Works within scientific principles	Investigates meaning and perception
Variables are identified, and a clear definition is established.	Takes context of data into account
Adopts a structured and replicable approach	Allows for incremental development of the research process
Ensures that the subjects being studied remain independent.	Accepts researcher involvement in the process being investigated
Uses large enough sample to be able to generalise the conclusion	Accepts the value of deep 'rich' data that is less generalizable
Positivism (Objectivity)	Constructionism / Interpretivism (Subjectivity)
Causation	Meaning (theorisation)
Pre-specified, Outcome-oriented	Open-ended, Process-Oriented
Numerical estimation, Statistical analysis	Narrative description, Constant comparison

(Source: Anderson, 2009)

A research study would aim to test the theory, develop hypotheses, and generate generalisable application of pre-set theory. The deductive method begins with developing a theory and is followed by actual findings (Anderson 2009). Meanwhile, the deductive approach, which is based on a positivist philosophy, is concerned with confirming existing concepts and theories rather than developing new ones (Brotherton 2008). The two approaches establish a distinction between the nature of research and its design.

Researchers depend more on primary data or participant perspectives to define the study's topics and categories, which serve as the study's starting point. On the other hand, researchers using the deductive method depend more on literature, self-pre-understanding, and assumptions as a starting point for the investigation. While the inductive method allows the researcher to begin with evidence (*i.e.*, observations, narratives, etc.) to develop a theory or theorise phenomena, the deductive approach allows the researcher to begin with a hypothesis or theory. Inductive methods begin with observation and other kinds of qualitative data, resulting in developing a theory (Goddard and Melville 2004). It entails a series of phases of research designed to uncover patterns in qualitative data and provide explanations or interpretations (Bernard 2011). As a result, no one theory is used at the outset of the study; instead, the researcher can change the direction of the investigation during the process.

Although deductive and inductive research methods are distinct, employing a strictly inductive or deductive strategy is uncommon (if not impossible) (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008). The researcher thinks that a single strategy to TM or business management study may not be appropriate. Consequently, some academics believe that integrating the two approaches results in a more productive study technique. (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008). Likewise, Saunders *et al.* (2012) argue for a mixed strategy (*i.e.*, abduction approach). The abduction method uses data to investigate a phenomenon, uncover themes, and explain patterns to develop new theories or alter current ones. The following table compares deductive and inductive approaches.

According to the literature review conducted in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, this research revealed that a combination of deductive and inductive strategy is the most excellent match for investigating how participants perceive, interpret, and make sense of HR and TM practices in their workplace during a turbulent period (*i.e.*, Brexit and Covid-19). Saunders *et al.* (2012) argue that employing the abduction strategy to concentrate and lead the investigation. The literature study revealed that the concepts of HRM, talent, and TM exist in the world (albeit they are mediated by elements such as the UK's historical context, economic position, and nature of the UK's SME sector, among others). From this, issues and interpretations are drawn.

In other words, when creating the theoretical framework and identifying themes in the literature, the deductive technique is used. The researcher then examines the inductive method, which states that we go into the field to gather evidence through empirical research to examine the application of HR, TM practices in the SME sector. Additionally, the data and conclusions may contribute to a better understanding of how HR, talent, and TM practices are implemented in the SME sector. Finally, the evidence is weighed objectively (the existing theory) and subjectively (participants' perspectives); further evidence or supporting material, such as observations and documents, is reviewed.

5.4 Theoretical / Literature Review and Secondary Data Collection Process

It was necessary to perform a literature review by looking for relevant material in several places. Literature was sourced from many sources throughout the screening process. The internet databases of academic research served as the primary source of information for this study. To guarantee that the most relevant articles are identified, a wide range of keywords were employed. The process of gathering and critically examining material from a varied source of papers and electronically stored information is similar to that of 'data mining,' but on a much smaller scale. This is what a critical literature review entails (Meenakshi *et al.*, 2000).

As part of a critical literature review, written materials from diverse sources might be carefully examined in order for researchers to discover gaps in the research, conclusions, and connections. To find particular themes, the researcher used both inductive and deductive methodologies, which were then used to construct a conceptual framework and model, which were then used to generate the study questions, goals, and objectives, respectively. Last but not least, each piece of literature was critically reviewed in light of the overall goal and specific objectives to determine whether theories and practices could be replicated and whether the findings of this research contributed to the body of knowledge in the academic field of HR and TM.

The process of analysing the documents could not be classified as either content analysis or quantitative analysis of what was included inside the text. Therefore, the researcher employed a variety of data sources while conducting a literature review. Academic journals, papers, books, government websites, and other data sources were used to gather information on important subjects and challenges relating to HRM and TM globally and in the SME business. For further information on HRM, talent, and TM, the researcher employed the Birmingham City University (Summon) search engine and Google Scholar, which was able to find a significant amount of information. More specific criteria were used, such as 'HR and SME industry,' 'TM and SME industry,' and "HR and TM in SMEs in a state of turbulence," which helped reduce the search scope. In addition, it was necessary to consider cultural and regional variations in data mining to prevent biases (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006). As a result, these factors were considered when selecting the data sources; a critical literature study revealed deficiencies in HR and TM. Following that, primary data was utilised to acquire a more in-depth grasp of the situation and address issues arising from examining the literature.

5.5 Research Purpose

Research may be divided into eight types: experiment; survey; archival analysis, action research; grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and case study (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Because study approaches are better suited to certain research strategies, they are mainly used in specific situations. For example, while doing research, there are many factors to consider, including the kind of questions asked, the degree of control an investigator has over natural occurrences and the amount to which the study focuses on current rather than historical events (Yin, 2009). There is also a collection of related research topics that might be addressed (see Table 5.5). For example, qualitative approaches are more suited to grounded theory and case studies research, while quantitative methods are better suited to experimental and survey research (Creswell 2014).

Table 5.5: Choice of Research Strategy

Strategy	Research Questions	Required of Control of Behaviour Events?	Focused on Contemporary Events	Implement to this Research
Experiment	How, why?	Yes	Yes	No
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes	No
Archival analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes / No	No
History	How, why?	No	No	No
Case study	How, why?	No	Yes	Yes

(Source: Yin, 2008)

TM in SMEs is a developing subject that justifies qualitative research methods by outlining the underlying assumptions and boundary conditions. Given the proposed challenge to established theory and the lack of research in the SME business environment, the study employs an exploratory research methodology. This study was required to gather primary data on HRM and TM practices and procedures in UK SMEs during a time of uncertainty. Although published papers, articles, and journals included some information, it was restricted, and the researcher had little control over what was included. However, the best method was to gather information directly from stakeholders (owners, managers, and workers) in the case of study SMEs in the UK using a process that enabled the primary data to be linked to the research objectives. Thus, the research strategy was conceived as a qualitative examination of these businesses in the UK.

Most of the literature has revealed many empirical investigations into HRM and TM practices in business organisations. However, it has been restricted in its theoretical notion of such practices in unstable environments, particularly in SMEs. Initially, a quantitative survey was used to collect data that could be analysed to establish causal relationships between variables. This, however, would not necessarily explain the links or the reasons or motivations for management choices regarding HR and TM practices. Given the researcher's limited knowledge of international firms and the type of research questions developed, it was determined that the purpose of this investigation was not to establish causal connections but to explore HRM and TM-related decisions in SMEs in the UK and the impact of a turbulent situation such as (Brexit and Covid-19).

Thus, the study focused on the 'why' and 'how' of HR and TM practices as they were implemented, which required examination of informal and formal organisational life elements. Given this assessment of the situation, it was determined that a two (2) case study utilising face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection method, rather than a quantitative survey, would be the most appropriate strategy for examining the complex set of interactions involving HR and TM practices within SME firms in the UK (Bryman and Bell 2011). However, in the end, it was ultimately determined that there were strong reasons to adopt a more qualitative approach.

5.5.1 Types of Research Purpose

There are three primary categories of study aims, according to Saunders *et al.* (2011): description, explanation, and exploration. Explanatory research focuses on investigating a scenario or an issue to explain the link between factors (Saunders *et al.*, 2011), see table 5.5.1. An explanatory study goes beyond descriptive research by examining variables and explaining a specific occurrence (Saunders and Lewis 2012). Unlike explanatory studies, which focus on causal linkages, theory-building studies aim to provide an integrated picture of how all the pieces fit together in an integrated but not yet realistic research goal.

Table 5.5.1: Types of Research Purpose

Case Study Type	Research purpose
Descriptive	This type of case study describes an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.
Explanatory	This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.
Exploratory	This type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.

(Source: Yin, 2003)

According to Hair *et al.* (2007), descriptive research is used to collect data that explains the qualities of the study issue. Finally, descriptive research accurately represents people, events, or circumstances (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Depending on the context, it might also be a precursor to a piece of exploratory or explanatory study (Saunders *et* *al.*, 2011). Descriptive work is meant to help better understand something or someone we do not know as much about (Braun and Clarke, 2013). On the other hand, exploratory research is a helpful tool for learning more about what is going on, gaining new ideas, asking questions, and re-evaluating occurrences (Saunders *et al*., 2011).

5.6 Research Strategy and Design Process

1) Exploratory Study

The issue has not yet been defined since familiarity with the phenomena under research must be understood as part of a complicated learning process. As a result, the research aims to determine how individuals interact in the given situation, their meanings to their activities and their concerns. There is a desire to discover what is going on and examine social phenomena without having predetermined assumptions about them (Schutt 2011). Exploratory research is used whenever a researcher has little knowledge or information about the study problem and wants to clarify their grasp of it and learn more about a topic of interest (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). As a result, the exploratory nature of the research is intended. The ultimate objective is to grasp the phenomena under examination rather than generate causal explanations or generalisable information.

a. The rationale for adopting Exploratory Study

To have a better knowledge of the phenomena under inquiry, more empirical research is needed. Therefore, the study is being conducted. Since the issue is fresh, there are no concepts suitable for serving as the foundation for hypotheses. Instead, many other points of view must be explored first, which validates the goal and form of exploratory research. No universal rules are envisaged to be produced because of exploratory study as research results. Despite this, judgments and inferences may be derived from them. However, unlike generalizable theories, it is up to the reader to assess if the results fit into the context in which she is interested and, therefore, determine whether discoveries may be transferrable. Context-bound outcomes, on the other hand, aid in the study of phenomena (such as perception, comprehension, and implementation of HRM and TM practices) within communities such as UK SMEs. It enables conclusions to be drawn regarding which components of these practices are most significant when dealing with the populations under study. It also aided in a better understanding of the concept's utility, perceived strengths and shortcomings, and which implementation approaches seem to be the most promising - and why.

2) Qualitative Research Approach

Braun *et al.* (2013) describe qualitative research as the collection and analysis of data using words. Consequently, quantitative research is defined as the collection of numerical data and their analysis using statistical methods. Quantitative research uses statistics and statistical analysis to quantify, while qualitative research collects data to describe, analyse, and comprehend (Willig 2013). Quantitative is often used interchangeably with any data collecting method or analytic process that produces or utilises numerical data, while qualitative generates or uses non-numerical data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

There are many links between qualitative and quantitative research, and they are employed in various domains in different ways. While qualitative indicates that it primarily relies on human perception and comprehension, this is not always true (Stake

2010). Statistical analysis and linear features are the foundations of quantitative reasoning (Stake 2010). According to Braun *et al.* (2013), qualitative and quantitative research are two sides of the same coin. A questionnaire in quantitative research may generate answers from participants in qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method studies. In the social sciences, quantitative research is essential to obtain information (Myers 2013). Nevertheless, it fails to comprehend human behaviour due to its compatibility with the theoretical paradigm, phenomenological orientation, and comprehensive research approach (Gilbert 2008).

On the other hand, the qualitative investigation is better suited to exploratory purposes and the knowledge of individuals in ways that quantitative research cannot, including their behaviours and experiences and the meanings they ascribe to them (Willig 2013). Qualitative researchers often claim that their approach, which depicts human nature more precisely and is more realistic, is superior (Hammersley 2008). In this case, comparing qualitative and quantitative methodologies is not much use since they are not interchangeable (Neuman 2011). Furthermore, the nature of the issue does not give measurable metrics, even though quantitative research methodologies are often used in empirical HRM work. Nevertheless, it is a well-suited approach for exploratory management research and may give good opportunities for generalisation, even from a limited number of cases, despite validity and reliability issues (Gilbert 2008). Qualitative techniques were used for this study because, contrary to popular belief (Bryman 2016), quantitative approaches are not as well-suited for studying participants' experiences, perceptions, and understandings.

a. The rationale for adopting Qualitative Research Approach

This method examines and explores the research questions more thoroughly, allowing for a deeper understanding of the study phenomena (Kramer 2016). This method was chosen because it entails the first study of a subject and effectively determines what is occurring in SME organisations regarding HR and TM practices, an under-researched field devoid of prior knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This decision was chosen based on its widespread use and acceptability in management and business areas for resolving previously unanswerable questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010). The qualitative approach was considered the most suitable for obtaining complete data on HRM and TM in SMEs. The most significant advantage of this approach was that it provided a platform for a holistic analysis and enabled a comprehensive study of how owners and managers understand, undertake, and deal with different HR and TM issues necessary for successful people management.

To summarise, a multiple case study and individual face-to-face interview method were selected for this research because it best enables the investigation of the phenomena under inquiry. The research benefitted from adopting an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter as an exploratory study (Wright 2008). Qualitative research may be used to understand behaviour and experience in ways that enhance knowledge and bridge the gap between preconceived notions and lived situations (Neuman 2011). They offer context for experiences, events, and facts and pave the way for new study topics that would not have been considered in other kinds of research (Pritchard 2010). Therefore, the methodology used in this study was consistent with that of previous studies in the HR sector, which often employed qualitative approaches in combination with quantitative methods (Jones and Saundry 2012).

3) Case Study Approach

Case studies are used to investigate and contextualise a current problem in different real-world situations and examine a research topic or phenomena (Yin 2009). This is especially true when the distinction between phenomena and setting is hazy. If a researcher wants to understand the research environment completely, case studies are required (Saunders *et al*., 2012). It is most effective when the researcher wishes to provide answers to "how" and "why" questions as well as "what" questions (Yin 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). According to Robson and McCartan (2016), a case study is a research technique that evaluates a recent occurrence in its real-world environment while drawing on various data sources.

A case study is a tried-and-true way of researching businesses and their leaders. Case study research investigates one or more examples to uncover critical facts about their nature (Bryman and Bell 2011). Because data must converge in a triangulation pattern for a case study to be valid, the research needs to rely on several sources of information. (Yin 2014). A case study design chooses a small number of study units, often in natural settings, that do not need data collection processes, may be utilised to establish more comprehensive generalisations, and can be used to develop theory (Blaikie 2010). If the context allows for investigating the phenomenon's sequence and breadth and causal linkages, a case unit does not have to be a single organisation (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014). Although a case may be any bounded entity, such as community development or educational programmes (Myres 2009), or employee segments, the organisation is typically the centre point of case studies (Baxter and Jack 2008).

Yin (2013) recommends establishing a framework before starting the data collection process, although examples do not need established frameworks and maybe positivistic, interpretative, or critical. To further understand the underlying phenomena surrounding the function of HRM, researchers have advocated using a case study method (Cunningham and Rowley 2010). When studying people's concerns, case studies are beneficial due to their relevance and interest. In any case, generalisations based on them are false. However, case studies are typically the favoured research technique since they are epistemologically congruent with the reader's experience and give a natural foundation for generalisation for that individual.

To summarise, a case study technique and individual face-to-face interview design were used for this research because they are the optimal design for exploring the phenomena under investigation within two (2) selected case firms. This was chosen as the most suitable approach for studying the idea of HR and TM practices in the SME setting during a volatile moment, given the relevance of the research's theoretical framework and the critical research issues. The goal of the case study technique was to get a more holistic picture of what is going on in a smaller social environment, such as SMEs in the UK, during a chaotic moment, whether HRM, TM, or other labels were used. The focus was on understanding behaviour from the participants' viewpoints or frames of reference to gain insight and meaning. According to Yin (2014), having more situations to which the framework may be used is never a sampling problem. These examples do not reflect a particular demographic. However, they were selected for the study because of other characteristics that promise to give a deeper understanding of the research model under consideration (Yin 2014).

a. The rationale for adopting a Two-Case Study Approach

When it comes to case studies, Dul and Hak (2008) define them as studies where one case is picked from their real-life environment or a small number of cases are compared, and the scores obtained from this case are qualitatively analysed (Dul and Hak 2008). There is more proof from several instances when there are various cases (more than one case). Therefore, the findings of numerous instances are more reliable than those of a single case (Yin, 2009). There are four types of cases in which Yin (2009) says a single example is suitable: important (rare), extreme (unique), representational (typical), revelatory (unusual), and longitudinal (long-term). The objective of a single case study is to enhance theoretical replication, but the goal of numerous case studies is to generalise the findings of the studies. (Yin, 2009).

The case study method worked well since the study's goal was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the influence of a tumultuous circumstance like Brexit and Covid-19 on HR and TM operations inside SMEs via a complete analysis. Case studies help develop theories as a technique (Langley *et al.*, 2013). While commonly mistaken with qualitative research, case studies may be based on either wholly quantitative data or a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Case studies are a kind of qualitative research based on a case study of a person's life. Many benefits may be gained by using many case studies (Yin 2013).

To begin with, as compared to other research methodologies, it enables the collection of comprehensive information. In addition, because of data triangulation, the data acquired is frequently more lucrative and essential than data collected via other research methods (Curry *et al.,* 2009). Another advantage is that researchers may do quantitative or qualitative evaluations on the results of multiple case studies using different instrumental and collective approaches. Constructing and extending theoretical concepts, offering explanatory models, and expressing theoretical statements is second to none (Bergh and Ketchen 2009). Furthermore, the extensive qualitative information obtained by several case studies typically aids in explaining complicated processes or circumstances that may not be well represented using other research methodologies.

4) Population and Sampling Procedure

Sample and sampling processes are used in various fields of study and are sometimes the sole means to get information about an inevitable reality. According to Blanche *et al.* (2006), A sampling process is a research strategy for selecting a subset of respondents from the population to be included in the sample. The practicality and sensibility of collecting data to answer research questions and satisfy the declared study purpose influence the sample procedures used (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). According to Ghauari and Gronhaug (2010), after defining the research topic and developing a suitable study design and data collecting instruments, the next phase in the research process is to choose the components from which the data will be gathered. The availability of various resources, notably money and the time available to the researcher and individuals surveyed, may sometimes impact the sample size and methodologies employed for sample selection.

The present research relies on Stake's (1995) notion that ‘the individuals who happen to be there when we chance to be there are unlikely to be the finest data sources.’ Instead, the researcher should have a ‘connoisseur's taste’ for the finest people, places, and occasions, with ‘best’ referring to those who would aid the researcher in better comprehending the case and study questions of interest. Therefore, the sample mainly was chosen based on the study goals to give trustworthy information for each research topic, as suggested by Patton (2002). Researchers can use a variety of methods to recruit participants, with probability sampling techniques (*i.e.,* simple random, systematic, stratified sample, cluster, etc.) and non-probability sampling techniques (*i.e.,* quota sampling, purposive, convenience sampling, etc) being the most common (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

The researcher may stipulate in advance that each section of the population will be represented in the sample using probability sampling (Leedy and Ormrod 2010). Random selection is the principle behind this kind. More precisely, for a particular sampling technique, each sample from the population of interest has a specified probability of selection. In non-probability, however, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) claim that "the researcher has no method of anticipating or ensuring that each part of the population will be represented in the sample" (Leedy and Ormrod 2010).

Non-probability sampling, according to Blanche *et al.* (2006), is any sampling in which the statistical principle of randomness does not dictate the selection of items. A non-probability sample, in contrast to a probability sample, was not chosen using a random selection procedure. This means that specific population units are more likely to be chosen than others (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2010). This study attempts to get a preliminary grasp of respondents' various experiences and views. As a result, achieving a high degree of variety in the sample is crucial. The responders must then be carefully chosen to use the unique information and insights they may provide, revealing the phenomena from numerous angles. A purposive or judgmental sampling strategy, in which the researcher determines whom to include in the sample based on her expertise and experience in the subject, is the best way to achieve this.

a. The rationale for adopting the Purposive Sampling Strategy

"What data can be collected?" is the most critical issue when it comes to gathering scientific evidence (Guest *et al.*, 2011). Purposive sampling is about gaining "insight and in-depth comprehension of the issue of interest" rather than making broad generalisations (Braun and Clarke 2013). The section of participants in this study was selected via non-probability purposive sampling. According to Polkinghorne (1998), Purposive sampling entails the purposeful selection of appropriate people for the study. Different 'categories' of respondents are not sampled to generalise to other entities of 'that kind' since samples are picked based on the information they can offer (Braun and Clarke 2013). Inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as "what or whom do we want to hear from, or what do we not want to hear from," are more significant (Braun and Clarke 2013).

Purposive sampling entails the researcher selecting individuals and conditions that enable them to respond to the study topic (Creswell *et al.*, 2007). Purposive samples come in various shapes and sizes, but they always have one thing in common:

participants are chosen based on specified criteria relevant to the study's goal. Thus, purposive sampling helps one to *"choose information-rich examples for in-depth investigation"* (Patton 1990). “Information-rich cases are ones from which one can learn a great deal about topics of vital relevance to the research objective.” (Patton, 1990, p.169). For a variety of reasons (Dean *et al.,* 2016), the purposive sampling strategy was used in this study:

1. This kind of non-probabilistic sampling might be helpful when the research goal is to investigate particular talents and learn about a specific occurrence (Spearman 2015).
2. It may be advantageous for researchers to acquire big data from a small number of well-selected cases (Yengoh *et al.,* 2015).
3. Purposive sampling procedures may also be required to assist the quality of the data collected (Gururajan *et al.,* 2016).
4. Purposive sampling provides a robust foundation for obtaining respondents in focus groups and interview research (Silverman 2014).

Participants were recruited for a particular reason using 'purposive' sampling (Silverman 2006). One of the reasons for using this strategy was that it included all major stakeholders and helped to ensure diversity in each critical area (Ritchie and Lewis 2006). Participants were chosen "on the premise that they can make a point dramatically or because they are essential" (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). Data gathering aims to understand what is occurring in each critical case to establish logical generalisations. This judgmental or purposive sampling strategy concentrates on who would be most suited to answer the study questions (Saunders *et al.,* 2007).

This technique is highly desirable when working with minimal numbers, such as case study research, and when the researcher's goal is to choose especially illuminating instances. However, while using this strategy to recruit people, researchers must consider the significant trade-off in generalisation issues (few information-rich cases against large samples being statistically representative) (Neuman 2000). Therefore, it is critical to know how the researchers used a 'purposive' methodology. It is worth noting that the goal was not to choose specific people (like an employee) but to make sure they were from the correct category. Thus, the researcher can best determine which respondents are most suited to answer the research questions, match the research goals, and give the maximum variety of data for the current study. Selecting various instances for in-depth research is one potential application of the judgemental (or purposive) sample strategy.

5) Unit of Analysis and Sampling Size

The basis for a sample is the unit of analysis (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, establishing the unit of analysis in advance is crucial since it will serve as the basis for gathering data analysed (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, having a clear understanding of the unit of analysis at the onset of the study is considered crucial and may help in giving early guidelines for analysis with highly unstructured data (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012).

The thesis is that the ‘places' where the examined phenomena occur are people's thoughts, based on the questions of what reality is, how it manifests, and how knowledge can be developed about it (ontological and epistemological problems). The phenomenon cannot exist without people or society, and individuals' perceptions and ideas are created via a range of social interactions. Due to these aspects, individual persons must be the unit of study since these phenomena can only be examined by investigating individuals, as perceptions, understandings, and assessments are all characteristics of distinct individuals. Thus, the study concentrated on actors who were ultimately accountable for the phenomenon's originality and variety: *i.e.*, 'owners, managers, and employees of the phenomena under consideration.

It must be acknowledged that people's views, meanings, and understandings are shaped by their social surroundings. However, analysing these situations would not answer the research aims since the phenomena to be understood are psychological and occur in people's thoughts. Thus, the purpose of this research was to understand these social settings and examine individual actors' perceptions, beliefs, and judgments within them. The initial methodology selected for the study (*i.e.*, mixed methods) was influenced by the challenges involved with sampling SME businesses in the UK. Based on the scope of the research, the number of SMEs at the national level, and the subject of the research, a sample was drawn from a list obtained from the University's library guide/database (Bureau van Dyk Jordans) – FAME, which contains financial and accounting information of UK and Irish SME businesses.

Following that, it was discovered that just a small number of e-mail addresses from the businesses were accessible to the public. Additionally, many businesses did not have a website. With these limitations in mind, between March and June 2019, e-mail alerts were sent to 650 SME businesses in the Midlands, Yorkshire, and London. In addition, selected and recognised SME businesses were approached through email, with a short description of the study subject and topic and its significance and permission to conduct research and collect information about the company.

However, despite two follow-ups, the response rate was low: 30 businesses replied to email inquiries. Only 2 (two) companies consented to participate in the study, despite 10.1% of favourable responses to the first online surveys. Due to the small size of the SME business organisations identified, not all could participate in the study; for example, independent entrepreneurs without workers and organisations with too few employees to have an HRM and TM policy were excluded. Again, several organisations were unwilling or unable to engage due to a lack of resources or time. Revising and revisiting the research methodology and design was necessary to ensure a more satisfactory response rate. Qualitative in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with owners, managers, and employees of the SME case companies in the UK. Sampling and sampling procedures apply in various areas of knowledge and constitute, often, the only way to get information about a particular reality that knows what matters. The characteristics of these organisations can be found in the table below:

I. Case Study A – Engineering Consulting

Case A is a thriving, incorporated, and national business with a regional footprint and a registered office in Solihull, West Midlands, UK. It is a privately held multidisciplinary engineering consulting firm that provides mechanical and electrical engineering services to various customers and market sectors. It is a medium-sized business with about 240 employees. It has been in business for about 40 years. It specialises in providing customised engineering solutions that result in cost-effective and compliance projects with a high degree of sustainability and motivation.

Additionally, it is a business that specialises in the design and integration of a comprehensive variety of energy solutions for existing and new buildings. By using innovative and contemporary engineering methods, it strives to provide customers with cutting-edge sustainable solutions that are energy efficient and financially and ecologically sustainable. With more personnel and a broader range of services, it has provided superior engineering solutions to local and national customers in various industries across the UK. The company has tried to create a flexible organisation that is flat with a low hierarchical structure.

Director 2 said: "As a medium-sized organisation, we did not have any human resources at the time." *(Director 2, Case A)*

HR Philosophy and Presence: As the company grew, it became more concerned with human resources. As the CEO said, the business has concentrated heavily on the human viewpoint in recent years.

"We have been working on this for the past several years since people are essential to us as an engineering consulting firm. As a result, we must ensure that the business hires the appropriate individuals. Furthermore, they will work if feasible for the business. They can grow and learn here and then contribute to the

community. Moreover, we do not have anything else to manufacture; people make everything here, so we are extremely focused on human resources." (Director 1, Case A)

The business has grown and expanded. Aside from increased HR issues, the business chose to employ an HR/Administrative Officer in the past several years. According to the CEO, they would want to have:

"More structured, more functional organisation. I would say so. We aim to enhance the organisation and functioning of the system. It may be compared to stability in terms of staff involvement, decision making, and the company's future. HRM is in part the duty of the HR/Admin Officer, reporting to the CEO and senior management (i.e., Directors)." (Director 2, Case A).

II. Case Study B – Construction Services

Case B is a well-established, successful building and construction services firm with a track record of producing award-winning projects for a worldwide portfolio of developers, public sector customers, and blue-chip corporations. Based in Leeds, Yorkshire, UK, a medium-sized business with over 15 years of industry expertise offers a first-rate construction service ranging from simple building repairs to a new build. It is a privately held firm, with the director owners actively involved in the operations. An award-winning construction firm that completes multimillion-pound projects in both the public and private sectors. The business has spent many years assembling a team of expertise and creativity capable of delivering new constructions, renovation projects, regeneration plans, and conversions of listed and historic structures in each of its markets.

HR Philosophy and Presence: Currently, the business does not have an HR expert; instead, they have created 'the personnel officer' who oversees personnel management.

> ***"There is a specific section in our management system for HR (CEO, Case B). For a few years after the foundation, we had a clerk who managed workers. However, at the time, the clerk's primary job was administrative, including document management and ensuring that workers were on time for work."*** (Director Operations, Case B)

The personnel officer plays an essential role in the recruiting and planning of individual employee training programmes. Previously, the CEO oversaw recruiting and hiring, but today the personnel officer oversees identifying qualified candidates and arranging training to enhance skills. The personnel officer also attends the corporate meeting.

6) Sampling Criteria and Participant's Profile

Participants were chosen based on a set of criteria. Jones *et al.* (2013) define this as a procedure in which sampling criteria are developed, and participants are selected following those criteria. SMEs in the UK were selected to participate in the study at the start of the sampling procedure. The companies were chosen based on the following criteria:

a) The company's size - (SMEs between 50 and 249 workers) - according to the EU definition of SMEs
b) Origin Country
c) Operation in a Geographical Area (local, regional, international)
d) SME Types (services, manufacturing, retail, etc.)
e) Years in Service
f) Have developed relationships with EU SMEs, hired and employed EU nationals.
g) Have an official talent management plan in place.

The following additional criteria were used to choose the respondents for the interview:

1. The respondent's role in the business required them to oversee first-line supervision, either within their specialised duties or as team leaders within their divisions or departments.
2. The level of work experiences the respondent has in the current role.
3. The respondent's unique involvement with key decision-making positions regarding TM and HR policies inside the firm.
4. Top-level executives were prioritised in the selection (Owners, CEOs, CFOs, general directors and heads of departments, line managers, and functional heads). This guaranteed that the data gathered referred to and represented the entire organisation.
5. The emphasis was also placed on non-relative personnel to avoid any potential prejudice caused by respondents' family ties to the business.

The criteria guaranteed that the firms investigated were SMEs. At the same time, the last condition was required to assess the influence of volatile events such as Brexit and Covid-19 on TM practices in SMEs. There were no restrictions on the type of business that could be owned or the industry in which it could operate. Instead, firms from various industries and with various types of ownership were sampled. A detailed table is provided to understand the informants better and comprehend some important arguments made at the later stage of the thesis. In particular, the tables and figures 5.6 below describe some of the essential interviewee characteristics such as occupational status, gender, nationality, years of experience, and industry.

Table 5.6: Demographic and Institutional Information of Participants

<table>
<tr><th>Position</th><th>Code</th><th>Gender</th><th>Nationality</th><th>Experiences (Yrs.)</th><th>Industry</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Owners, Directors, and Chief Executives</td><td>DR1</td><td>Male</td><td>Greek</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR2</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 15</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR3</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR4</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 8</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR5</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR6</td><td>Male</td><td>Spanish</td><td>Over 7</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>DR7</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>CFO1</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>8</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="10">Managers, Line Managers, Assistant HR managers</td><td>GM1</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>FM1</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>9</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>M1</td><td>Female</td><td>Bulgarian</td><td>5</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>M2</td><td>Female</td><td>British</td><td>4</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>M3</td><td>Female</td><td>Sweden</td><td>5</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>MCSR 1</td><td>Female</td><td>British</td><td>6</td><td>Construction</td></tr>
<tr><td>AM1</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 15</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>AM2</td><td>Female</td><td>British</td><td>8</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>ATL1</td><td>Female</td><td>Germany</td><td>5</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>ATL2</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>Over 10</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Middle Level</td><td>ME1</td><td>Male</td><td>British</td><td>7</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>ME2</td><td>Female</td><td>British</td><td>12</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>E1</td><td>Female</td><td>Polish</td><td>4</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>E2</td><td>Male</td><td>Italian</td><td>8</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
<tr><td>E3</td><td>Female</td><td>Spanish</td><td>6</td><td>Engineering</td></tr>
</table>

	JE1	Male	Romanian	3	Engineering
Administrative, Housekeeping, Front office staf	PA1	Female	British	5	Engineering
	PA2	Female	British	5	Construction
	AO1	Female	British	5	Engineering
	PO1	Female	British	7	Construction

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

****Further information could not be released since it would jeopardise participant identity.**

Table 5.6: Case Company A – Engineering Consultancy

COMPANY A – ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY					
NO.	**Gender**	**Position of Interviewee**	**Nationality**	**Job Type**	**No. of years worked in Company**
1	Male	Mechanical Engineer	British	Permanent	7
2	Male	Director (1)	Greek	Permanent	Over 10
3	Female	Associate Team Lead	Germany	Permanent	5
4	Male	Associate Manager	British	Permanent	Over 15
5	Female	Mechanical Engineer	British	Permanent	12
6	Female	Engineer	Polish	Permanent	4
7	Male	Associate Team Lead	British	Permanent	Over 10
8	Female	Personal Assistant to Director	British	Permanent	5
9	Male	Engineer	Italian	Permanent	8
10	Male	Director (2)	British	Permanent	Over 15
11	Female	HR / Admin Officer	British	Permanent	5
12	Female	Engineer	Spanish	Permanent	6

13	Male	Director (3)	British	Permanent	Over 10
14	Male	Junior Engineer	Romanian	Permanent	3
15	Female	Associate Manager	British	Permanent	8

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

****Further information could not be released since it would jeopardise participant identity.**

Table 5.6: Case Company B – Construction

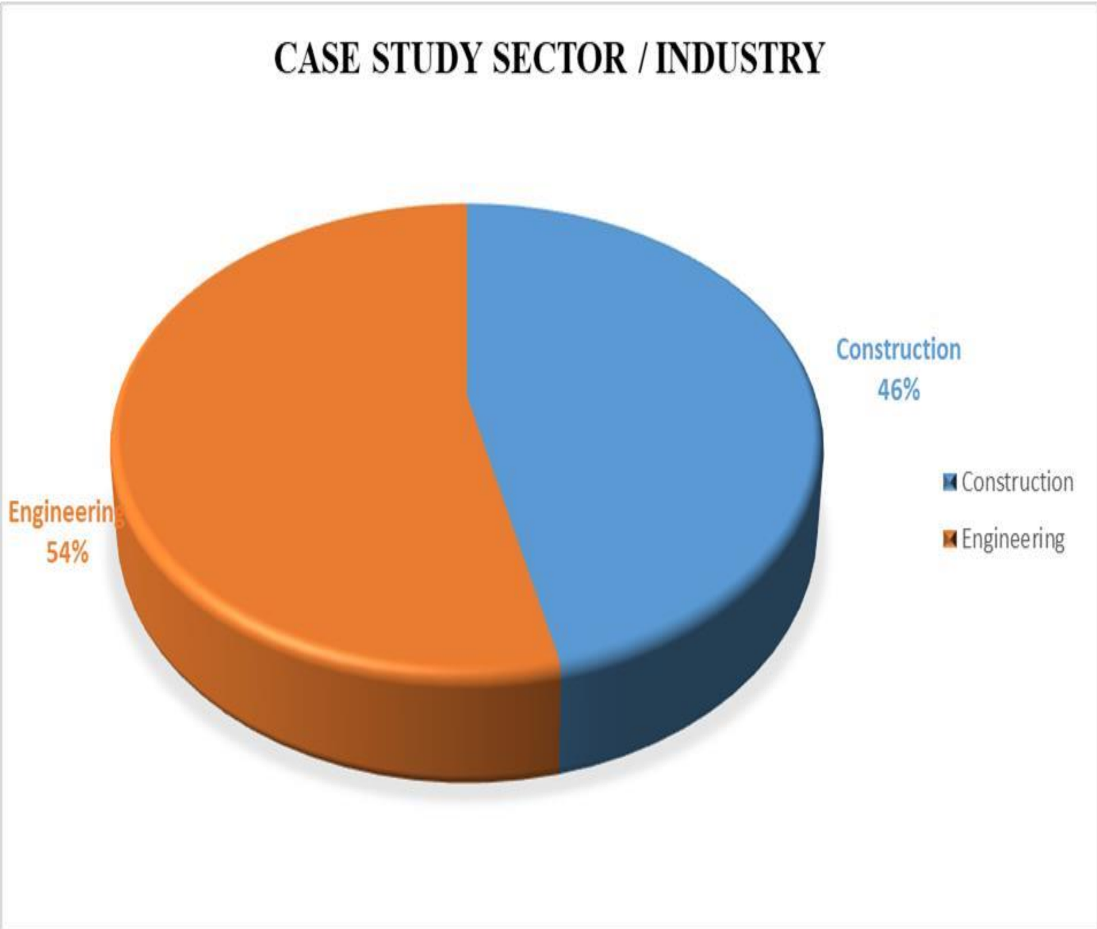
COMPANY B – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES					
NO.	**Gender**	**Position of Interviewee**	**Nationality**	**Job Type**	**No. of years worked in Company**
1	Male	Director Operations (1)	British	Permanent	Over 8
2	Male	Director (2)	British	Permanent	Over 10
3	Female	Manager	Bulgarian	Permanent	5
4	Male	Finance Manager	British	Permanent	9
5	Female	Personal Assistant to Director	British	Permanent	5
6	Female	Manager	British	Permanent	4
7	Male	General Manager	British	Permanent	Over 10
8	Female	Manager	Sweden	Permanent	5
9	Male	Chief Finance Officer	British	Permanent	8
10	Male	Director (3)	Spanish	Permanent	Over 7
11	Female	Personnel Officer	British	Permanent	7

12	Male	Director (4)	British	Permanent	Over 10
13	Female	Manager CSR	British	Permanent	6

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

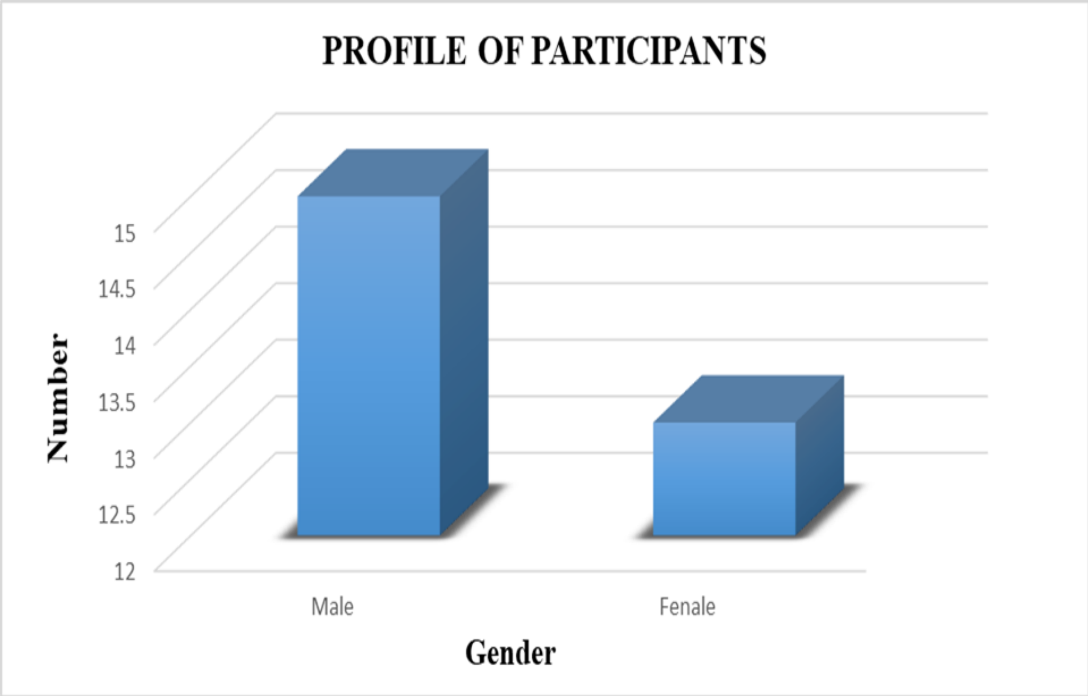
****Further information could not be released since it would jeopardise participant identity.**

Figure 5.6: Percentage of Participants by Industry / Sector



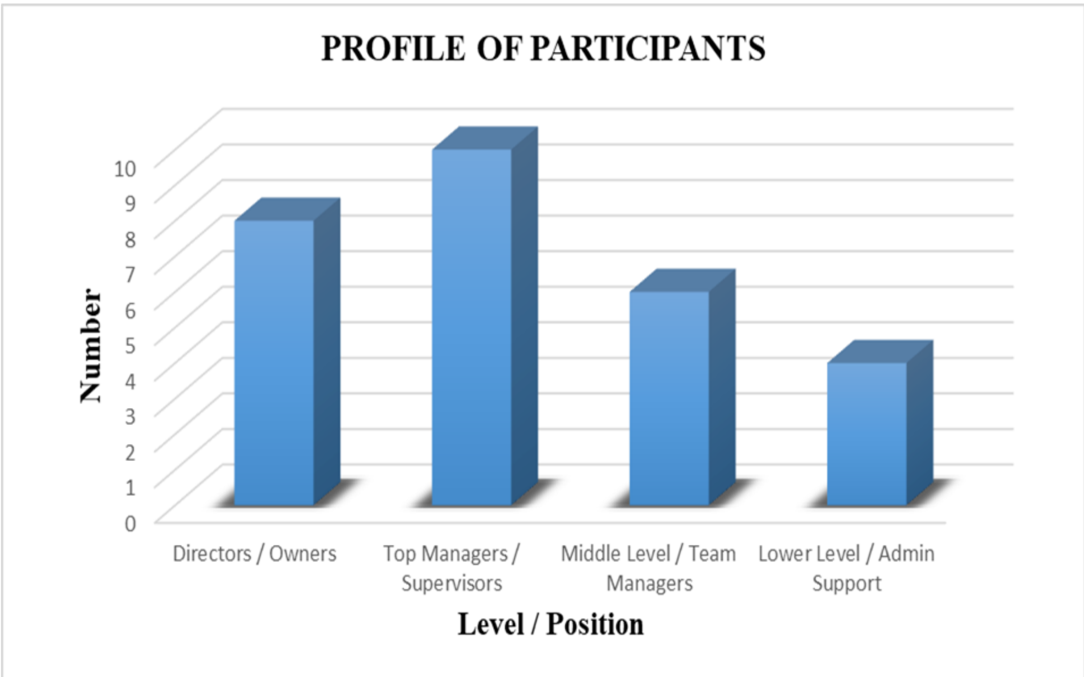
(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Figure 5.6: Number of Participants by Gender



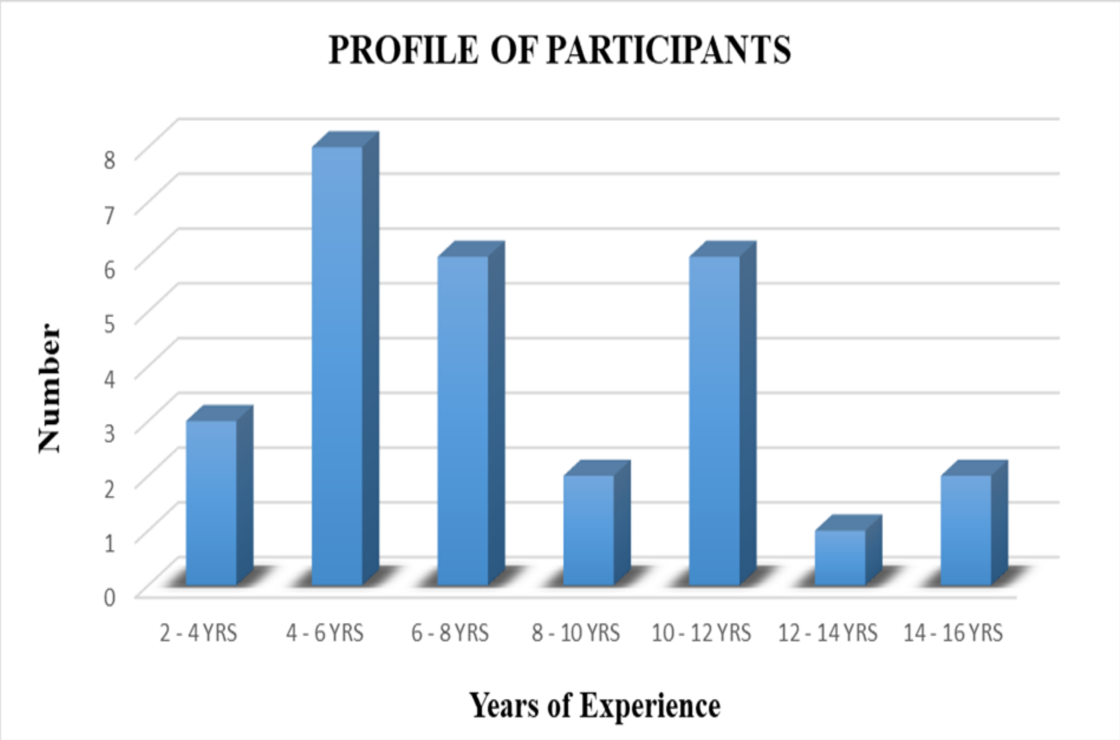
(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Figure 5.6: Number of Participants by Level / Position



(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Figure 5.6: Number of Participants by Years of Experience

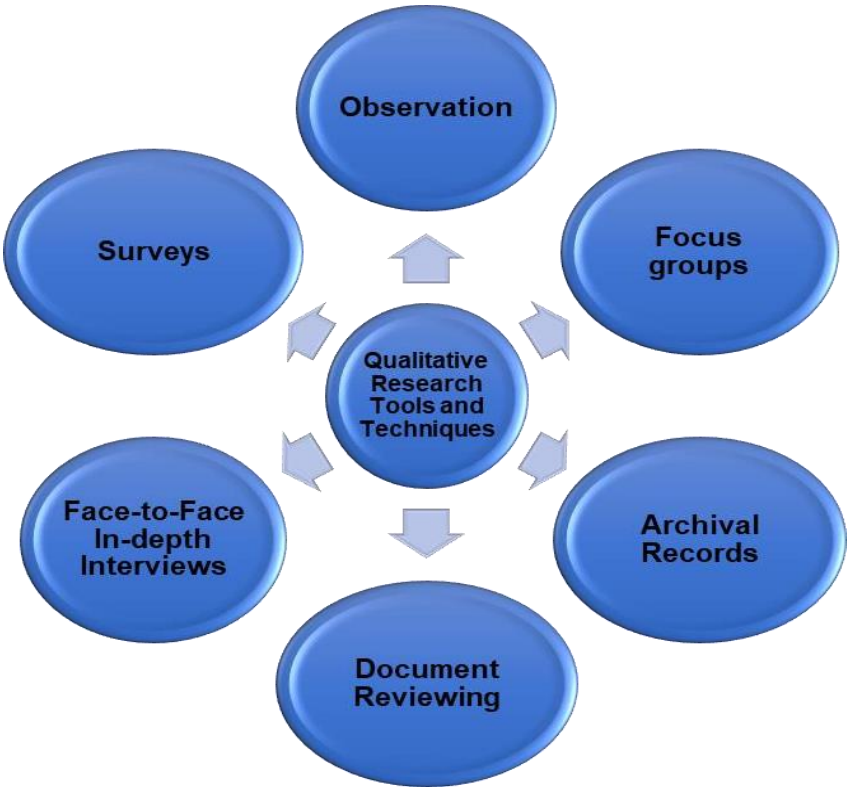


(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

5.7 Empirical Research Data Collection Process

Stage Two's goal was to gather data about how HR and talent are defined, identified, and managed, as well as any challenges and opportunities. Key individuals were recruited (*i.e.*, owners, managers, and employees) from SME businesses to participate in the research using qualitative interviews and document examinations. The following parts cover the research design, including case selection, empirical data collection utilising a triangulation of techniques (semi-structured interviews and document analysis), the pilot study, ethical considerations, and data quality issues.

Figure 5.7: Research Data Collection Method



(Source: Adapted from Bowen, 2009)

The data for this thesis was gathered through several methods. By triangulating data collection methodologies, the researcher was able to ensure data consistency. It guaranteed the consistency, reliability, and validity of the collected data, the inductive investigation of new themes and categories, and the facilitation of accurate theoretical sampling as the data analysis advanced. According to Bowen (2009), the researcher is expected to employ at least two sources of evidence, *i.e.*, seek convergence and confirmation via diverse data sources and procedures. Yin (2009) investigates the benefits and drawbacks of each kind of evidence, which are summarised in Table 5.7:

Table 5.7: Strengths and Weaknesses of Sources of Evidence

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weakness
Documentation	- Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly - Unobtrusive: not created because of the case study. - Exact: contain exact names, references, and details.	- Retrievability - Biased selectivity if the collection is incomplete -Reporting bias: reflecting the bias of the author - Access: may be deliberately blocked
Archival records	- Same as above - Precise and quantitative	- Same as above - Accessibility may be limited for privacy reasons
Interviews	- Targeted: focuses directly on case studies. - Insightful: provides perceived causal inferences	- Bias due to poorly constructed questions - Response bias -Inaccuracies: interviewees say what they think the interviewer wants to hear
Direct observation	- Reality: covers events in real-time - Contextual: covers the context of an event	- Time-consuming - Selectivity: poor, unless broad coverage - Reflexivity: events may be processed differently

(Source: Yin, 2009)

According to Silverman (2011), it is preferable to incorporate diverse data sources and, if feasible, use numerous data gathering techniques in qualitative research, particularly in case studies. In addition, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) said that employing "multi-methodological methods enables more extensive and accurate studies while seeking for causalities" or data triangulation (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2007). Therefore, various data collection strategies are used in qualitative research (case study), including interviews and documentation. Other data collection approaches include direct observations, participant observations, and physical artefacts, among others. (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

1) **Qualitative Semi-Structured In-depth Interview Method**

When doing a case study, interviews are one of the most important sources of information. Even though various methodologies are utilised, it is widely accepted that interviewing has remained the most popular way of gathering qualitative data throughout the years. Interviewing is a qualitative data-gathering strategy that allows researchers to access the context of people's behaviour and comprehend the meaning of behaviour (Harding, 2013). Furthermore, interviewing allows a researcher to delve into people's subjective experiences, which would otherwise be impossible to access (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2011).

Although quantifying the quality of interview data collecting is challenging, employing it with other approaches increases its acceptance as a method (Cassell 2009). This research attempted to attain validity by combining interview data with other types of data (Silverman 2011). The decision was made that qualitative interviews would be the primary method of data collecting. Another justification for employing qualitative interviews rather than a survey needing statistical analysis was that this technique matched the researcher's abilities and expertise. The researcher had significant semi-structured interviewing experience from a previous career and previous work experience in multinationals. It was expected that this would give the researcher credibility in the informants' eyes, help foster dialogue with them, and contribute to the understanding of comments made.

Practicably speaking, interviews may be performed across long distances and are particularly suited for probing the prior experiences of those being interviewed

(Perakyla and Russuvuori, 2011). It was considered that qualitative interviews would be the most effective method of data collecting in this situation. A related argument for adopting qualitative interviews was that this approach was more suited to the researcher's talents and expertise than a survey needing statistical analysis, which would have required more time and resources. As a result of her prior work in multinational corporations, the researcher was anticipated to have a high degree of credibility in her informants' eyes and the ability to promote interaction with them and comprehend their views better.

This strategy created a calm environment for gathering information. The participants felt at ease sharing and speaking about their thoughts, ideas, and points of view on HRM and TM practices in a turbulent period. The interviews for the studies were conducted using a mix of conversational interviews and the general interview guide technique. Each interview started with dialogue and chat with the participants in their environment. This section of the interviews included discussions concerning participants' institutional and social positions within their company context, status, and role activities. The researcher was able to unfold the discussion and obtain participants' perspectives on the applicability of HRM and TM practices in the organisation, how and why they adopted them, to what extent a turbulent situation like Brexit and Covid-19 has an impact on these practices, and what factors and actors have influenced them to follow these practices by using this interview guideline approach. The goal was to come at the fieldwork with a list of issue-oriented questions, with some leeway to shape guided talks. The emphasis throughout interviews was on recording participants' experiences and investigating their descriptions and explanations rather than obtaining a simple yes or no answer.

Semi-structured interviewing is sometimes known as 'qualitative' interviewing, 'exploratory' interviewing, or 'in-depth' interviewing (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the instant encounter with other individuals is at the centre of our social and personal existence (*i.e.,* we express who we are through social interaction). Therefore, this method of interviewing was chosen to maximise instant face-to-face interaction for conversing, engaging, and, if required, clarifying questions and replies. Before the interview formally started, the essential topics and a list of crucial questions were offered to the participant, allowing them to grasp what would be requested during the upcoming interview session. This was done to reduce the likelihood of participants experiencing negative feelings throughout the interview if they felt they were being asked above and beyond their expectations.

Meanwhile, it may aid them in planning to react and develop responses. Confidentiality and anonymity were both stressed and ensured. Interview data were audio-recorded with consent from participants and augmented with notetaking. Saunders *et al.* (2012) strongly advocated for the hybrid approach, stating that one data collecting technique cannot replace another. Audio recordings allow the researcher to go back over the original data several times to ensure that no information has been lost. (Neuman 2011). In addition, taking notes may help interviewees stay focused by summarising key topics and re-stating them to corroborate the interviewer's knowledge. It can also be used to provide follow-up questions and capture transient ideas that would otherwise be forgotten. (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). The duration of interviews should be modified to account for ethical concerns and the volume and quality of the data being collected.

A longitudinal design was adopted in the research, including two data collection periods. During phase one (1), face-to-face interviews were conducted with 28 individuals from both case organisations. Furthermore, phase one (1) was supplemented by phase two (2), in which data was gathered by telephone and Microsoft team audio interviews rather than face-to-face due to the current pandemic in-person government restrictions (*i.e.*, Covid-19), as shown in tables 5.7 – phase 1 & 2 below. All persons at the case organisations were asked to participate in the study, and 28 participants volunteered to participate during the first phase, and 12 participants volunteered to participate during the second (follow-up) phase. The duration of the interviews varied from 25 to 45 minutes (phase 1) and 20 to 30 minutes (phase 2 - follow-up). The interviews with firm owners, managers, and non-managerial staff lasted between 20 minutes to one (1) hour on average. In addition, the participants were questioned at their workplace at times that were convenient for them.

PHASE ONE (1) - CASE COMPANIES (A & B)

Table 5.7: Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Collection (*i.e.*, First phase)

NO.	INDUSTRY	INTERVIEW DATE	INTERVIEW DURATION
	SUB-TOTAL: 15	CASE A - ENGINEERING	
1	Engineering	11th October 2019	41:20 mins.
2	Engineering	11th October 2019	32:16 mins.
3	Engineering	11th October 2019	25:43 mins.
4	Engineering	11th October 2019	42:06 mins.
5	Engineering	11th October 2019	25:51 mins.
6	Engineering	11th October 2019	31:05 mins.
7	Engineering	11th October 2019	34:58 mins.
8	Engineering	11th December 2019	43.46 mins.
9	Engineering	25th October 2019	43:15 mins.
10	Engineering	25th October 2019	40:19 mins.

11	Engineering	25th October 2019	32:45 mins.
12	Engineering	25th October 2019	30:22 mins.
13	Engineering	25th October 2019	42.16 mins.
14	Engineering	25th October 2019	24:42 mins.
15	Engineering	25th October 2019	38:21 mins.
SUB-TOTAL: 13	**CASE B - CONSTRUCTION**		
1	Construction	13th September, 2019	30:20 mins.
2	Construction	13th September, 2019	26:54 mins.
3	Construction	13th September, 2019	34:36 mins.
4	Construction	13th September, 2019	40:24 mins.
5	Construction	13th September, 2019	29:55 mins.
6	Construction	13th September, 2019	38:10 mins.
7	Construction	13th September, 2019	36:32 mins.
8	Construction	27th September, 2019	43:49 mins.
9	Construction	27th September, 2019	33:15 mins.
10	Construction	27th September, 2019	26:48 mins.
11	Construction	27th September, 2019	41:35 mins.
12	Construction	27th September, 2019	37:14 mins.
13	Construction	27th September, 2019	32:48 mins.
TOTAL: 28			

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

<u>PHASE TWO (2) - CASE COMPANIES (A & B)</u>

Table 5.7: Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Collection (*i.e.*, Second phase)

NO.	INDUSTRY	INTERVIEW DATE	INTERVIEW DURATION
SUB-TOTAL: 7	**CASE A - ENGINEERING**		
1	Engineering	20th October, 2020	21:37 mins.
2	Engineering	21st October 2020	25:12 mins.
3	Engineering	22nd October 2020	20:52 mins.
4	Engineering	22nd October 2020	28:48 mins.
5	Engineering	23rd October 2020	23:52 mins
6	Engineering	23rd October 2020	27:18 mins.
7	Engineering	2nd November 2020	24:41 mins.
SUB-TOTAL: 5	**CASE B - CONSTRUCTION**		

1	Construction	3rd November 2020	28:45 mins.
2	Construction	3rd November 2020	22:32 mins.
3	Construction	4th November 2020	26:29 mins.
4	Construction	6th November 2020	21:22 mins.
5	Construction	6th November 2020	29:14 mins.
TOTAL: 12			

(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

To maintain anonymity, only gender, nationality, and the number of years working at the case organisation and their skill level were gathered at the time. Participants were also promised identity protection prior to the interviews, and in all instances, were assigned a fictional company and individual participants' names. The study sought information from owners, managers, and workers of SMEs in the UK. Participants were first briefed about the study topic, the interview goals, and the confidentiality conditions. Furthermore, each participant case firm was told about this study's advantages to their organisations concerning TM. Finally, participants were told prior to each interview that the information acquired would be utilised strictly for academic.

a. The rationale for adopting Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview Method

We should use specific techniques to gather information by selecting suitable data collecting methods (Blaikie *et al.,* 2010). Data for the study was gathered using guided, semi-structured, in-depth interviews because, in exploratory investigations, in-depth interviews help determine what is going on (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). In addition, the goal was to acquire insight into the phenomenon under investigation by looking at respondents' perspectives, thoughts, and opinions via the language they employ (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012).

To get unique knowledge or interpretation possessed by the individual questioned, Stake (2010) says that qualitative researchers use interviews. They also gather a numerical aggregate of data from many people, and they uncover "a thing" that the researcher was unable to witness themselves. Since interviews investigate knowledge and perception, they are well-suited to experience-type research questions and construction-type research questions (Braun and Clarke 2013). First and foremost, the exploratory nature of the research justifies the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Second, the study issue was very relevant to the researcher's work environment, and the phenomena under investigation had occurred in her field. Thus, interviews are particularly well-suited to exploring knowledge, perception, or construction of objects and exploring practice-type research topics when the researcher or respondents have a personal investment in the issue (Braun and Clarke 2013).

When used in combination with interviews investigating respondents' interpretations, opinions, and attitudes, 'guided interviews,' which are among the qualitative interviews, are the most suitable method of gathering information. As a result, an interview guide contains subjects that have been pre-determined and will be discussed during the interview. The precise wording of the questions and the sequence in which they are asked are not deemed obligatory. More crucially, Gläser and Laudel (2010) construct a natural conversational flow. If the purpose is to explore a phenomenon that has been little understood so far, the kind of question (s) and how to ask the questions must be taught first. There is the possibility that the whole interviewing process will be adjustable, enabling the researcher to make changes in real-time (Guest *et al.,* 2011). Based on early interviews, the interview guide was developed and changed. It was modified throughout the interviewing process. Hence, data collecting techniques must be interactive, capturing information as it emerges via a collaborative process between the researcher and the responder.

To summarise, a research design that captures this information is essential due to individuals' many forms of research knowledge. Survey-based questionnaires or thoroughly organised interviews are ineffective because they are too rigid to enable respondents to expand their knowledge interactively or to blend their bits of tacit and explicit knowledge via reflection and reasoning. Semi-structured interviews were much more suited to gathering such information. In social science, particularly in business and management, interviews are widely regarded as one of the most common and essential qualitative data collecting procedures (Myers 2013).

The study goals and questions primarily determine the use of interviews. First, compared to other well-known qualitative methods, the interview seems to be the most appropriate approach for this research than other methods such as participant observation and focus group discussion. Observation and focus group discussions are often carried out in groups, while interviews are conducted individually. (Neuman 2011). Second, the researcher looks at what HRM and TM activities are used for, how these practices are carried out in small businesses, and how people view the effects of chaotic environments on these practices.

Considering the sensitivity of some topics and the evolving nature of SMEs, qualitative data is thought to be best gathered one-on-one rather than in groups. Furthermore, observation is often used for analysing the underlying meanings of group members' behaviours in a participative situation (Bryman 2012). On the other hand, the focus group discussion includes two significant faults that are damaging to this research. First, fewer ideas are created because it limits the number of topics covered during the session (Neuman 2011). Finally, given the breadth, complexity, and information required for this research, an interview seems to be the most appropriate strategy.

2) The Interview Cover Letter

A cover letter explaining the aim of the survey or study is often included with most interview questions, as reported by Saunders *et al.* (2009). Therefore, the inclusion of a covering letter may assist in improving the number of responses. The cover letter for this study was one page long. The structure of the covering letter contained the following information: the research title, the research objectives, and the research ‘s significance for the participating sample; promises of confidentiality; emphasising that their cooperation was the most precious factor contributing to the success of this research; the researcher ‘s contact details, and finally thanking the participants for their concern, cooperation, and help.

Including all of this information in the cover letter has been proposed to improve response rates and times. As a result, all recommendations for the cover letter were taken into account. To add to this, it is essential to note that a letter from the research team's supervisors and the University motivated and urged respondents to assist the researcher in attaining the best possible results from their participation in the study. For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data. Using a face-to-face interview format allowed the researcher to connect better and improve interactions with the interviewees. Among the significant informants in the SME case firms were company owners, human resources managers, and other management and non-managerial personnel. Achieving relevant data required separating the interview questions between owners/human resource managers and non-managerial employees.

People in various hierarchical levels tend to be aware of distinct pieces of information. It was, therefore, possible to design two different sets of interview questions based on two different groups. When it came to the interview, the sequence of questions was chosen to help establish rapport while also providing time for follow-up inquiries that elicited further information and were relevant to the study's objectives (Silverman, 2011). To ensure that all critical questions were asked, the interview was structured so that there was enough time to establish rapport before asking follow-up and probing direct questions and questions to interpret and clarify meaning. Pauses and silences were included to allow the interviewee to reflect, consider, or add additional comments (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Hence, it is vital to explain why the interview instrument was selected above alternative qualitative techniques before going into detail about its construction.

3) Consideration of the Role of Researcher in Interviews

When collecting interview data, Researchers should use interview data collection techniques specifically tailored to the logic of qualitative research while conducting their interviews with participants (Silverman, 2011). A respondent's account must be checked for accuracy, and the researcher's effect on the setting must be considered (Silverman, 2011). Furthermore, modern arguments about the use of interviews as a research technique include reference to the researcher's reflexivity, the dynamic character of the interview, and 'real-life' accounts of participants (Cassell, 2009). When it comes to reflexivity, it is defined as the ability of researchers to be self-aware of the consequences of their methodologies and values, their biases and choices, and their presence in the settings they are investigating (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Understanding how to get access, create rapport with respondents, and use interview questioning skills was aided by the researcher's background. Given her training and expertise, the researcher was adept at establishing rapport with respondents, ensuring them that she understood their point of view and the pressures they were under in terms of social standards and accepting their point of view in a non-judgmental way.

The researcher needed to be self-critical to guarantee that she was constantly assessing her degree of impartiality (Silverman, 2011). For example, the interviewee's opinions were not impacted by her own beliefs when she recorded them since she wanted to convey them authentically. Furthermore, while providing an interview overview, the researcher instructed the interviewee to interrupt if they thought the interviewer was heading them in the wrong direction. Finally, as a result of her previous academic and research experience, as well as her membership of a leading UK human resources professional body (*i.e.*, the CIPD), she felt comfortable interviewing the subjects in accordance with expected academic norms, albeit not at the same level as she would have been in her role as a PhD candidate.

4) Documentation Method

Research methods such as document analysis are combined in a triangulation process (Bowen 2009). This was another method employed in this study. It is a method for studying or assessing materials in a methodical manner (Bowen 2009). A variety of documentation may be used to support a research project. This includes printed documents as well as electronic documents and website materials. It can also include correspondence (such as letters and memos) as well as agendas and administrative documents (such as maps and charts) (Yin 2009). This kind of information supports the researcher in boosting evidence gained via other processes, such as essential information on written documents collected without the assistance of a researcher, to support his or her findings. (Bowen 2009).

According to Saldaña (2011), researchers should have access to relevant information and secure written agreement from all parties involved in the study process. During this investigation, the researcher only had restricted access to a photocopy machine or scanner, and most of the materials were highly sensitive and confidential to the organisation. However, the researcher read some of them, and some were taken down as notes. For example, well-written sections in the HR planning document included job descriptions and person specifications, training programmes and rewards for each position, and each activity's budget. There was also information for the number of employees in each department (full-time, part-time, casual, and apprenticeship employees). These other materials supported the interview, such as a company job description, training programme, yearly report, and skill guidelines for each position/person specification. They also contained a performance review form, interview form, application form, and presentation slides.

Definition of talent and Managing talent

- What type of employees does the case firm need currently? Is there a purpose for these requirements?
- What if a business requires specific qualifications or skills?
- In the case firm, which position/role is most important?
- What strategies does the company use to recruit and retain employees?
- Do you have any difficulties or obstacles when it comes to hiring and managing people?

5.8 Access and Barriers to Data Collection

Best practices in research methodologies, as well as ethics, legislation, and regulations from throughout the globe, advocate for educating the research organisation and obtaining agreement from research owners, senior managers, and personnel. In both situations, the management of organisations was officially told about the study, its goals and objectives, and the importance of the same in academic and practical terms, which may benefit them. The researcher established openness and built trust and confidence among the management team with this action.

Formal permission was obtained with promises of secrecy. It was granted with the explicit conditions that the organisation's identity would not be divulged and that the data obtained would be used only for this academic research endeavour. In each instance, consent was given by the participant's signature on the form. The interview questionnaire was circulated to staff once clearance was obtained from the two case firms. In terms of ethics, the design of the interview questionnaire safeguarded the respondents' anonymity since their responses could not have been used to identify them. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012), the topic of ethics in the research interview defines the acceptability of the researcher's behaviour with persons who are the subject of the study. The owners, managers, workers, and organisations involved in the study were the subjects. Nevertheless, there are a few unresolved ethical dilemmas.

The first issue is gaining access to the necessary data and information and dealing with any problems. Second, there are ethical concerns about the data collecting stage, and third, there are concerns about the analysis and presentation stage. Each demands a unique technique and plan to be dealt with effectively and correctly. It is critical to identify concerns that pervade all three stages of the study design: participant privacy and the confidentiality of the data they supply. The volunteers were told that they may opt out of the research at any moment and that they would not be persuaded in taking part. There were no substantial ethical difficulties identified in the study since the researcher was external to the organisations, despite the risk of coercion and intimidation related to data access. At the outset of the encounter, the researcher informed all participants about the study aims, methodology, and data collecting technique, and their agreement was obtained ethically. By acting ethically, the researcher assured objectivity in the analysis. She avoided being selective in her data analysis, and all the information gathered via interviews was analysed in the results. During the data collecting and analysis procedure, the researcher met several roadblocks. These are as follows:

a) It took a long time to transcribe the primary material (tape recordings) obtained via semi-structured interviews. Transcription time for each interview was, on average, 12 hours.
b) Coding, categorising, and designing themes all took time. This meant re-reading the scripts to verify that all concerns were captured and analysed.

As some participants opposed being recorded, the researcher noted the documents witnessed and the whole interview in certain instances.

5.9 Trustworthiness of Data Collection

To produce dependable study findings, high reliability and validity must be reached (Silverman 2006).

5.9.1 Reliability

The degree to which a method produces the same findings regardless of when or where the study is conducted is reliable (Loh, 2013). Researchers suggest many methods for improving the reliability of qualitative research. Moisander and Valtonen (2006), for example, propose two techniques to improve dependability in qualitative research:

i. Ensuring the study's findings are easily understood by clearly describing the study's research approach and data analysis methods.

ii. By expressing the theoretical viewpoint from which the interpretation is derived and demonstrating how this leads to interpretations that reject others, theoretical transparency is considered.

By using these recommendations, the researcher purposefully explains the whole study process and the transparency of each step. Silverman (2006) observes that 'low-inference descriptors' are related to good dependability in qualitative research. Additionally, Silverman contends that interview research must adhere to the low-inference descriptors requirement by:

a. By recording interviews in a concrete manner as possible, such as verbatim reports of what individuals say rather than researchers' reconstructions of what a person said, researchers' viewpoints may impact reporting (Seale, 1999).
b. Instead of delegating the task to an audio-typist, carefully transcribing these recordings according to dependable analytical requirements.
c. Including large data extracts in the study report, at the very least, the queries that elicited any responses (Silverman 2006).

The researcher completely adhered to this criterion in this study; tape-recording of all interviews with the participants were precisely transcribed.

5.9.2 Validity

As crucial as the reliability of data and methodology is, the validity of qualitative research results (Silverman 2006). The veracity, authenticity, and reliability of information are all influenced by the degree of validity. According to Hamilton and

Corbett-Whittier (2012), quality research measures the truthfulness and correctness of its findings, *i.e.*, the degree to which the researcher's conclusions accurately represent its purpose and reflect reality. The validity of this study was improved using triangulation, peer debriefing, probing, and cross-checking.

- Ethnographers believe that triangulation is a critical approach for verifying qualitative research because it may overcome the biases inherent in a single point of view (Silverman, 2006). A triangulation method uses many theories, procedures, observers, and empirical data to provide a fuller and more objective image of the subject being studied (Silverman, 2006). Observing something from several angles, it is believed, enhances the probability of creating an accurate depiction.
- It has been suggested by Robson (1993) that repeatedly presenting one's results and analysis to a colleague or other peer may benefit in the growth of the study's design and analysis; the habit of being when preparing something for presentation to a peer eventually creates credibility. Thus, the researcher used the findings of her study to elicit input from colleagues and other academics, notably from her PhD supervisors, who made insightful suggestions.
- Disagreements and inconsistencies may be resolved by validating interviewee assertions using various data sources (Taylor and Bogdan 1984). Interviews were conducted using a cross-checking approach. Several questions were asked according to the same interview schedule by the researcher with people from different levels of hierarchy and departments. The researcher repeatedly asked the same questions in various ways to get the same answer from the same person. Due to these several comparisons, the researcher discovered hidden realities and obliterated incorrect information previously suspected. There have

been instances when triangulation techniques like documentary analysis have shown multiple points of view to include inaccuracies or misunderstandings. In this way, the study adopted the prevalent opinions while disregarding and excluding deviations that failed to provide objective knowledge.

5.10 Ethical Considerations and GDPR Compliance

Ethics is defined by Saunders *et al.* (2012) as the suitability of behaviour to the rights of persons who become study subjects. This implies that while observing or interviewing individuals, the researcher must keep his or her ideals and obligations in mind. Many ethical considerations must be considered when doing research, including interviews and case studies with specific individuals. Ethics are critical in all research and should be considered at all stages, including conception, initial access, data collection, analysis, and reporting, while also being mindful of the impact of the work on those who provide access and cooperation, as well as those who will have an impact on the research's findings (Ryan 2011).

When weighing the advantages of doing research, it is essential to consider the ethical difficulties and risks. These issues must be handled and controlled throughout the process (Silverman, 2011). Before beginning the fieldwork study, the researcher must apply for ethical approval to address problems such as protecting documents, data collection, and the subject under investigation. Consequently, approval was sought from the University's Research Governance and Ethics Committee.

- The goal of gathering primary data was to aid in answering the research questions and to accomplish the study goals and objectives. To achieve this, the researcher made prior contact with case companies under investigation, and necessary permissions and access were obtained. Before starting the fieldwork and data collection, invitations and informal approvals were made via in-person, face-to-face and remotely.

- The participants and interviewees (*i.e.*, owners, managers, and employees) were provided with a cover letter and participant information sheet, including information about the research and the ethical and confidentiality clause associated with taking part in the study. It was not necessary to collect participants' names or other personal information. Data was only visible to the researcher and her supervisory team. Thus, the process remained anonymous, and the identity of individuals or organisations were not revealed.
- All data and interviews collected during the research were subjected to a stringent confidentiality agreement. No personal information was made accessible to or anyone else because of this study. All the information obtained during the research was erased immediately after it was generated.
- A few of the participants agreed to have their conversations videotaped with their consent. In addition, face-to-face and other interview data were transcribed and incorporated into a database. Finally, several brief telephone follow-up interviews were conducted to help explain the significance of some of the data collected during the first interviews.

Every research project must ensure that the participants are not harmed or that the study results are used against them in any manner (Cresswell 2009). Research ethics must ensure that the methodology's design is solid and ethically justifiable for all stakeholders. The information gathered for this study was thus discreet and anonymous to protect the privacy of the participants. This study does not need a thorough understanding of the participants; hence no names or other identifying information was necessary while using the data gathering tools.

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), respondents' right to withdraw when they feel uncomfortable should be respected. If the study subjects' identities were revealed, it would be against their will. Not one copy of the survey respondents' data was used in the analysis. It is vital to emphasise that the respondents were adequately informed about the study and its goal. Because the researcher did not want anybody to feel humiliated or embarrassed throughout the interview process, she asked only basic questions that would not cause physical or mental distress to the interviewees. Aside from research, the material obtained was simply used for a productive conclusion. Surveys were completed, results were compiled, and questionnaires were destroyed to safeguard respondents and prevent data from being misused or coming into the hands of unauthorised parties.

5.11 Limitations of the Research Data Collection

Patton (2002) asserts that researchers must guarantee that the data they obtain is both genuine and dependable. The validity of the results, in this case, is concerned with whether they are what they seem to be. Several sources were employed to determine validity, including interviews and secondary data evaluations. Evidence was retained to show that the study questions could be explored to the finish. Given that just two case studies were selected, the findings could not apply to the SME sector. The dependability of the research design is concerned with minimising and managing errors and biases in data collection, interpretation, and presentation, among other aspects. Researchers should be aware of the topic or participant prejudice, according to Robson (2011), while planning research. Throughout the research, the covering letter stressed that the interview questionnaire would be obtained and evaluated anonymously, alleviating any worries about the reliability of the data collected. The researcher designed a semi-structured, in-depth interview with more open-ended and probing questions to get more significant data. In any case, there are certain important limitations to this research that should be taken into consideration.

Starting with the fact that this research only looked at two case scenarios in the UK, it is essential to note that the results should not be construed as evidence for a general index of all organisations in the SME business. However, it is difficult to identify an industry comparison since the research was conducted in the UK SME sector. Thus, if a cross-sector (*e.g.*, SMEs vs large corporations) or multinational organisation comparison could be conducted, the research results could be more generalizable in their implications.

However, owing to time and resource constraints, such a comparison was not feasible. During the semi-structured interview data collecting procedure, there were time and access constraints, both in terms of the number of interviews to be conducted and the amount of time each interviewee could reasonably be expected to devote. Even though just a few interviews were conducted, a saturation threshold was achieved in which no new information was discovered. As such, the number of interviewees was unimportant. The interviewees were often busy persons with tight schedules, although giving up to one hour of their time to be questioned.

Nonetheless, it was sometimes impossible to complete the interview in the allotted time. The researcher examined the questions as the interview schedule continued to obtain the essential information from each subject. However, this complicates direct comparisons between respondents. It was not always feasible for the researcher to keep quiet, and interviewees sometimes questioned the researcher. In certain situations, the researcher's silence or resistance to feedback may have seemed cold and unresponsive.

5.12 Empirical Research Data Analysis Process

Grounded theory, narrative analysis, content analysis, pattern matching, and thematic analysis are just a few examples of qualitative research methodologies (Berg and Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Content analysis is the process of examining and interpreting the contents of research in order to find patterns, themes, categories, biases, and meaning (Berg and Lune, 2012). As far as qualitative research goes, it is the most common way to analyse data. Its goal is to extract meaning and draw conclusions from written or visual information. (Brotherton, 2008). Many different types of recorded communication may be used as data sources in content analysis. These include interview transcripts, discourses and protocols of observations, and videotape and document recordings (Creswell, 2014). However popular content analysis may be, it is time-consuming to categorise information and calculate the number of times each category is mentioned in a text or picture, regardless of how many times the term is used. Since it defines the frequency with which categories appear, content analysis heavily relies on counting characteristics inside data sets.

Content analysis is just one part of a thematic investigation. Analysis and reporting of patterns and themes in data has always been stated as the primary goal of this method. (Robson, 2011). Data sets may be broken down into meaningful patterns using thematic analysis, which, according to Joffe (2012), is one of the most effective methods. Using thematic analysis, researchers may identify the most critical meaning clusters in a dataset. According to Brotherton (2008), data analysis in qualitative research helps the researcher discover patterns, linkages, themes, and relationships, interpret their importance and develop meaningful explanations. Therefore, a systematic approach to collecting, organising, and analysing fieldwork data must thus be integrated into the overall planning and begin as soon as data are acquired during fieldwork and continue until final data analysis is completed (Yin, 2014). For this reason, the researcher began analysing while collecting data and amended her analysis after collecting complete data (Robson, 2011):

- How should the interviews be conducted so that the findings and meanings can be analysed cohesively and innovatively?
- In order to discover what the interview reveals to the researcher, how should she go about doing so?
- In what ways might the interviews help the researcher learn more about the phenomenon they are studying?

There are two ways to look at interview data. One is founded on the constructionist tradition and emphasises language, while the other stresses content more (King and Horrocks 2010). Using template analysis, a theme analysis, the researchers could better grasp the participants' real-life experiences. The researcher employed template analysis to discover themes since it considers the individuals' whole job experience. Discourse analysis was ruled out in favour of thematic analysis since it is more flexible and is suggested when the research includes numerous groups (King 2012). With the use of NVIVO 12 software, the induction-deduction interaction was applied to the whole theory.

Because of the complementing nature of these two research methods, template analysis may be used first, followed by vivid matrices or the other way around in some instances (King and Horrocks 2010). In addition, qualitative analysis, as opposed to quantitative analysis, often works with large volumes of text rather than figures (Chambliss and Schutt 2010). Analyzing qualitative data by a phenomenological approach necessitated that thematic analysis techniques be used to operationalise the phenomenological interpretation (Morgan, 2011). One of the primary objections to qualitative research is that findings are often interpreted subjectively and ad hoc (Silverman, 2013). The material in this study relates to the interview transcripts, and the notes gathered during the interviews.

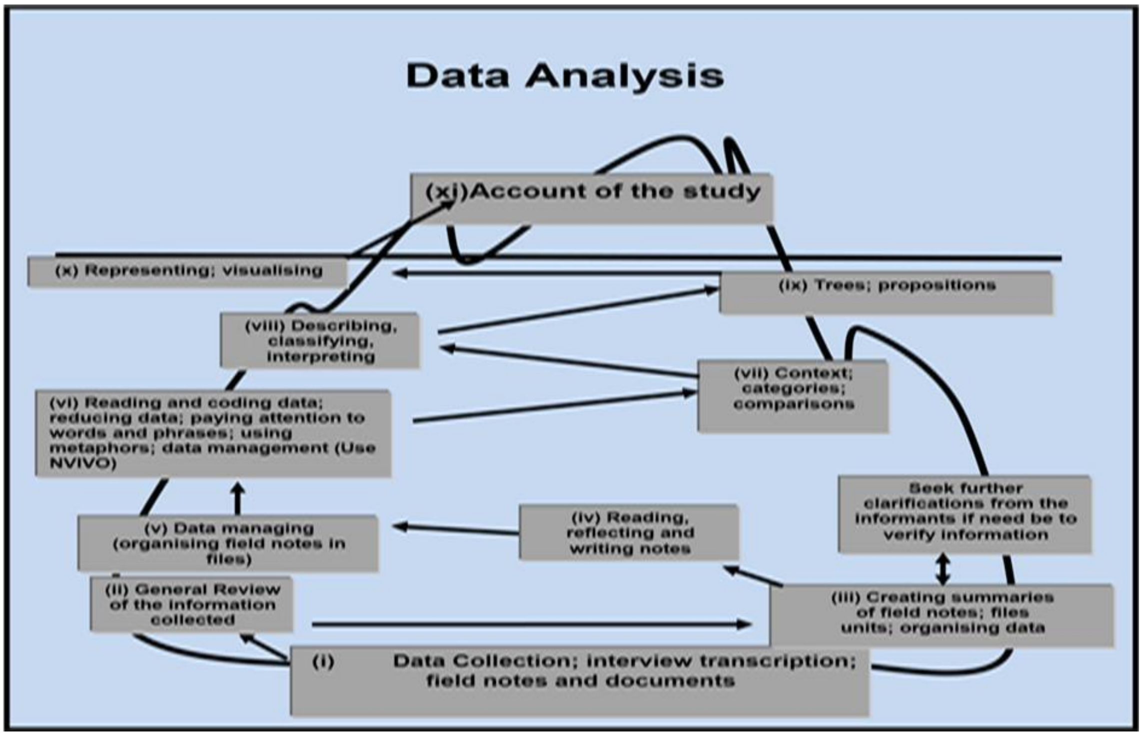
In the absence of a systematic strategy, qualitative data analysis looks to be challenging. Saunders *et al.* (2012) claim that there is no conventional technique for qualitative data analysis. A data reduction procedure was used in this study because of the large quantity of data and the necessity to analyse it systematically. This is an important data analytic choice in qualitative research (Grbich 2013). Even though thematic analysis served as the foundation for the data analysis, the researcher adopted the techniques presented in the literature to create a custom approach that best suits the research's particular requirements while also expressing the researcher's thinking style. For instance, the data were analysed using NVivo 12 software but organised utilising a conventional 'analogue' mind map approach (pencil and paper) and an excel spreadsheet for visualisation. Because the researcher is a visual thinker. She argues that visual techniques may better handle the complexity and large quantity of data. The theory and use of this mix of analytic approaches are described in the following sections.

The goal of the investigation was to explain what was shared by everyone who took part. To convey the universal essence, phenomenology reduces individual experiences to their essential nature (Creswell and Poth 2017). According to this theory, in phenomenology, data analysis can follow systemic procedures that move from small units of analysis to larger units of analysis and on detailed descriptions summarising two elements, "what" the individuals have experienced and "how" they have experienced it (Creswell and Poth 2017).

It was developed to organise data from 'small units of analysis' by inductively discovering themes based on participant experiences and comparing results to build broader meanings, portraying essence as the final feature of phenomenological investigation following this method (Creswell and Poth 2017). It was logical since the whole analytic process focused on finding key remarks, words, or quotations from the data that shed insight into how the respondents saw the phenomena. The next step was for the researcher to turn the significance of these critical assertions into themes (Creswell and Poth 2017).

When it comes to analysing qualitative data, there are various problems than when it comes to quantitative data (Silverman 2011; Lyons 2016). Everything relies on how good a researcher you are and how well you interpret what you find (Lyons 2016). There must be data analysis since the numbers do not speak for themselves; the meanings remain concealed and must be carefully teased out. Since Creswell (2007) data analysis spiral involves moving in circles rather than linearly, the study was carried out by modifying Creswell's (2007) data analysis spiral – as shown in figure 5.10. As a result, an 'iceberg' of stages was used to perform the analysis. As an exploratory investigation, the analysis did not occur in a single, discrete step or phase, but rather as part of a continuous process related to continuing data collection and using a less conventional methodology (Anderson 2009).

Figure 5.12: Creswell's Data Analysis Spiral (2007)



(Source: Creswell, 2007)

1. The data gathering and transcription of recorded interviews are at the very bottom of the iceberg. As part of the interview process, written/diary notes were collected. The majority of the information was gathered via interviews with owners, senior management, line managers, and workers, supplemented by corporate documentation. Interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were limited to three pages in length and were conducted in English. Field notes and interview transcripts combined with these many sources resulted in an extensive database. In order to complete the transcribing process, the interview lasted between 5 and 8 hours. The difficulty of transcribing an interview depends significantly on the language used and the interviewee's pace. There were significant variances regarding this element depending on the linguistic style and speaking the participants' pace. Some interviews were simple to transcribe, while others were significantly more difficult. It was necessary to read over the data to comprehend it to achieve the research's goals fully; thus, the next step was to comprehend it.

2. The material gathered was reviewed numerous times to obtain thorough knowledge, then summarised and organised into file folders. To manage the data effectively, it was necessary to create summaries of the field notes and file units. According to Creswell (2007), A qualitative research study comprises the preparation and organisation of qualitative research data (Creswell, 2007). The researcher constructed operational themes using transcribed notes from recorded interviews, field notes gathered during interviews, and documents reviewed. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data and fill in any knowledge gaps, it was critical to ask participants for more explanation. This goal was

reached via a series of e-mail discussions that followed. During this step, the data was reviewed iteratively, and participants' input was sought for clarity. Identifying concerns that were relevant to the research's overall goal was the next step. So the next step was to consider the information that had been gathered.

3. As advised by Creswell (2007), rereading the field notes and transcripts helped unearth any buried meanings. For instance, most interviewees commented on their own life experiences when asked about the research process in general (Creswell, 2007). These techniques were brought to life and opened up new avenues of investigation for HR and TM in SMEs.

   In order to re-read and reflect on the interview transcripts and field notes, it was necessary to jot down important information gleaned from the tales recounted by participants, which proved to help identify important messages. This sparked several ideas for categorising the data, which were further refined. Indeed, this stage assisted in confirming several patterns that had previously been identified in the literature and identifying new themes that had emerged.

4. Coding is regarded as a data analysis procedure that may be used to collect continuous data. Analyzing data requires the researcher to follow specific rules to make sense of their findings (Creswell, 2007). As an example, field notes may be organised and coded to handle a large quantity of data. The repeated process of reviewing and categorising the data also allowed the voices and messages of participants to be heard, allowing for the interpretation of their experiences to be made possible.

5. According to Creswell (2007), researchers continue their investigation by understanding the whole database once the data organisation has been completed (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the data were analysed using Creswell's (2007) spiral, the NVivo 12 Desktop App, and Microsoft Word. NVIVO enables the researcher to electronically code and organise data, displaying it in categories or a hierarchical structure of categories and sub-categories. Using NVivo 12 was a good choice since it generated a project to retain the data and ideas, and most crucially, allowed the researcher to link them. An in-depth comparison of the differences and similarities among the programmes was made feasible by the software's ability to compile quotations specific to each one. With NVIVO's introduction and refresher courses in mind, the researcher opted to manually handle the data processing and analysis for this study's outcomes. For this study, the researcher chose to handle and analyse data manually rather than NVIVO since it would provide more accurate and sensitive findings.

In addition to the Creswell Spiral, NVIVO allows the researcher to upload all the relevant field notes, transcripts, and papers prepared in Microsoft Word. This presented yet another chance to pore into the text in search of oblique references. Organizing, rearranging, and controlling the massive quantity of data was made much easier thanks to the NVivo programme. Once the interviews are coded in NVivo, all sections associated with a particular code may be seen and printed. It is also possible to do searches throughout all interviews for text strings to compare relevant paragraphs that include the search term.

To make importing the transcripts into NVivo easier, the interview transcripts were structured in Microsoft Word in a particular fashion. Interview questions were given a “heading 1” format, for example. In addition, the opening two paragraphs of each transcript included pertinent information regarding the interview. This made it possible for information from the interview to be automatically added to the document's attributes when it was imported into NVivo. The interview transcripts were formatted correctly from the start, making it easier to organise the data and do the research. Much of the laborious and time-consuming effort of maintaining and retrieving the data may be eliminated by employing the NVivo software, freeing up time for other essential duties such as analysis and interviews. Using NVivo's colour-coding system, it would be simple to distinguish between various sets of interviews. NVivo has the benefit of automatically assigning a date and time stamp to all codes and memoranda submitted. As a result of this capability, the development of codes may be tracked back to its inception.

6. NVIVO made it possible to review the data in order to construct and validate the classifications. This necessitated the organisation of field notes, as well as categorising and organising emergent themes and subthemes. The analysis, in the end, creates answers because it allows for searching through the data, producing categories that account for the interpretations, and continuously examining the data, looking for confirming and contradicting evidence. Because NVIVO is merely a computer-assisted categorization and coding system, this procedure took a long time to complete successfully. Therefore, the researcher was responsible for a significant amount of effort. According to

Robson (2002), technological assistance is limited in qualitative analysis, and the researcher must spend substantial effort breaking down the data (Robson, 2002). NVIVO was useful in limiting the number of categories and correlating them to relevant evidence. As a result, emphasis is put on understanding the social world by investigating how reality is interpreted by its members. It was thus critical to understanding respondents' social worlds in order to understand this data.

7. Because individuals build their worlds and give meaning to their realities, the data analysis step was utilised to collect more insightful tales, words, or statements into the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998). As a result, differential and comparable characteristics were discovered. Taking this phase in the data analysis process was required, especially in HRM and TM, where there is a lack of consensus. After examining the interview excerpts and quotes, it was possible to understand the participants' messages and how they portrayed their culture, mainly how HR and TM practices were implemented. Once the field notes and interview transcripts had been reviewed, the researcher could draw appropriate comparisons and ensure that the context was understood. It was via this method that the researcher understood better how people in the sample group saw and experienced HR and TM practices and tactics during a period of turbulence.

8. According to Creswell (2007), the development of codes or categories is at the core of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2007). Because this was a qualitative study, there was no conventional way to gather data. A non-

standardized approach was used to gather data for this qualitative study since it was qualitative. However, it was necessary to categorise the outcomes (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). Consequently, following categorization and contextualisation, the results were described, classified, and interpreted in the context of the literature, which led to a critical examination of the data that brought less apparent elements of HR and TM practices in SMEs in the UK.

9. Findings were presented in a variety of ways once they had been described, classified, and interpreted. Following the categorization of data, there are several methods to present the information. When presenting data, researchers should use text, tables, or figures. Text, tables, and figures were all employed in this study. In order to show the various definitions of talent and ideas of HR and TM practices in SMEs, tables were used. Matrices were also employed to simplify and explain participants' remarks and data in relevant categories and then guide further research.

5.13 A narrative method in interpreting HRM and TM practices in the case study organisations (*i.e.*, Case A & B)

Ultimately, the study's goal was to understand better HR and TM practices in SMEs from owners and managers and workers (*i.e.,* Stakeholders of case organisations). While HRM has a long-term and indirect influence on workers and the organisation, TM has a direct and immediate impact on both. As a result, it was critical to look at the perspectives of stakeholders other than top management. Narratives were utilised in conjunction with the adapted version of Creswell's Spiral for data analysis. The process of gathering data offers little room for introspection. As a result, the data analysis step provided a chance to think about and connect with the situations described in both case studies. Understanding the current HR and TM situation in each organisation required much reading, reflection, and note-taking. For the management and skilled staff, reflection was essential in constructing their experiences.

Additionally, it was necessary to classify and compare the data from various sources to contextualise it. This included looking at stakeholders' (owners, managers, and workers) perspectives on TM practices and their histories as told via their own stories. Each employee has a unique mix of experiences and developmental history, which shapes their demands, perspectives, and expectations of how organisations treat them (Nadler and Lawler 1983). Aspects including lifetime convictions, previous experiences, common sense, and wishful thinking impact expectations. Other factors include external pressures like the wisdom of trusted advisors and deception by deceivers. The goals of departments and organisations, management styles, and modes of operation all impact what employees anticipate (Karten 1994).

Because expectations evolve and are shaped by the views and experiences of individuals inside organisations, the narrative method was deemed ideal for studying HRM and TM practices in SMEs. Clandinin and Cane (2008) defined that narrative inquiry as to the primary method for comprehending experience. Furthermore, it is a research strategy. This allows for the in-depth examination of people's experiences across time and in context from a perspective of people's experiences and a technique for narratively investigating experience. Narrative inquiry places persons inside their social contexts and daily settings (Bamberg 2010). After great deliberation, the researcher decided to conduct this study using narrative inquiry.

As the researcher discussed with the participants, she discovered hidden meanings in their stories while learning from them. As a result of the interaction with the participants, the researcher built trust via a personal connection. Their tales were meticulously documented, analysed, and the essence of their experience was distilled from them. These tales were critically and thematically analysed. In the HR, TM, or career literature, a narrative inquiry has gotten little traction. As a result, this study filled a methodological need in the existing body of research. Like (Thunnissen *et al.,* (2013); Panda and Sahoo, 2015), several researchers feel that HR and TM and career literature must comprehend individual workers' experiences and results related to TM practices in the SME sector. It is a much more complex, time-consuming, intense, and yet more profound way to begin with participants' lives since narrative inquiry is ultimately about life and living, which is why it is not used in HR and TM (Connelly and Clandinin 2006). This may be the reason why it is not used in scientific studies.

5.14 Conclusion

The credibility of any research undertaking rests on the methodology – the honeycomb of elements and processes that constitute the strategies, processes, and practices around the collection, refinement, interpretation, and presentation of the findings and the conclusions drawn from them (Wilson 2014). This is so because the methodology entails gathering and analysing information and serves as a bridge from extant theory to its empirical origins. In doing so, research can entrench or give credibility to existing theory, or research may question the credibility and remit of theory and suggest an alternative theory. For these reasons, researchers are asked to go beyond the mere statement of their choice of methodology but to robustly justify how the choice represents a credible, reliable, and valid framework for addressing the research questions and achieving the research aims and objectives.

In this respect, researchers must be upfront and unequivocal about their perspective on what constitutes knowledge and its creation and show how these positions inform their methodology. This chapter began with participation in the philosophical debate. A wide variety of issues were addressed, which affected the study's methodology and design. In response to the researcher's points of view, a philosophical viewpoint was presented. This strategy was chosen because it helps the interpreters to make sense of the information they offer. In addition, incorporating phenomenology and case study approaches increased the validity and reliability of the results.

There is little question that the adopted approach has contributed to the research on HR and TM practices in SMEs in turbulent situations. However, it took a unique mix of a dual theoretical framework, case studies, Creswell data analysis spiral and a narrative approach to accomplish the goals of this study. After presenting and supporting the theoretical framework (Chapter 2), reviewing the literature (Chapters 3 & 4), and executing the technique (Chapter 5), the researcher is now ready to go on to the application stage. Finally, chapter 6 summarises the findings and conclusions drawn from the study.

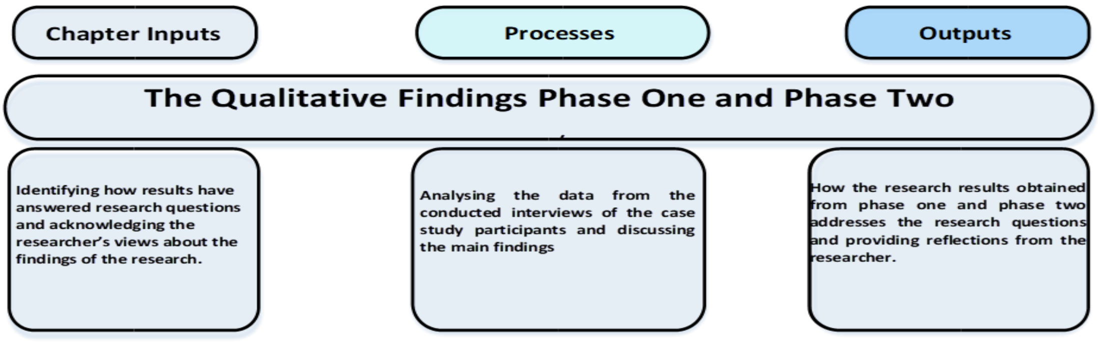
CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter concludes that, despite the long history of research, much work about the processes as to how HRM and TM practices and strategies are developed, implemented, and conceptualised in SMEs during a turbulent period is scarce. This was an important driver and rationale for undertaking case study research on this project. In this research, findings were presented from two (2) case study organisations. These case studies were chosen from different business sectors, including engineering and construction. The two (2) case studies were coded as A and B, respectively. The case organisations were selected primarily based on the researcher's ability to secure access. They were designed to showcase different employer types in terms of sector and size.

Figure 6.1: The Qualitative Findings (Phase One and Phase Two)



(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Semi-structured interviews and documentation analysis were carried out in this research to complement the results as appropriate. After classifying and categorising the interview replies, themes were developed based on the findings. Then, investigations were conducted on the relationships that existed between the various topics. As part of the documentary analysis, words, phrases, and sentence codes identified were used. To correlate findings from the semi-structured interviews, they were utilised to tie findings to the study's overall objectives. The results of the semi-structured interviews were corroborated by documentation method, which were analysed. These approaches were made possible to triangulate data from different sources, which helped to verify the conclusions.

6.2 Themes and Coding: Review from Semi-structured Interviews and Documentation Method

6.2.1 Defining Coding and Coding Process

Interview questions should be as open-ended as possible, allowing interviewees to speak freely about what matters to them in each situation. Next, the researcher must give the experiences or meaningful experiences to the interviewee a conceptual term, known as a code. Interview coding aims to keep track of what is stated during the interview and study how individuals perceive and respond to their experiences. A data analysis procedure begins with coding. It enables the researcher to move away from utterances and a more abstract interpretation of the interview data (Braun and Clarke 2006). In the words of Braun and Clarke (2006), codes are meaningful and brief labels that identify a critical analytical concept or idea to the researcher from the data. Finally, the researcher double-checked the data to make sure there were no omissions during the coding process.

NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, was used to code the interview transcripts, but this was not the most efficient method. The researcher used pen and paper to go over each transcript, using line-by-line coding to make notes on themes and phenomena in the margins. More abstract categories emerged as the codes were not developed strictly microscopically; some were close to the interviewee's accounts, while others were more abstract or conceptual. Post-it notes, keywords and phrases were written down and pasted onto an A2 flip sheet (see 6.2.2). The post-it notes were organised on a piece of paper. Rather than being a haphazard collection of named post-it notes, the sheet came to resemble a tree as more interviews were tagged. As the exercise progressed, memos were created to document thoughts and suggestions concerning the data analysis that were being considered.

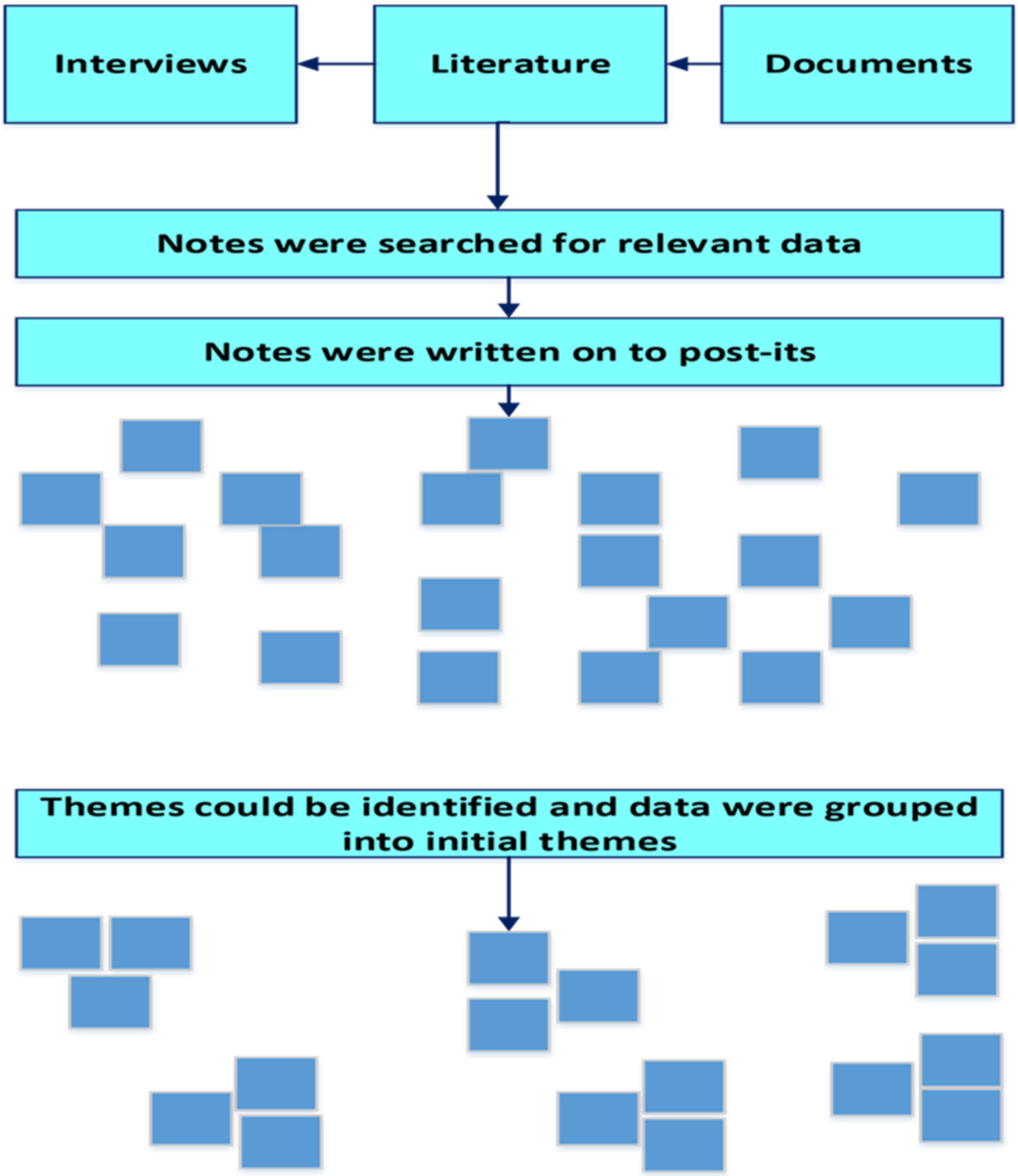
Developing a matrix table with codes for properties and dimensions and some remarks and quotes for this research. Interviews continued to be coded, and the list of codes grew. However, they remained substantially unchanged after being adjusted and checked on additional interview transcripts. The codes were then placed into the NVivo programme, making it possible to search the interviews, re-sort the data, and continually redefine the codes to help research.

6.2.2 Defining and Identifying Themes and Sub-themes

According to Law (2004), the world is messy, and he is interested in mess politics, the process of knowing mess, and mess methodologies. He claims that simplicity will not help us see this mess; rather, research should be messy and diverse in practice. As a result, the researcher needed to conduct a case study to identify and extract relevant data from this chaotic social environment. Every piece of data gathered from the chosen cases had to be included and considered. A theme is a collection of behaviours, actions, and thoughts demonstrated by those interviewed in this study. Themes reflect patterns or meanings within the data collection essential to the study inquiry (Braun and Clarke 2006). Although there should be several theme instances throughout the data set, this does not always imply that the theme is more critical (Braun and Clarke 2006). Sub-themes, on the other hand, are sub-themes. They can aid in organising a large and complex theme and the display of the data's hierarchy of meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006).

To create themes, comparable codes were organised once all of the data was coded. Themes identify a more general level of meaning than codes (Braun and Clarke 2006). The researcher developed an analysis map with prospective topics after comparable grouping codes into clusters (see figure 6.2.2). Thematic summaries were created by manually transferring the central and sub-themes to a thematic matrix, which gathered all the information from the participants and organised it into themes (Kuckartz 2014), as shown in table 6.2.2. Using open coding and initial codes, the researcher focused on themes surrounding effective HR and TM practices, strategies, and implementation challenges as units of analysis, due to ethical concerns regarding the participants' anonymity in selected case companies. By doing this, the researcher could see all the new topics that emerged throughout the investigation. As Clarke and Brown (2014) point out, this is an important stage since themes should be relevant to the research issues being investigated at the time of writing.

Figure 6.2.2: The process of identifying themes from the collected data.



(Source: Compiled by Researcher)

Table 6.2.2: Identification of Themes and Sub-Themes

	Codes	Exploring and investigating strategies and practices of HRM and TM in case of companies (SMEs)	Interview Quest. No.
	PART A – HR & TALENT MANAGEMENT		
Theme One	**Codes**	**Exploring and investigating strategies and practices of HRM and TM in case of companies (SMEs)**	**Interview Quest. No.**
	Code 1	Sub-theme: Presence of HR Specialist or HR Department	1(1) & 2(1)
	Code 2	Sub-theme: Defining and understanding the concept of Talent: Views on Talent	3(2) & 4(2)
	Code 3	Sub-theme: Defining Talent Management	3(3)
	Code 4	Sub-theme: Defining the difference between the concept HRM and Talent Management	6(4)
	Code 5	Sub-theme: Presence of a Talent Management System TMS	5(5)
	Code 6	Sub-theme: Importance and Reason for adopting a Talent Management system	9(6)
	Code 7	Sub-theme: Talent support in achieving competitive advantage	8(7)
	Code 8	Sub-theme: Talent Management responsibility in case companies	10(8), 11(8) & 12 (8)
	Code 9	Sub-theme: Perception and feeling about case companies	17(9)
	Code 10	Sub-theme: Presence of HR & Talent Management practices: Current practices in case companies	7(10), 13(10) & 14(10)
	Code 11	Sub-theme: Presence and Talent retention practices in case companies	15(11) & 16(11)
	PART B AND C – TURBULENT SITUATIONS (*e.g.*, BREXIT & COVID-19)		
Theme Two	**Codes**	**Explore a turbulence or challenging situation impact on implementation and operationalization of HR and TM practices in case SMEs**	**Interview Quest. No.**
	Code 1	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on business operations and case companies as a whole	2(1) & 3(1)
	Code 2	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on employees in case companies	4(2), 5(2) & 8(2)
	Code 3	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on recruitment and selection processes/policies in case companies	9(3), 10(3) & 11(3)
	Code 4	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on employee morale, engagement, and commitment	12(4), 13(4) & 14(4)
	Code 5	Sub-theme: Tools /Techniques used for gaining commitment and engagement among employees during a turbulent situation	15(5)
	Code 6	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on training and development activities in case companies	16(6), 17(6) & 18(6)
	Code 7	Sub-theme: Turbulent and economic factors (Brexit & Covid-19) impact on workforce size – downsizing, skills, and knowledge gaps in case companies	19(7)

6.2.3 A Process of Abstraction

A three-stage abstraction process was developed and followed to identify common themes and understand their significance. The raw data's complexity and messiness were represented in the model’s first stage. This included the participants' thoughts, opinions, and actions and the organisational structure and contexts that influenced them.

This stage was jam-packed with information, allowing the researcher to immerse themselves in the study entirely. The second step was identifying trends in the data. A list of sub-themes evolved when patterns recurred. The third phase was to identify links between sub-themes. After extensively exploring the links between sub-themes, they might be formalised into a list of important themes. Iterative processes are used to guarantee that no qualities are neglected and that the themes stay apparent and relevant. The research question and objectives could then be addressed by highlighting these key themes.

6.3 Empirical Data Findings: Review from Semi-Structured Interviews and Documentation Method

An in-depth examination of how HR and TM practices impacted the personal growth of workers in SMEs during a turbulent period was possible only after thorough identification of all major themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, to provide a complete and accurate image of what is happening in participating case companies, the responses of owners/managers and workers were analysed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

6.3.1 Findings from Review and Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview Data: Approaches to Talent Management in Case companies (*i.e.*, A & B)

Turbulence is a situation in which a firm's external environment undergoes frequent changes because of the environment's dynamic and complex nature (Lynn 2010). Technology, competition, and the market are constantly evolving at a breakneck pace over a short period (Samson 2015). As a result, the environment is frequently hostile, varied, uncertain, multifaceted, dynamic, and volatile. As a result, firms face excessive and uncertain entrepreneurial risks and uncertainties in a turbulent environment, necessitating an appropriate level of risk-taking proclivity, reactiveness, and innovative strategies (Lindelöf and Löfsten 2006). Thus, SMEs must successfully navigate and manage environmental turbulence by combining both short-term and long-term strategies to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace (Samson 2015).

According to Jaworski *et al.* (2000), environmental turbulence creates an environment in which firms are focused on their customers' constantly changing demands compared to what their rivals have to offer. Rose and Shoham (2002) emphasise the importance of firms recognising and spotting potential new market possibilities, responding to customer demands, and designing and implementing the most effective tactics to compete in turbulent environments. Managing talented employees in today's economic climate and turbulence, such as Brexit and Covid-19, presents difficulties. This section summarised the findings and provided an in-depth look at how selected case companies employ HR and TM practices. Initially, the researcher focused on talent's worth and then highlighted the challenges of managing talent in volatile times. Lastly, presented how talent is managed during these times of uncertainty in participating case SMEs.

This section began by establishing the presence of talent within the participating SME industry's domain. Then, a critical assessment of how talent is implemented in the SME sector was looked at. The analysis guided the following research questions: What is the perception and characterisation of talents and their management in the participating organisations? What factors are utilised to determine whether workers are talented? What variables play a role in spotting talented workers? Besides primary data collection (*i.e.,* interviews), case company documentation was used to complement the study. Interview questions focused on familiarity with terms like "talent" and procedures in human resources and the perceptions of the idea within each participant's workplace.

According to the interviews, the case firms used a wide range of strategies in managing talents. Although pay and benefits were not the primary focus, participating SMEs did utilise this method to attract and retain staff. The case participants also said that when faced with challenging events like Brexit and COVID-19, they employ ‘intrinsic techniques’ such as ‘strong connections’ and ‘branding’ to manage talent. The following section goes into further detail about these approaches and strategies:

SECTION A: TALENT MANAGEMENT

I. Presence of HR: Does your company have an HR Specialist or HR Department?

Before discussing HRM and TM practices in SMEs during a turbulent period, knowing whether an HR department or specialists were present in the case companies indicates how many levels of importance owners and managers place on HRM/TM practices and procedures in their organisations (see table 6.3.1). Additionally, this knowledge contributed to understanding the HRM and TM functions involved and the implementation and distribution of HR-related work and activities within the sampled case companies.

Table 6.3.1: The presence of HR departments / HR Specialists in selected SMEs

	Joint HR / Admin. Department	Absent (No HR Department)
SMEs	**CASE A – HR /Admin Officer**	**CASE B – Personnel Officer**

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

<u>CASE A</u>

Case A had a joint department called the "HR and Administrative Department," which combined administrative and HR functions. It was discovered that the department's role was more operational than strategic. Departmental tasks and responsibilities were not clearly defined and, in most situations, overlapped with each other. This could be due to the department's small size and limited capabilities (*i.e.*, having one HR/Admin Officer in charge of all work). As stated by the HR/Admin Officer:

"We do have a department which we call the 'HR and Administrative Department'. It is involved with HR-related work. There is just one person in charge, and that will be me. Sometimes I get help from one of the director's assistants who supports

me as and when needed in activities like new entrants, employee exits, and organising induction/training activities, etc." (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

CASE B

A human resources department was not present in Case B; the Personnel Officer was responsible for all HR-related responsibilities with the assistance of the business's owners or vice presidents. Such a decision could be based on the nature of the work, the relatively low workload, and the company's lack of attention and recognition of HRM activities.

"I do not think we have a department like that. However, there is a position for a personnel officer who manages and handles all HR-related work... and that is me. " (Personnel Officer, Case B).

"I do not think our company needs something like an HR department or an HR specialist to oversee our workforce. So, I guess a Personnel Officer is sufficient to do all the work in that section. For a firm like ours, we usually integrate and join tasks in one position, so we do not need to set up a whole department for just one person when we do not usually have enough daily activities to deal with. " (Director 4, Case B).

II. Defining Talent: What does it mean to be a talented employee in your organisation? What is the definition of talent in your organisation?

CASE A

In Case A, the interviewees agreed on the definition of talent. Participants believed that everyone who performed their job duties and met the company's expectations was talented. For instance, the HR/Admin Officer stated:

> ***"All employees can be viewed as talented... If reasonable measures go into effect, all people will become talented..., and everybody will turn out to be an actor or actress if he/she gets their stage for performance. I think everyone has the ability. The more you do something, the better you get at it. Suppose you have an interest in what you are doing. If you love what you are doing, you will get better and want to be the best. It can be anyone, and we just have to get them in the right position".***
> (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

The HR/Admin Officer mentioned that all workers are considered talents since they emphasise their potential and future growth. Her opposition to seeing human resources and technology through the 80-20 Rule perspective arose because of this experience.

> ***"You do not know whether the people in the part of 80% today might be included in the part of 20% tomorrow. Furthermore, suppose our company does not value the people making up 80%. In that case, the people in the remaining 20% in the other companies will not join our company".*** (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

Participants interviewed noted that workers bring various ideas to the firm. To their credit, they did think that such a wide gap was caused by differences in the beliefs held by those in power. Similarly, Director (2) stated:

> ***"All of our employees should be our talents... When these people joined our company, they were talented. Otherwise, what is the point of recruiting them? So, after some time, if it is proven that certain people are not talented, we normally handle them in this way; we provide opportunities for them, such as training, redeployment, etc., to help them re-adjust their competence structures to become talented again. "*** (Director 2, Case A)

The Mechanical Engineer (Case A) supplemented:

> ***"As long as employees come up to their job requirements, they will be deemed as talented... Their differences are reflected in the roles they play in their respective positions. All employees in our company are divided into two categories: supporting staff and engineering staff. Engineering staff are mainly technical staff while supporting staff are mainly from finance, HR, administration, etc., who support engineers... Every employee can find the corresponding definition of talent in their job category."*** (Mechanical Engineer, Case A)

According to the participants, talent development may benefit both individuals and organisations in the quest for competitive advantage, as seen above (Krishan and

Scullion 2017). Also agreed upon were the notions that anybody may be gifted, as talent can be developed. That talent development should be driven by a person's love or excitement for the activity, especially when combined with the desire to gain a competitive advantage (Thunnissen and Van Arensbergen 2015).

For example, in Case A, the organisation takes an inclusive stance. It considers all workers to be talents, regardless of job title or function. It appears that there is a common understanding throughout the organisation (*i.e.,* everybody has talent). This corresponds to the definitions of TM by some researchers. TM procedures should not be restricted to a privileged few, as Armstrong (2006) reiterated. Even though some employees have more incredible talent than others, everyone can learn new skills. In a similar vein, a statement is made by DeLong and Vijayaraghavan (2003). They argue that talented, consistent performers are the hidden heroes of organisational success. Underneath this interpretation, there are two significant implications.

First, it considers that people have inherent abilities to apply their knowledge to a particular scenario to the best of their abilities. Secondly, it prioritises giving all workers an equal opportunity to succeed by thinking that everyone deserves a fair shot. According to the participants, everyone may become an actor or actress if they have their stage to perform on. This concept of skills may be seen (Stainton 2005). Because of the exclusive perspective's focus on a small group of people, this broad approach eliminates the risk of alienating most employees. Additionally, it puts the field of TM in a precarious situation because the term talent is just another word for people in this context.

CASE B

The General Manager of Case B claimed that there is no clear and precise definition of who or what skills should be since each firm has distinct needs that fluctuate depending on the stage of growth in which it is now operating. Nevertheless, he concluded that firms should pay close attention to critical and non-critical skills. Moreover, to maximise profitability, they should pay particular attention to essential abilities.

> ***"Individuals in various categories constantly have varied worries and needs; as a result, there should be distinct management strategies and tactics that are targeted at people in different categories."*** (General Manager, Case B)

Participants, however, all agreed that these talents could be described in a variety of ways. Individual employees are valued in and of themselves; hence they should be categorised as talents broadly. Their point was that this definition does not apply to all organisations; instead, it is particular to a company, depending on its growth stage and features and target markets. They would try to hire individuals with the company's critical business expertise to fill open roles most of the time. That group claims to be treated better in terms of policy, resource allocation and other such factors. Because every business has limited resources, it is a significant problem to figure out how to make the most of them.

> ***"I believe that everyone has the potential to be talented, and it all depends on the environment they are in; how talented they become is determined by the***

stimulation and guidance they receive. I do not think that everyone can be talented. Certain people can be multi-skilled, but other people are set on one talent, and if they deviate, they do not perform. Talent is like a hen's teeth. They are far and few. It is rare, and you do not get too many talented people out there. I have been faced with this before in my time. Out of the 100's of people I have been associated with, maybe only two or three are talented people. " (Manager CSR, Case B)

When it comes to B, talents are discovered based on two criteria: their level of integration with the company's overall strategy and how scarce they are on the job market. The term talent refers to persons who provide considerable strategic value while also in high demand on the job market. They went on to say that they may be classified as core human capital. Consequently, depending on their knowledge, the ideas expressed above may be interpreted as the participants' notions of skill.

According to the research, an organisation is more likely to select between inclusive and exclusive methods since the knowledge of talent differs throughout management levels and depends on variables such as the industry, the organisational context, and institutional considerations (Tansley *et al.,* 2013). On the other hand, Case B believed that talent is uncommon, with most individuals having unique talents in a single area of specialisation. These beliefs are consistent with the literature (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017).

In this scenario, the areas of specialisation concentrate on technical skills and product and industry knowledge. Additionally, they perceive that talent is intrinsically tied to the capacity for learning and cannot be taught; consequently, the learning capacity is directly associated and a critical component to growth. For instance, Smilansky (2005) notes that TM attempts to increase the quality, availability, and flexibility of extraordinarily skilled and high potential individuals who may significantly influence corporate performance. Defining talent should encompass both performance and prospective characteristics, according to Ashton and Morton. Ashton and Morton (2005) proposed that defining a talent should encompass both performance and potential dimensions. Furthermore, a realistic definition of talent must strike an appropriate balance between current performance and potential for future growth and long-term goals. The organisation believes that identifying and targeting skills is challenging since they are based on current and historical behaviour and future contributions.

Several methods have been used to help with this. These include competence models, KPIs, and KCIs. As a result, Case B stated that their talent-defining method is based on staff categorization, a vertical and horizontal management approach. All workers are divided into distinct groups in the vertical process, but only the best performers and the brightest prospects are chosen from each group in the horizontal process. Instead, then concentrating exclusively on management skills, this strategy incorporates a variety of essential elements. Some functional capabilities have been examined that are necessary for success but without which the firm would be unable to operate. Those in Case B agreed on this point. TM is mainly utilised to organise programmes focused on selecting management and professional individuals in certain worldwide businesses, they said. This strategy may aid workers in understanding their future career options. As a result, it seems that the respondents saw this as an improvement. They also saw talent as a dynamic idea since it is performance- and competence-driven. This means that when a firm grows, the defining criteria will change. For example, one of the participants said that talent is a term that is constantly changing. One may only be classified as talented if they have functional competence and skill in its primary strategy.

The functional abilities that corporations want will be updated following the changing fundamental business plans of the organisations. Since talent is not fixed and unchanging, the criteria for defining it are not always static, and as a result, the skills picked are not always the same. More studies have supported this point of view. The recent TM research was done by the CIPD (2007), for example, discovered that talent definition is dynamic, meaning that it is likely to vary over time in response to changing organisational goals. Therefore, any investigation of TM must unavoidably begin with examining what is meant by the term talent (CIPD, 2007). Considering the above, it is not easy to nail down the specific definition of skills since each organisation has its style and culture and its own set of business requirements and goals, as previously said. Because of this, there are no universally accepted definitions of what talent implies for an organisation or its employees. Despite this, there was some agreement among the many definitions in the end. This study showed that these data might be used to form two major viewpoints on the concept of talent. After thoroughly analysing all the interviews, it is also possible to detect these two separate strains of thinking regarding skills in the empirical data.

III. Defining TM: How does your company define TM?

TM has a wide range of meanings to various individuals, and the literature analysis found an alarming lack of clarity on the definition and scope of the term. This was likewise the case throughout the investigation of the interview results. The researchers (Chuai *et al.*, 2008) discovered that various characteristics of HRM and TM were held in common throughout the case study firms. They investigated the following two strands of viewpoints on TM. According to the first point of view, TM comprises the same functional areas as human resource management (such as employee recruiting). However, it concentrates on top performers and high potential rather than all personnel in each organisation. This approach also views TM as a collection of techniques aimed to guarantee that various functions are integrated rather than separated from one another, as was commonly the case with HRM. The second viewpoint views TM differently, seeing it as a kind of competency development that is oriented toward the organisation.

CASE A

Case A involves managers who abstain from concentrating their efforts on a particular group of workers to prevent the circumstance in which employees from other groups get demotivated. For this case, TM does not relate to highly detailed regulations or declarations that clarify what TM should be or what sorts of work it should do, but rather to a narrower idea that focuses on employee development. Director (3) pointed out:

"Our company has a wish, which is to expect that all of our employees can be developed and stretched." (Director 3, Case A)

Unlike in Case B, TM in Case A encompasses all workers, not just those at the top. Case A's TM is thus equated to conventional staff development by the HR/Admin Officer.

> ***“From what I have explained, it seems like human resources to me, so I would assume that talent management is about identifying areas in the business that could use additional people and sourcing talented people that suit those jobs. Then it is about how those people are looked after and grown in terms of things they can offer the business. It is about having the right skills and performance for the job."***
> (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

As a result, in A, the key characteristics of this notion include tracking staff competency and performance to improve the total competence of the organisation eventually. It is important to note that TM is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of competence development but with an emphasis on organisational effectiveness. Annual reviews of competency assessments and performance records are compared to basic work criteria as part of TM in A's design. By comparing the results, we can see the differences and where there may be room for improvement. By confirming the talents' performance and encouraging non-talents, TM eventually realises an increase in total competence.

> ***"Talent management is about finding the appropriate people to hire and ensuring that they have the proper skill set. It is also about hiring these people, managing***

their careers, and developing them. It is also about anticipating where the person will be in the organisation in the future. If you look at the big picture, it is about making sure people feel like they are a part of the organisation, and not just performing their jobs in isolation." (Personal Assistant to Director, Case A)

In line with previous research, this result indicates a dearth of knowledge of TM techniques (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.,* 2013). Additionally, the results suggest that individuals believed TM was most related with the following:

1	Attracting / sourcing	**4**	Performance Management
2	Recruitment: Placement	**5**	Reward and Retention
3	Development: Training and development	**6**	Other: Engagement

According to the participants, the focus of TM is on finding and placing individuals who are qualified for specific jobs based on their talents and experience.

"TM programme is more focused on developing the staff's abilities than it is on their knowledge. Thus it is more about their skill growth than their knowledge development. This means that for me, the focus of TM is on developing and aligning a team member's skill set with the organisation's strategic objectives. As a result, it all boils down to corporate strategy and matching the right skill set for the job. TM is more about what we need to build in our staff and what skill sets we currently have to guarantee that we are providing the correct services to our customers." (Director 2, Case A)

CASE B

Regarding Case B, the Chief Financial Officer of the business says that the primary priority for TM is the total growth of the organisation.

"He stressed that the focus of TM is not an individual and isolated functional model. It concerns the strengths and weaknesses of the whole organisation, the current and future expected needs for competence, and the potential competence gaps that may emerge". (Chief Finance Officer, Case B)

Participants in Case B discussed their understanding of the term TM. The notion is typically referred to as a set of management operations targeted towards a certain group of individuals. Those chosen skills serve as the conceptual starting point for this notion, with management activities (such as recruiting and development, termination of employment, and so on) serving as tools to achieve this goal. The purpose of all management actions is to ensure a continuous flow of qualified candidates. Overall, the goal of TM is to support organisational growth rather than to manage a single individual or a group of individuals.

IV. In your opinion, how does TM vary from HRM?

CASE A

In Case A, the essence of HRM and TM seemed to be the same since the company regards all workers as talents and values their personal growth.

"That is to recruit the right people, then train the right people, and finally retain the right people to maintain their satisfactory performance in their respective posts. In this sense, 'HRM is just like TM. " (Associate Team Lead, Case A).

Interviewees agreed that each employee brings something unique to the table in terms of contribution. Thus, TM is a management style that focuses on various employees, each with unique skills and abilities. This means that TM devises unique growth and advancement paths for each group inside Case A. As the differentiation management philosophy was adopted as the TM's new approach to HRM. HRM was also seen to combine the skills of all workers so that they work as a team and provide a value that is greater than the sum of the individual contributions.

"To put it, HRM plays the role of the 1+1 rule". (Associate Team Lead, Case A).

In this respect, HRM is macro-management that focuses on the broader context. Therefore, from the two views gathered in Case A, it is possible to infer that the link between TM and HRM should be such that TM is either part of or equivalent to HRM.

<u>CASE B</u>

Manager Case B stated that:

"It is tough to distinguish between them in terms of definitions because they are not in conflict with each other. They have a kind of 'belonging' relationship. TM is just one aspect or perspective of HRM, while HRM is a rather comprehensive concept involving all issues concerning people." (Manager, Case B)

According to a Director in Case B, TM should be initiated to emphasise organisational growth rather than particular individuals or groups. His opinion is that the essence of this knowledge of TM is to examine the full strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and then increase the strengths and remove the flaws appropriately. Because talents are the ones who embody the company's fundamental values and competitive advantage, these two understandings are not fundamentally at odds with one another in terms of their content and meaning.

For his part, he agreed that HRM is considered in the context of managerial functions. According to him, TM overlaps with HRM in terms of the management tasks that each cover since there are always the same difficulties to deal with when it comes to HRM. Because HRM is often focused on the whole workforce, and because TM is focused on key personnel, according to him, TM is a component of HRM.

V. What is the motivation behind the use of TM? ? Why did your company establish a TM system?

It was discussed from various perspectives, including whether the case study organisations decided to adopt or establish human HR or TM practices or systems because of their competitors in the same industry and environment, or whether they pursued symbolic meanings, such as branding effects, among other things.

CASE A

All the people interviewed in Case A indicated they agreed with TM because they wanted to see it developed much more urgently than they had before. Additionally, it was said that internal and external pressure had a role in the acceptance and implementation of TM techniques in the industry. According to the interviews, the internal pressure is to keep present employees to improve overall management competency and develop new management specialists. An alternative approach is to increase the company's talent pool by using external pressure.

Director (3) observed:

"Our clients are from a wide range of sections of the economy, such as telecom, energy, government, education, etc. We require talents to contact these clients from different sections, so they must be of high quality. We have our competitor, there is competition between us, certainly including talent competition. If we need to fill a position, we will not only attach importance to our internal training programmes but also actively look for suitable people in the labour market." (Director 3, Case A)

For Case A, the external pressure comes from the talent market. The company must figure out how to acquire top personnel in more aggressive and competitive marketplaces. However, TM ideology emerged and developed primarily due to internal factors, according to the respondents. External influences, such as competition from other firms, political upheaval such as Brexit and Covid-19, and a company's need for legitimacy, can only have a slight effect on internal dynamics.

A case study revealed that job applicants face stiff competition when finding positions that match their skills and qualifications. TM was adopted due to two factors: first, the urgent need to stay competitive in the market, and second, the pressing need to retain and motivate their existing workforce, according to the study's authors. Additionally, those interviewed noted that implementing TM methods might have a good influence on other aspects of the business, such as the following:

> ***"TM can bring us branding effects in the labour market. Our company has kept the title as 'one of the industry's best employers' for years… It values the establishment of its image in the talent market."*** (Associate Manager, Case A)

In the opinion of the participants, TM is necessary for contemporary firms. Their perception was that this was important since future performance grows because of having the appropriate abilities associated with the right job. Additionally, it was believed that this association contributed to an increase in individual development and productivity (*i.e.,* business performance and growth). Aside from that, participants had the impression that efficient TM procedures may result in a more pleasant working environment since employees in the appropriate positions would love their job, are engaged in it, and had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

> ***"Because then, skills would be considered appropriate for all positions here, so everyone would have a clear indication of what they need to do and what their responsibilities are. I also think that the people here would be happier and feel***

valued because it seems like a system that would consider them. It does not help if you employ someone who is counterproductive to the whole system. Being a medium-sized business, which is highly specialised, it takes some time to get people to perform the way we want them to perform, and we do not want high staff turnover. " (HR / Admin Officer, Case A).

Although most of those interviewed said that the main reason for their adoption of TM was their requirements, other reasons, such as influences from rivals, were not considered relevant.

"We are not keeping an eye on the other companies anymore. We decided to accept and carry out TM mainly based on our demands". "It is not a point of departure for the HR department. The starting point should still be our down-to-earth demand for further development. " (Director 1, Case A)

CASE B

In Case B, respondents responded that they would want to implement HR and TM practices since they have become aware of the difficulty in attracting and retaining talent throughout their growth.

"Nowadays, the competition in the market is dreadfully vigorous... In such a situation, how to attract and eventually retain talent has become our primary concern in carrying out TM." (Finance Manager, Case B).

It is plausible that corporations may make commercial choices based on other factors; however, Case B refuted that theory. They argued that modern corporations are nothing more than profit-seeking commercial enterprises. Thus their primary focus is net income, and as a result, they are very frugal when it comes to spending. In the end, their requirements and intents determine their business behaviour. So it seemed implausible that businesses would waste money on meaningless endeavours just because other businesses were doing the same.

Neither a single department nor a group of people influences organisational behaviour in their eyes. A well-established firm will constantly consider the big picture before making business choices. Consequently, the lack of a department or a specialist in HR cannot attract owners or directors to create or even engage interest in TM or HR practices and activities. Adopting TM is motivated by internal pressures, and therefore they are doing it. Take the manager of CSR, for example:

"If there are no urgent internal demands, it is challenging for TM to take root in a company. TM projects can only be conducted when companies have urgent internal demands while coming up against obstacles and wishing to overcome them. " (Manager CSR, Case B)

The Director, Operations observed:

"No outside forces could be the primary motivators here. Only internal demands might be. If we imitate other businesses or make choices based on the opinions of

others, we will lose our sense of purpose and drive. That is why we cannot use our limited time and resources to keep a watch on those who have not met our standards. Since our everyday tasks are overburdened, we do not want to add more formality to the mix. I am not sure whether TM would help here since you could hire HR to deal with this; disciplining someone does not need much expertise. If you're in my category, you have the required abilities for day-to-day dealings with others. To have talent, you need someone who is born with a specific ability. (Director Operations, Case B)

When it came to Case B, participants believed that TM was superfluous in today's firms. One of the reasons for this perspective was that the organisation lacked the financial clout and resources necessary to provide career opportunities or room for personal advancement to its most brilliant members. Thus, owing to a lack of advancement possibilities, all of the company's brilliant employees would be forced to depart. Participants also believed that the organisation was too small to justify the implementation of a TM or HRM system since it would not provide any new value or offer answers to issues. Similarly, according to Ellehuus (2012), most organisations do not value TM and do not have TM-related initiatives in place.

"I think the company is not big enough to implement a system like that. Even if talent were identified, the company would not offer that person any room for growth or to develop his or her skills further. We do not take on enough new people to warrant such a system. It sounds like it would need radical change to occur,

which could cost in terms of productivity. No, I think this small-to-medium-sized business is not the correct type to support a system like that. " (Director 4, Case B)

People interviewed believed that TM practice has a place in the business world and could be of considerable benefit; however, they believed it was not necessary for their current operation and the industry in which they operate. They provided reasons for believing that skilled and talented people are essential, but TM practices are not. Furthermore, because of TM practices' magnitude and cost consequences, they do not benefit from implementing them.

"I think it would work in a corporate structure or much larger companies, but a company such as ours is not big enough and is too specialised to focus on generic talent or the management thereof." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

Participants believed that TM was not a priority and that the organisation was only concerned with output rather than with people or TM practices or activities. This study adds to the growing body of evidence indicating that the organisation's talent strategy is set in stone and may have harmful consequences.

"Even though there is no formal structure to support talent management, gaps are still considered and filled when there is a requirement to do so. We offer training and develop people to do their work, but any further development must be done personally. Developing a person further in terms of skills would not offer the

individual much as there would be no room for growth. So, yes, matching people to specific jobs and providing the necessary skills, but not overly formal talent management processes. Based on what I can see and hear, I do not think a system is even remotely close to that which exists here. " (Manager, Case B)

Even though most participants believed that employees with the appropriate abilities were necessary to be in the appropriate roles, it remains to be seen if owners or managers understood the skills required for these jobs and whether they are correctly positioned (Oosthuizen and Nienaber, 2010). Additionally, interviewees expressed their belief that the existing organisational structure does not promote TM initiatives. The following quotations serve to highlight this point:

"I think it is because there is a general lack of structure that we have, and because there is a lack of structure, there is no actual planning and goal-setting. Because of that, the need arises haphazardly, not calculated or planned. Also, there are motive issues. The lack of structure and any real direction leaves it open to spur-of-the-moment, snap decisions. The issue is how we evaluate what we need in a talented individual and balance that with the organisation's goals and make it more efficient. " (General Manager, Case B)

According to one of the participants, the organisation is not too big for TM, so TM is not a top concern. The research confirms this, as Dries (2013) points out that many organisations do not have a formal TM framework.

VI. Competitive Advantage and TM: How could talent help support your company goal?

Participants were questioned about how they perceived the impact of TM on their company's competitive advantage and how they perceived TM facilitated their company's goal of gaining a competitive advantage.

<u>CASE A</u>

They believed that TM is associated with a competitive advantage because appropriately situated individuals and execute well in their positions may perform better and perhaps be the greatest in their fields, contributing a unique value that rivals could not replicate. The participants gave the reasons why it was necessary to enable TM, strikingly like the explanations given in prior research in the TM literature (Campbell *et al.,* 2012). It is worth noting that this conclusion is consistent with earlier research in the TM literature, which have shown that organisations in this scenario recognise that technological innovation is critical to facilitating competitive advantage (Vaiman *et al.*, 2012). The following quotations show this observation:

> ***"Having talented people would ensure the company is the best in the field and add to business success. Talented people who are good in their positions would lead to better performance over competitors, I assume."*** (Associate Manager, Case A)

> ***"Managing talent maintains skills and keeps talent properly, which automatically gives the company a competitive advantage."*** (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

CASE B

Case B participants believed that there was no connection between TM and competitive advantage. The distinctive product offers and technical skills provided a competitive edge, not the organisation's employees. Reiterating a previous conclusion from this research, owners and managers in Case B failed to recognise the significance of TM and failed to establish a relationship between TM and company success and competitive advantage, as shown in the literature (Collings, 2014). Another critical point is that participants understood the need to connect abilities to employment and believed TM techniques were inappropriate for their organisation and sector.

VII. TM Responsibility: Which job or function in your company oversees TM?

CASE A

In Case A, participants believed that HR was responsible for TM choices, while others believed everyone was accountable for TM decisions or actions. These observations are shown in the following quotations:

> ***"Human resources is known to deal with the people of the company and look for gaps and fill them when there is a requirement, but they would need to follow the direction of the upper management*****.**" (Personal Assistant to the Director, Case A)

> ***"I would say everybody is responsible. However, that needs to be narrowed down within the company, starting with upper management. I have always believed in a***

team effort in the companies I have been to. I think we have always had outstanding teams, and the team is everyone. So that is why I think it is everybody's job to assist one another and themselves to identify talent." (Junior Engineer, Case A)

CASE B

Case B participants believed that TM activities and decisions were entirely under the control of senior management, which is in line with previous research on the topic (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

"I believe higher management would have the final say on whom to hire and fire." In my opinion, senior executives oversee such matters. I believe they are the only ones with a sense of purpose and structure, therefore making judgments about what has to happen must be part of their job description." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

VIII. How do you feel about your company? Why do some workers quit or remain with the company?

This question depicts participants' attitudes regarding their current roles and their general feelings toward their organisation throughout the research period.

CASE A

Participants in Case A were asked about their motivations for remaining with the organisation. Most respondents responded that money, comfort, and a genuine interest in their jobs were the primary reasons for staying. The following quotations illustrate these principles:

> ***"I have a passion for work. It always challenges me and changes, which keeps me interested. I would also say that I am paid well enough, considering the size of the company and the number of years I have been here, but it is not about the money. I would think it is more about the type of work I do that keeps me interested."*** (Associate Team Lead, Case A)

> ***"To be honest, I am happy to be here where I work for a job with benefits, where there is TM and a company with human resources. An individual within the company who understands and helps me to grow."*** (Personal Assistant to the Director, Case A)

Participants said that the organisation's objective was to expand not just earnings but also personnel capability. They responded that chances for individual improvement existed at the survey and saw a strong relationship between lower and higher levels. The following quotations substantiate these observations:

> ***"The firm is merely growing its personnel, and I think there is room for advancement for me at this organisation. Based on what I observe, I see chances***

every day, and everyone has a place and a role to play. Employees will get on-the-the-job training from their employer. I believe the personnel are well-versed, so that is an excellent place to start. (Manager CSR, Case A)

CASE B

When asked about their work status, half of the participants in Case B said that they were looking for new opportunities at the time of the research, which was an unexpected result given their long tenure with the case organisation.

"I know off-hand that about 80% of the lower staff are looking for new jobs right now." "At some organisational levels, yes Leadership exists at a high level. I feel that is being eroded, and much faith has been lost in leadership. " (Manager CSR, Case B)

As a result of this comment, it is safe to say that people may have lost confidence in the leader's capacity to lead. A deeper look at the relationship between leadership and TM is essential. These participants believed that their abilities were not fully used throughout the study period. As a result of their feelings of underemployment, they felt misplaced inside the organisation. An example of this may be seen in the quote below:

"I do not enjoy the paperwork side of running things, and I think it is not my best work. I prefer to focus on the clients. Well, there is no one else to do the work. You

need to do certain things for the company to make sure things get done. " (Manager, Case B)

Participant's thought that higher-level jobs in the company are given more attention, which means they are preferred. This quotation might provide light on the matter:

"Certain positions naturally have a higher focus because of their importance. You must look at the ease of finding a suitable replacement for certain positions. Certain jobs are critical to the operation of this business, and those are the positions that receive greater focus." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

Another conclusion in line with previous findings is that the organisation lacked structure and had no sense of purpose throughout the research period. Some blamed poor business strategy for the company's ills. A few people thought the leadership and direction were terrible.

"No, there is not anything as such. In this group, I do not perceive any authority figure. Occasionally, I come across individuals who possess leadership abilities but are not themselves leaders. Although this is only my view, it should be noted that" People in higher positions seem to be more flexible and content in general than those in lower ones. The bottom level of the organisation feels divorced from the top, and they are free to do anything they want" (Personal Assistant to the Director, Case B)

Even though the data above offer a bleak picture of Case B, a picture of an unhealthy workplace, there seem to be some positive aspects to the organisation's performance in the sector and its ability to retain employees at all levels of the organisation's hierarchy. In terms of how the various levels view the efficiency of TM procedures, there seems to be a mismatch between the two.

Today's working environment is characterised by a group of workers in the lower and middle strata who believe their abilities are underutilised or misplaced but who remain because they have no other choice and need the money. For any organisation, particularly in these uncertain times like Brexit and Covid-19, this situation might be poisonous and make it difficult to keep top personnel on board. Participants' perceptions about the organisation must be captured in this research since employee retention is tied to their organisation views. These views influence whether workers want to stay with the company (McDonnell *et al*., 2017).

IX. Current HR and TM practices in case companies: What are your company's HR and TM practices and methods?

This question finds out what HRM and TM practices are used in sampled case SMEs.

1) Recruitment: Attraction and Selection

Attracting top performers from the internal or external labour market is the goal of talent acquisition and attraction strategies (AlKerdawy 2016). SMEs have more in common than differences in recruitment and selection methods, although the level of complexity varies from one company to the next. Many people are drawn and selected in a hurried, prejudiced manner.

<u>CASE A</u>

There was no confusion among the participants when it came to HR and TM processes in Case A. Owners/managers, on the other hand, provided a comprehensive description of how they recruited new employees to fill openings at different levels within the company. Obtaining and retaining employees was not an issue for the company. Instead, they relied on the relationships they had established. Leung *et al.* (2006) found that when small enterprises grow, they become increasingly reliant on the business networks they have built over time.

> ***"We find people through the contact that we have and the recruitment agencies. It is very successful... Since we know how good they are. "*** (Director 3, Case A)

These statements present that they could have the right people from having people they already knew or working in the same business area before.

> ***"I have a network at the company I worked for before... They were engineers and managers who had excellent skills and competencies. Moreover, when starting this company, we had the opportunity to contact people we worked with to join the company as engineers."*** (Director 3, Case A)

The way companies are set up seems to have an impact on how they hire new employees. Case A showed that social media and other networks were utilised to discover appropriate personnel. Employment fairs, campus/university recruiting, existing employee and acquaintance recommendation, job agencies and headhunting firms were all utilised.

> ***"Recruitment in my company follows a formal procedure, starting with the submission of a request by a department manager. Then it needs to be approved by the Admin. & HR department and the directors. Once it has got approval, job vacancy information can be released through a proper channel. We use all kinds of sources, such as the internet, friend referrals, etc.".*** (Associate Team Lead, Case A)

It seems that management and non-managerial workers were recruited from different places. Instead of going outside or using existing social networks, the former group relied on internal or external sources such as the internet, employment agencies, and college campuses to find candidates for open roles. In addition, key managers and senior professionals were sometimes recruited through headhunting organisations when the pool of suitable candidates' access was deemed restricted.

> ***"We mainly recruit workers from job agencies and social job fairs. Most managers are promoted internally from the lower level. A few managers were recruited from outside by friend referrals. If a line manager leaves, we will consider existing***

employees in the first instance to fill that position. If no one is capable, then outsiders will be under consideration.

Furthermore, because of the nature of our business, our management team should ideally have an engineering background; as a result, we generally hire managers from within, primarily engineers. To assure the quality and quantity of recruited junior engineers, we establish cooperation with colleges and universities locally and nationally by signing contracts for directed development plans. " (Associate Manager, Case A)

Leung *et al.* (2006) state that an SME's lack of organisational legitimacy and resources influences them to use the most convenient finding methods. Recruiting people through networks seems to be their solution. Windolf categorised firms using the same channel when recruiting people as "muddling through" (Boxall and Purcell, 2008). Muddling through strategy can negatively affect those employed, leading to a narrow way of finding a person who fits specific functions or positions. In Case A, formal documents and forms were in place. These included interview assessment forms, methods, and criteria, among other things. On the other hand, it was observed that the materials were written in the broad and primary language, with explanations and clarifications included.

"Two interviewers need to be present for an interview. They will have a short discussion after the interview and fill in an assessment form. The form is pre-formulated and consists of performance factors that need to be assessed. There are

ratings to measure each factor from A-excellent to E-very poor. Interviewers rank the performance based on their observations and perceptions. " (Engineer, Case A)

Participants in the interviews also claimed that there was no question that face-to-face interviews were the most common technique of selecting candidates for positions. While there was some consistency in the format, it varied greatly, ranging from a casual discussion to something almost like a semi-structured face-to-face interview in other instances. Written exams, psychometric tests, personality tests, and work samples were used significantly, with the amount of time spent on each varying primarily dependent on the nature of the job. It is worth noting that, despite the use of several and different methodologies in certain circumstances, interviews were depended mainly on as the primary method of gathering information. More crucially, the interviewees' views, opinions, and experiences were considered when making the ultimate and final judgement.

"We have established selection procedures with relatively structured interview materials...(Applicants) need to demonstrate their previous work experience during the interview... In some cases, we do not use professional tests in a written form yet. The department manager will decide whom to hire based on his observations through interviews". (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

An Associate Team Lead recounted her experience:

"I came to the company after I got a call from HR. I was interviewed three times on that day by the HR, department manager, and director. HR firstly asked about my expected salary, the reason for leaving the previous employer. Finally, I met with one of the directors of the company. It was more like a conversation between friends than a job interview. We chatted about my career plans and the outlook of the company. " (Associate Team Lead, Case A)

"Engineering and technical workers need to be tested by actually doing the relevant tasks. Written tests are only applied to professional skill-based positions such as finance, accountants, marketing, and customer service, etc., and I am afraid we have to select based on our perceptions and experiences." (Mechanical Engineer, Case A)

Finally, it is discovered that unstated and unspoken norms, principles, standards, regulations, and occasionally non-work-related factors were observed throughout the selection process, without formalised and methodical assessment procedure.

CASE B

SMEs have a variety of methods and techniques for recruiting arrangements and timing decisions. For example, case B interviewees indicated that they were hired via the submission of applications and CVs online, indicating that web-based recruiting was the norm at the time. It was discovered that Case B belonged to the sort of case that was more likely to execute planned recruitment, which was as follows:

"Every department head submits a request plan for the following year in December, stating the total number of new people needed, the positions that need to be filled, specific job requirements, and expected start date. My department will form an annual recruitment plan accordingly. Considering different expected start times and the group of people we are looking for, the plan is divided into a quarterly target. Apart from the annual plan, unexpected demand may occur at any time due to voluntary turnover, boosted business volume, or lack of temporary workers. If under these circumstances, then an additional request form is needed. Once it has got approval from the superior department, we are informed, and the procedure begins. So we do not always stick to the plan but deal with a combination of scheduled and unscheduled recruitment." (Manager, Case B)

Such a method and process might be because specialised positions are in high demand, making it challenging to locate competent people on the job market. The high turnover of a specific set of workers may also contribute to recruiting appropriate applicants. As an example,

"We have different recruitment strategies for various posts. Our construction, architects, and project *supervisors'* ***staff are commonly recruited in a fixed period.***

At the same time, our support area workers' recruitment is open all year round, and recruits join if there is a vacancy. " (General Manager, Case B)

For most of the people interviewed, there were no written materials and documentation provided by the interviewees. Instead, their primary sources were the internet and personal recommendations from friends or family members. However, the following transcriptions provide insight into the reasoning and factors that influenced these decisions:

"Considering our scale, we are very cautious about recruiting managers, who are core employees for us. We have never selected 'strangers.' It is always more reliable to find people from our social and working circles. So, Senior managers are chosen by myself and my other director colleagues at some point. No, they (senior managerial applicants) do not need to go through the normal procedure. For instance, since the applicants are basically from my network, I have known something about them. So, I prefer to invite him/her to a dinner during which we can develop our mutual understanding because such a setting would bring comfort and openness". (Director Operations, Case B).

In Case B, the Finance Manager verified that he had been suggested by the general manager, with whom he was highly acquainted and had previously worked, and that he had accepted the position. On the other hand, participants believed that recruiting techniques and methods differed depending on the level or degree of employment. The following quotation exemplifies this point:

> ***"Management seems to go on hearsay and whom you know. Lower management goes through a proper recruitment process. "*** (Chief Finance Officer, Case B)

Management personnel were selected differently from non-managerial employees in the Case of B organisation, as shown by their participation in more rounds of interviewing and more interviewers in the selection process. Non-management workers in the Case B firm had fewer interviews and fewer interviewers than managerial personnel. When hiring mid-level to lower-level staff, additional and further selection rounds would be necessary, and senior management would almost certainly be engaged in the decision-making process. Despite this, the fundamental technique of interviewing, on the other hand, stayed the same. It was discovered that rather than following a formal system, informal ways were more often used to select top managers, which was surprising. The company's owners and directors carried out a large portion of the selection process. It was said that a casual setting would be good in terms of alleviating uneasiness and fostering a deeper understanding.

2) Training and Development

Rutherford, Buller, and McMullen (2003) have shown that high-growth firms confront employee development and training challenges. This explanation is that communication between employers and employees becomes more distant when the firm grows and managers cannot train everyone. Five factors were taken into consideration when looking at training and development practices in SMEs, including the presence of written documents, induction practices and T&D methods, differentiated practices for non-managerial versus managerial staff, influential factors, and constraints to implementing sophisticated T&D practices.

CASE A

For starters, there were written training-related manuals in Case A. Induction programme packages, training requirements forms, yearly training plans, training materials, supplementary training application forms, processes, and records were just some of the things that were included in the massive archive of documentation. In addition, training assessment documents were also present in this case firm, indicating that evaluation systems were applied and in place.

Case A provided courses, training, and special education to the employees. The reason for that is to support everybody to grow with the company. Courses, programs, and incentives can lead employees to commit to the organisation when they realise they can develop within it.

"The short-term consequence of these practices and strategies is to stabilise. People may be unhappy and frustrated because they are in deathrock, but these programs and incentives can make them stay in the company. It is a way to keep good people from leaving the company. The long-term consequence is that you have an employee with more skills and are better qualified. Later, they can also take on larger responsibilities." (Director 3, Case A)

Induction programmes were offered, although mostly limited to a quick overview of the business and its policies and procedures. The following response provides evidence:

> ***"It (i.e., the induction programme) conveys essential information, for instance, the development of our firm, organisational culture... It is done within one hour. The HR & Admin department oversees organising and implementing inductions for newly recruited employees. It is a one-day session in which safety issues and critical regulations are introduced, for example, rules of work attendance. "*** (Associate Manager, Case A)

Case A used a variety of professional trainers' internal and external training programmes by employing a wide range of formal and informal approaches in different combinations.

> ***"We have different training for two groups of people because the requirements and expectations are discriminatory—training programmes for general staff focus on developing their practical skills. We emphasise shaping their values to be consistent with organisational values, developing their initiative for thinking, and developing their leadership capability for management. We use differentiated methods. General staff often take short internal training sessions. For management, we occasionally invite professional trainers from outside. Alternatively, they are sent to participate in external courses and seminars. Discussion-based interactive training is more preferred. "*** (HR/Admin, Case A)

Employees' feedback and responses confirmed that the training approaches were distinct. To provide an example, an associate team lead acknowledged that he just attended an external one-day training session on the topic of how to manage his team members efficiently and successfully. Another mid-level participant had recently come from a 4-day workshop/seminar on work-life balance and workplace psychology. In Case A, investment in T&D seems to relate to industrial features and characteristics and beliefs and opinions of the value of T&D held by the owners of the company.

> ***"Apart from regular training, we believe career development is significant. We are currently initiating an activity with the theme of career planning and development this month. Employees are encouraged to think about how they would like to plan their careers. We will collect their ideas and see how our firm can provide a career path, integrating individual and organisational development goals. We believe it would strengthen their confidence in the firm and their willingness to stay with us."*** (Director 2, Case A)

Additionally, Case A employees were likewise trained on the job. In addition to standard and conventional training programmes offered, other training activities took place regularly, such as lectures and workshops, which were presented by internal personnel, during working time and in regular meetings. In most of these training programmes, the focus was on enhancing service knowledge, developing the skills, and working abilities essential to satisfy short-term employment requirements or job placement opportunities. In this case company, there was a clear preference for apprenticeship programmes. In each period, employees new to the company were allocated one or more personal tutors to help them get up to speed. However, the efficiency of this practice is limited by the ability and desire of the tutor to instruct their participants. Thus, most of the time, the practice is informal, focused on the short term, and ad hoc in most instances.

> ***"Yes, we do implement apprenticeship programmes. A master (an experienced employee) is assigned to a new employee. They need to sign an agreement to confirm the relationship. It (the training arrangement) is flexible depending on the workload. Training activities are unlikely to be during our busy period. The skilled or experienced teachers give lectures to recruits and poor performers. "*** (Mechanical Engineer, Case A)

> ***"Our people deliver most of the training during daily work time... The training programmes are directly related to their work. We do not have job rotation opportunities as it is not necessary at the current stage"*** (Associate Team Lead, Case A)

By way of example, it was observed in Case A that department supervisors and heads provide informal career guidance to their workers in the workplace. They offer an educational assistance programme for its workers; if they decide to seek higher education in a field connected to their employment, they return half the expenses or money paid for the complete course. Sponsorship and financial assistance are given to the highest management staff who are pursuing master's degrees. In response to feedback from participants, the organisation offers a three-day leadership development seminar for newly appointed supervisors. Individuals frequently have the technical abilities or know-how but may lack the interpersonal and people management abilities required for leading and managing a team.

CASE B

Most of the participants in Case B believed that training and development were informal and ineffective. The following quote shows an illustration of this point:

> ***"OK, well, I do not think there is anything [training and development]. I think there are individuals within the business who take it upon themselves to better others, which is about it. We do not get called around or into meetings to learn a new product or anything like that. It does not happen. Not at all. We must find out for ourselves. A manager sometimes gives us a short training session during weekly meetings if typical problems have occurred. But we need to learn by ourselves most of the time by reading manuals and technical documents. "*** (Manager, Case B)

According to the study, case B's official T&D processes are not being implemented due to organisational and individual challenges. Organisational restrictions may include insufficient financial resources, a lack of HR specialists, reduced job requirements and the repetitious nature of labour, employers' views and opinions of discounting the value of T&D and concerns about highly trained employees changing jobs or leaving the company. For example, a lack of resources, budgetary limits, inability to recruit and retain qualified employees, no HR specialists, well-trained personnel leaving for other jobs and owners' view and opinion that T&D is undervalued are all factors that might hinder an organisation's ability to invest in T&D at the organisational level.

As a result of a severe workload, lack of learning initiatives, misunderstood training aims and limited cooperation from department supervisors; workers may be reluctant to participate in T&D activities on a personal level. In the workplace, individuals may be reluctant to participate in T&D personally because of a demanding workload, a lack of learning initiatives, a misunderstood goal of training, and a lack of support from their department superiors. Organisational restrictions are evident in the transcriptions that follow:

"I have to admit that they (training) are mostly unplanned, reactive, and unsystematic... They are mainly cramming. Job rotation is encouraged in our firm. However, it is crucial for private firms, as unpredictable situations often happen where a versatile person is more needed than a specialised workforce. The career development path is unclear. The managers are assigned to their subordinates as 'masters.' Not all can be coaches due to their lack of coaching skills. Some are unwilling to coach because they fear the trainees may take over once the core skills are gained. An old saying is: the master will starve to death once the apprentice has acquired the skills." (Director 4, Case B)

"We have no intention of carrying out any training in our firm. We are not like the big companies that have a sufficient financial budget. Besides, skills training is not

necessary here. Enterprises are not like schools. The business priority is to make profits and stay 'alive'…We cannot afford professional trainers. I am not saying we should not provide training at all. Our training, mostly, is informal, taking place on-site" (Finance Manager, Case B)

Case B has highlighted training and development as a TM concern; as indicated, the case organisation's leadership is not engaged in talent development, resulting in talent becoming fixed. However, although participants believe that training and development are unsuccessful and have said they are essential, this conclusion is crucial since this technique results in informal training. This might have repercussions and an effect on TM in terms of retention. However, from the findings, employees seem to stay because it is convenient, financially rewarding, and attractive.

"We rarely invite professional trainers from outside. It is not applicable for small and medium firms like ours. How can we afford such high costs? So, we have a big dilemma. Training is essential for our company because we must keep pace to avoid being kicked out of the market. However, extensive training experiences would improve their marketability if they pursue a career in the industry. They will depart if a higher-paying position becomes available. If they can engage in intense, high-level training courses our partners offer, we must enter into training agreements with them. Still, it is hardly a foolproof method of preventing job jumping..." (Director Operations, Case B)

> ***"We had used web-based training before, which cost much money... However, it did not go well. After years, the results were still not satisfactory, and then we stopped using it. This was because we had not provided pre-training activities and follow-up measures to support the programme. We lack experience in training. "***
> ***"On the other hand, they (employees) were not actively engaged because they felt like completing the required training hours was a task. They did not realise it could help them to improve work performance. It also seems other department heads do not understand what we are doing. They believe training sessions are HR department responsibilities that are irrelevant to them…So our training becomes much more reactive."*** (Chief Finance Officer, Case B)

3) Rewards and Retention Management

CASE A

In Case A, effective retention procedures and practices were deemed a critical component of HRM to keep employees engaged. In addition, there were written documentation about the situation. For example, participating employees felt that the salary offered by the firm was on pace with or even more than the typical market rate for their industry.

> ***"We have written compensation policies stating our pay structure, salary scales, criteria of adjustment and other relevant rules…I believe the overall pay level in our firm is at the upper-middle level compared with the market level. It should be competitive with our rivals in the same sector"*** (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

The pay is comprised of two main components: basic pay and performance pay. The base salary or pay is set and determined by the employee's grade and the type of the job or task performed. On the other hand, performance-based pay is variable, based on how well the employee performs during each period. In some instances, depending on how the task is done, there is a considerable variation in each of these two components. In addition, seniority pay was implemented, accounting for just a minor portion of the total compensation. Even though overtime labour is expected in the SME sector, it was discovered that overtime compensation was unlikely to be offered in Case A, except in cases where there was a perceived great deal of pressure to recruit and retain employees. In contrast, a small number of participants believed that talent retention exists in several forms, as shown by the following remark:

"I think the quickest measure of that is staff turnover, which has been fairly low throughout all the years within the company, and I think that it is a good indicator that something is working." (HR / Admin Officer, Case A)

Staff retention at all levels was critical for the organisation and the business and sector in which it operated.

"Yes, on all levels. If you have staff and they have been with you for a while, then they have an understanding." (Director 1, Case A)

CASE B

According to employees at all levels, exit interviews were not undertaken when an employee leaves the organisation. In support of this remark, the following quote is provided:

"Our functional area employees keep leaving; if there were plans in place to manage them, then surely they would not leave, right? The company does not ask them why they are leaving, and they just let them go, and we replace them." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

Interviewees said that owners were not concerned with employee retention and that lost employees were quickly and efficiently replaced. They complained that the employees were under-appreciated and felt that they were not being adequately rewarded or recognised. Most interviewees agreed that the organisation did not place a high value on retaining its best employees from a financial standpoint due to budgetary constraints. These results are consistent with how these workers felt about the organisation, their present jobs, and the elements they believed were essential in retaining top talent. They were also under the impression that those deemed essential to the organisation's functioning were retained. It was discovered that the exact pay or salary package was primarily chosen by employers, leaving little room for workers to bargain on their terms. According to the interviewee's own words:

"It is my employer that sets my pay level. I did attempt to negotiate, but you know, it changes nothing at the end." (Manager CSR, Case B)

Case B participants did not recognise the value of keeping all employees. The following remark exemplifies this point:

"I think it is impossible to retain all the staff here because of our size. It is not uncommon for companies to offer better pay, pay that we cannot match. We also seem to be used as a stepping stone for the younger generation. In that sense, I would say no. It is not essential to retain all the staff. " (Director 3, Case B)

Many businesses do not have active talent retention strategies in place, lack a complete understanding, and lack the necessary knowledge to deal with the implications of losing essential staff or customers (Ellehuus, 2012). This loss of talent and the apparent failure to recognise the prospect of staff attrition might have significant consequences for the organisation's competitive edge and the ability to compete. It was stated that talent existed within the precise abilities needed by the sector and that having these specialised talents would provide a competitive edge over those who lack them. Previous statements about the organisation's dependence on skills and talent implied that a loss of skills would damage its productivity and, ultimately, its capacity to compete successfully on a global scale. It is possible to get helpful insight into the perceptions of staff loss by examining participants' viewpoints.

Once again, participants expressed concern about the size of the company operation, believing that it was not big enough to support the practice or achieve the objective of retaining all employees. The organisation's capacity to retain a competitive advantage might also be adversely affected by its loss of knowledge talents. This knowledge can be transferred or employed in other contexts and organisations. As a result, they reacted strongly to the loss of employees. Most of them feel that the loss of personnel leads to productivity losses and losses in skills, knowledge, and talents, opinions, and beliefs backed by the literature (Villiers and Stander, 2011).

Participant perceptions in Case B indicated that the loss of personnel produced stress and imposed a greater demand on the present staff capability and existing staffing resources. For example, they indicated that they found that there had been high turnover in lower-level positions and that losses in talent or skills harmed essential business operations and the company's capacity to run effectively, among other things. Talent is a scarce commodity for many companies. Case B participants believed that replacing talent was difficult. The participants agreed that talent is hard to replace and costly to acquire. This conclusion was consistent with the company's earlier response to what talent strategy they use and why talent is so critical to its success. Despite this, they take an exclusive approach to talent and prioritise keeping the people they believe are essential to its success. They also adopt approaches and practices that are expected to affect their ability to sustain competitive advantage negatively.

X. What challenges is your company facing in managing and retaining talent?

Talent mobility and regional and worldwide competition for talent are becoming increasingly prevalent in today's business climate. Companies are increasingly competing on a regional and worldwide scale for top talent, rather than just on a national level. Thus, the importance of transferring knowledge has grown significantly (McDonnell *et al.,* 2010). In this part, the outcomes and conclusions of the difficulties in managing talents are discussed from the fieldwork interviews. This summarises the widely cited problems and challenges that the participant case companies identified as impacting the recruitment, selection, and retention of talent. This section summarises the frequently reported difficulties and obstacles that the participating case firms recognised as influencing the recruitment, selection, and retention of the top talent in their organisations.

CASE A

According to Case A, managing talent was difficult since most of the workforce comprised younger people (*i.e.*, 20-35 years old). Talented employees in this age bracket are very adaptable, with a wide range of skills making this a problem. This age group is likely to keep trying for new opportunities and is characterised by a lack of patience and a proclivity to seek out new chances. The participants made the case that the critical draw for this generation of employees is bigger and better salary offers, more responsibility and a better working environment, among other things.

The following are some examples:

> ***"Workers nowadays are changeable. If they get offered more money, they will simply leave."***(Associate Team Lead, Case A)

Talent needs more than just financial incentives; it also requires "greater responsibility, better prioritisation and better growth possibilities. In addition, several participants in Case A mentioned the significant growth in the number of SMEs and the increasing rivalry for workers as a significant obstacle. The growth is causing a labour market dilemma for employees. According to the Mechanical Engineer:

> ***"It is challenging to find people. As you can see, more and more companies are opening now, especially in our sector, and these new companies offer more money to persuade workers to work for them."*** (Mechanical Engineer, Case A)

There was a consensus that the labour market was becoming "tighter."

> ***"Demand exceeds supply in this market. As a result, the market is overheated. So, for instance, we have to lower our expectations because there are not many candidates to select from. We want people with high standards, but at times we have to accept people who are at about 60-70 per cent of our expectations."*** (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

<u>CASE B</u>

The Chief Finance Officer in Case B noted that:

> ***"It is not just money that attracts talent; they also want better job satisfaction, flexibility, training opportunities, and an appropriate work environment."*** (Chief Finance Officer, Case B)

For one thing, today's best and brightest workforce desire a challenge. Case B referenced this to support the following statement:

"We are struggling to retain talent... as young talent keeps moving from one job to another, testing their skills and knowledge. Thus, we must note that talent is more likely to accept new jobs if it meets their criteria, and these criteria can take different forms (rather than merely financial reasons)." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

To recruit and maintain the best talent, organisations must first understand what motivates their employees to craft the best strategies for attracting and retaining the best people. Therefore, understanding the drivers of talent is critical for organisations and keeping this in mind while devising strategies for recruiting and maintaining people is a significant issue for them.

"This young and talented age group is aware of their full potential, and they easily transition from one firm to another... We need to understand what they require and attract them in the right way." (Director Operations, Case B)

As previously said, Case B revealed that the number of small businesses is expanding, which means that the mobility of qualified and competent employees in this sector is also increasing. *"Good workers have more choices."* According to this, the growing numbers of small businesses and rising demand for employees in the labour market significantly affect the recruitment and retention of talent.

SECTION B & C: TURBULENT SITUATIONS (BREXIT AND COVID-19)

XI. How have the external turbulence factors like Brexit and Covid-19 impacted your organisation?

CASE A

"There has undoubtedly been an increase in employee, client, and contractor concern, primarily due to the sheer uncertainty. There is a question mark hanging over us and no real answers from the powers that be. In that regard, it is a guessing game as to how the Brexit and COVID-19 pandemic dust will settle and its impact going forward, but we must make plans to be prepared for every eventuality. So that is what we have been doing: making plans for whatever happens. We now have strategies to ensure we can remain to operate smoothly and successfully with the government and global restrictions. " (Director 1, Case A)

"From our company's perspective, it has not changed much at all. Our clients are still using our services, and we have had a steady stream of new work and projects coming through, not just in Europe but elsewhere around the world. If anything, we are busier than ever, which shows Brexit or Covid-19 has not impacted on our business situation or the organisation." (Associate Manager, Case A)

CASE B

"Brexit and the current COVID-19 pandemic have taken us all by surprise. As a result, the company had to undergo cost reduction. We needed staff on board to go through that process; we have downsized and reduced the payroll costs over this

uncertain period, especially in this Covid-19 pandemic. We had to introduce cost reductions due to a reduction in subvention. The company is pursuing further cost reductions and is currently negotiating over changes to the employees' contracts." (General Manager, Case B)

XII. **How have the external turbulence factors like Brexit and Covid-19 impacted your recruitment policy and strategies?**

CASE A

"There has been no change for technical/professional positions; we still need to recruit when positions arise. Finally, we are now offering more fixed-term contracts for available positions. In addition, we outsource some projects rather than take on permanent members of staff. " "We have recruited at the senior level, even though there is a recruitment bar for recruiting for safety-critical positions. Whether internal or external, every role now must have a business case to justify the recruitment for a position. In addition, there is an increase in the use of temporary, fixed-term contracts". (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

CASE B

"Officially, we are not recruiting; however, if it is a vital role and somebody retires or leaves, yes, we fill it; the biggest impact is that there are fixed-term contracts. If we are recruiting externally, it means we do not have the skillset in-house. Outsourcing will certainly be looked at in the future." (Personnel Officer, Case B)

"Except for technical roles that were not accessible inside the company because of the uncertainty, we have not recruited outside since that time. Increasingly, we are using fixed-term contracts. We have expanded our reliance on fixed-term agreements. Most roles that become available are filled internally. Recently, we had a vacancy. We did not have someone who could fill the post, which was a failure; various personnel inside the department might have been groomed to take over for the role when it became available. Due to lack of time and staff, "decreased staff due to downsizing has prevented much cross-training in departments. " (Director 4, Case B)

XIII. Has the external turbulence factors like Brexit and Covid-19 impacted your company's training and development methods?

CASE A

"There is probably no difference. It did not impact one way or another. However, since the company has just one person in charge of HR and administrative issues, the training function was effectively devolved to departmental heads." (Director 2, Case A)

"No, we realised in this uncertainty that there was a need for cost savings, but not to cut the training and development budget. We have concentrated on developing our staff in every area. We have not cut back on developing managers and identifying people with a certain skill set that we believe is in line for succession in

one area or another. However, financing for higher education is still available, although the amount provided is significantly reduced." (Associate Team Lead, Case A)

CASE B

"There are two things. Yes, our budget has decreased, but not for technical training because there are specific regulatory requirements that we have to meet. The talent training and development budget has been cut significantly. The career development programme does not run anymore. We have not funded an MBA or professional course in years, so the spending on such training has been cut. The shift is to more in-house training and development. Safety-critical training like social distancing measures, for example, during this uncertainty (Covid-19) and regulatory training is carried out" (Personnel Officer, Case B)

XIV. Have you noticed an impact of the external turbulence factors like Brexit and Covid-19 on employee engagement, commitment, and psychological contract?

CASE A

"Yes, two key things: people are generally more insecure and more anxious now; their job is more important to them. This does not necessarily mean that people are performing better. If anything, I think they have gotten a little warier and are now questioning things going on. Because of the business environment's current

uncertainty, we had to change people's terms and conditions. As a result, people's demands are more productivity for less pay. Also, because we are making changes to our way of operation, this has impacted the contract with our clients. " (Manager CSR, Case A)

"I do not believe that there is a lack of involvement or dedication on the part of the staff. Employees do not seem disengaged or unwilling in any way. Employees have a positive working connection with the firm, rather than the other way around. To guarantee that effective communication channels are constantly available, we put forth significant effort. Maintaining open channels of communication is a top priority for our company." (Director 1, Case A)

CASE B

"Not notably yet, but it will be in the future as there are harsher cuts to come on what has already come down the line. We have downsized considerably, and we have reduced the payroll costs throughout the uncertainty. As a result, there have been considerable reductions in the payroll bill." (Finance Manager, Case B).

Notably, we have not run a staff culture survey for some time since the pandemic. However, we have decided to run one. We have created an internal survey committee; this will be a "tick box survey," The results will be analysed internally. Following considerable changes in operations and reorganisation due to the

present uncertainty, we believe that this will provide us with a better picture of how engaged and devoted our staff are (Director Operations, Case B)

XV. Have development tools been employed to increase commitment and engagement among your staff during times of external turbulence such as Brexit and Covid-19?

CASE A

"The organisation is committed to giving employees the opportunity and support to develop their careers within the company. This is a win/win situation for both the organisation and the employee, and the organisation retains staff, and the employee experiences higher job satisfaction, which increases loyalty and commitment." (HR/Admin Officer, Case A)

"Yes, I think development is a useful tool to gain commitment and engagement from your employees, particularly in the current turbulent economy. An employment contract is a two-way contract. We have a contract of employment, but the employee also has a contract with the organisation to communicate with them. We should allow them to develop and be heard. If you look after employees in the bad times like what we are in now (i.e., Brexit and Covid-19), it will pay dividends in the good times. We have excellent staff retention; a turbulent situation like these two factors will always give us that, but I would like to think that people are staying

because we are a good employer. We give opportunities for development through all grades." (Director 3, Case A)

CASE B

"Departmentally, but not as an overall business strategy. We have cases where we ask people to take on more responsibility with no wage increase due to people exiting on Voluntary Severance Programmes, but it has probably been limited. We will have to deal with the fallout from the whole process and deal with disengagement and the subsequent re-engagement of staff. This is highlighted because some former lower-level employees are now middle managers in the organisation." (General Manager, Case B)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND REVIEW OF SELECTED INTERVIEW DATA IN CASE COMPANIES (A & B)

CASES	Presence of HR Department or HR Specialist	Defining Talents	Defining TM	Difference between TM and HRM	Reason to adopt TM	TM Linkage to company competitive advantage	Role responsible for managing talents	Current HR & TM Practices adopted
Case A	Yes	Key personnel who have shown superior performance and competency Part of the human resources that are more capable and productive. Everyone, if they satisfy the standards of their position.	Competence development, but with an organisational focus An improvement of organisational competence as a whole Equal to traditional personnel	TM is a part of HRM, because its target is part of human resources TM emphasises differentiation management. TM ≤ HRM TM is one part of HRM. It is a set of	Urgent demands for retention and attraction of talents Retention and attraction of talents for further development Demand for organisational competence	TM is linked to competitive business advantage, as employees are placed in the correct positions at the right time TM linked to the company goal, gaining a competitive edge that	HR Department, including the involvement of all levels of employees, is responsible and involved in HR and TM activities and practices	**Recruitment** • Social/business networks • Headhunting/recruitment agencies • Campus/university recruitment • Employee referrals • Internet recruitment **Selection** • Face-to-Face Interviews • Evaluation/Assessments • Informal Chat • Short discussion • Written tests • Psychometric tests • Personality Tests **Training/Development** • Induction Programmes • Education packages

		Those that hold significant roles in each career path	development	more directed management systems	development. pressure from talent war	competitors cannot match Talents ensure the company is the best in the sector by adding value to business success		• Internal/External training courses • Seminars/Workshops • On-the-job training • Routine meetings • Apprenticeship Programmes • Personal Tutor training • Career mentoring **<u>Rewards/Retention</u>** • Basic/Salary Pay • Performance Pay • Incentive/Bonus Pay • Seniority Pay • Overtime Pay if needed
Case B	No	Strategically important individuals have a high level of scarcity. Some personnel are directly involved in	Life cycle and development cycle of talents A series of functional models to guarantee a	The starting point of TM is talents, rather than split functional models like HRM TM works from	Overcome the hurdles of retention and attraction of talents Companies' urgent demands	TM is not linked to competitive advantage or business goal, as products, offered, and technical capabilities add value to	Upper Management / Owners and directors are responsible for TM and HR activities and decisions as they are solely responsible	**<u>Recruitment</u>** • Web recruitment • Resume online • Scheduled/Unscheduled recruitment • Acquaintance referrals • Social/Working circles • Dinner/Social meetings **<u>Selection</u>**

		the fundamental value chain of the organisation. Individuals holding positions that need essential business expertise	smooth talent supply	the perspective of people rather than management functions TM is discussed from the perspective of organisational development		business success Though TM is essential in linking skills to the job, TM and HR practices are not suitable for their type, sector, and size of the organisation	for the direction and structure of the organisation	• Face-to-Face Interviews • Informal discussions **<u>Training/Development</u>** • Short training sessions • Weekly meetings • Manuals/Technical training documents • Job Rotation • Personal Tutor training • On-site training • Informal training • Intensive training where possible and available **<u>Rewards/Retention</u>** • Basic/Salary Pay • Bonus Pay • Compensation Packages (*i.e.*, free shuttle bus, free meals, insurance etc.)

6.3.2 Findings from Review and Analysis of Selected Documentation: Approaches to Talent Management in Case companies (*i.e.*, A & B)

Numerous documents were gathered, evaluated, and analysed to corroborate the semi-structured interview data. The researcher identified and confirmed practices, knowledge, skills, behaviour, and working style inside participating organisations by evaluating and analysing the contents of accessible material (as shown in tables 6.3.2 – findings from documentation below). Talented employees that fit these criteria were critical in assisting businesses in implementing their business strategies. These needs were discovered in a variety of sources, including the following:

1	(JS)	Job specification
2	(HRG)	Human resource guide
3	(JD)	Job description
4	(PS)	Person specification
5	(JA)	Job advertisement
6	(IF)	Interview forms
7	(AF)	Application forms
8	(EF)	Evaluation forms
9	(IIB)	Internal information board
10	(TP)	Training program
11	(AR)	Annual reports
12	(OW)	Organisation website
13	(SBO)	Staff benefit and opportunities
14	(SP)	Staff photos

For example, it was also possible for researchers to examine several factors for a person's suitability to a particular role, such as educational background and work experience and traits such as leadership and problem-solving abilities.

The human planning guide also clearly laid out the requirements/qualities and competencies needed from recruits; and the instrument (s) that were to be used to measure attainment of these competencies. Personnel requirements/qualities and competencies were specified in detail in the human resource planning guide and the instruments to gauge progress toward achieving those goals. Results from the evaluation and analysis of chosen documents are presented in this part; the results in this area are used to enhance the findings from the semi-structured interviews discussed above. They were examined to provide insight into how the case organisations recruit, retain, and manage their people in the face of uncertainty (such as Brexit and Covid-19) in the business environment.

CASE A

6.3.2: Summary of Findings (Documentation) by Themes - Approaches to Talent Management in Case Company A

Source of Document	ATM A	ATM B	ATM C	ATM D	ATM E	ATM F	ATM G	ATM H	ATM I
D1	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO
D2	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO
D3	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
D4	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
D5	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓
D6	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓
D7	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓
D8	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO
D9	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO
D10	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO
D11	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO
D12	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓
D13	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓
D14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓
D15	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓
D16	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO
D17	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO

D18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓
D19	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
D20	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO
D21	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
D22	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
D23	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO
TOTAL	**18**	**15**	**14**	**11**	**10**	**7**	**17**	**12**	**8**

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

**** D: Document / ** NO: None / ** ATM: Approaches to Talent Management**

<u>CASE A</u>

I. Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits (*i.e.*, Rewards Strategies)

One of the apparent goals from the documents was that the organisation's talented employees were compensated fairly and appropriately. Financial compensation, particularly salary, was a significant incentive and an important persuasion factor for employees to remain with the organisation. For example, the researcher examined the organisation's planning guide, which included a budget for recognising and awarding employees. The company's stated goal is to become the employer of choice. Developing a positive reputation both inside and outside of the organisation is one way to accomplish this goal. Having a budget set out for recognising achievers on an annual basis is essential to achieving that level of achievement. This is the key to their continued success.

II. Building a solid internal relationship/ supervisory relationship (*i.e.*, employer-employee relationship)

Employees are more likely to stick around if they have solid internal ties with their employer. The participants said that creating solid internal ties with the company is key in retaining its best employees. Almost all the organisation's internal boards and website were adorned with photos of various activities (*e.g.*, sports, charitable events, end of the year, new year, and birthday celebrations). Some HRM guides also specify that part of the HR/Admin department's role is to create an excellent working atmosphere and good relationships between the organisation and the talent. According to several HRM manuals, HR/Admin is also responsible for creating an outstanding work environment and fostering positive connections between the organisation and its employees. When it comes to creating a work environment, "we design our surroundings to be suited to working, allowing the owner, manager, or employee to collaborate as a group," this guidance states.

III. Creating and Developing a talent pool (*i.e.*, opportunities and succession planning)

Some evidence from the participating organisation indicated that they were constructing a talent pipeline or developing personnel to fill future responsibilities (*e.g.*, Training Program, Annual Report, and Presentation Slide of Human Capital Development). For example, case A Annual Report stated that "planning for talent to inherit and develop in a key position is essential for the organisation. This reduces the risk of losing talent." Furthermore, the Human Capital Development Presentation Slide stated that "we must prepare our employees to meet the required standards to fill future positions by providing regular training."

IV. Giving authority and flexibility in decision-making

In Case A, some of the techniques employed to retain talent include delegating control and allowing for more freedom to make decisions to keep their jobs. For example, in the Annual Report, it was stated that staff utilised their power appropriately and within the limit of their responsibilities. This meant providing employees with the autonomy to make their own choices or judgments and the freedom to act on them. However, if this power and flexibility are exploited, it might be restricted or revoked.

V. Building employer branding/employer attraction (*i.e.*, Employer Reputation and Image)

Most participants said they recruit the best and brightest by establishing themselves as an employer of choice and having a positive reputation. For example, the mission statement was repeated in the planning guide document, and the goal was stated as follows: "to become the employer of choice is our mission." To do this, developing a positive reputation both internally and externally and recruiting and retaining the best personnel are all ways to accomplish this objective. Furthermore, according to the HR Plan, "the success of our organisation is dependent on the quality of service provided by our talented workforce, and the organisation must demonstrate that they are doing everything possible to look after this talent."

VI. Providing appropriate and adequate training (*i.e.*, Training and Development Strategies)

In addition to enticing talent via compensation and other incentives, the documents indicated that providing workers with sufficient and enough training was one of the essential human resource roles. This was discovered in training/HR development programme documents. What was particularly intriguing from the researcher's perspective was that these training programmes existed and were recorded methodically. There were unique training programmes for each job level inside the organisation, and the researcher was granted access to the training programmes and seminars that were available. For example, the (HR development program) message stated that "training and development, on-property-in-house training, core training, and the task force must be fit within position levels."

Additionally, it offered a list of available slots for various levels of training (with training hours and locations); notably, it included a section for workers to request training relevant to their job functions and responsibilities. However, the organisation's job was to analyse the proposals and offer the training necessary to put them into action. Among other things, the researcher highlighted that the organisation "puts their words into action" by posting images of training sessions on its internal notice boards.

VII. Recognising and valuing talent's performance from the organisation (*i.e.*, Performance Management)

One of the most noticeable attractive approaches to retain talent seen in the documentation was recognising and valuing talent's performance. In the documentation, it was clear from the evidence that one of the most appealing ways to retain talent was to recognise, appreciate, and value employees' success. Employees were recognised for their achievements via several performance initiatives, such as the "best employee of the month" and the "best employee of the year." For example, on the organisation's website, the employee of the year was announced and information about how the workers did throughout the previous year. In addition, there were a wide variety of prizes given out for exceptional performance ranging from ‘money,’ ‘vacation packages,’ ‘certificates’ and ‘promotions.’ The document pointed out: “We recognise our employees for commitment to delivering exceptional client services and their passion for our business, including recognition of associates who demonstrate outstanding commitment; managers who demonstrate exceptional leadership; associates who demonstrate commitment to local communities; and associates who provide referrals for new employees, etc.” When it comes to enticing and inspiring talent to remain in an organisation, this strategy has been identified as a useful tactic, as mentioned in the following section of HR planning guide, “best performer has to be noted and evaluated, and as a result, the reward should be given to the performer.”

VIII. Putting the right people to take the role of managing talent

An employee's personnel file showed that when the company hired someone for a job, they are paired with a "buddy." Typically, the buddy is often appointed to help them adjust and feel at ease in their new surroundings between one month and three months. For instance, the annual report noted that the organisation's stated goal is that "employees in positions should have someone appointed whom they can consult, and the consultant needs to have enough experience." During the initial phase, which should take between one and three months to complete, mentors (mainly their supervisors) monitor if they need any assistance during their work or develop to their highest performance. According to the (Human Resource Management Guide), they can feel they are not alone in the organisation, according to the (Human Resource Management Guide). However, it indicated that the CEO and the HR/Admin Department should designate individuals entrusted with developing TM strategies since this is a critical role. Failure to take the proper precautions in this area might result in an organisation's inability to retain talent within its ranks and risk losing key employees.

Table 6.3.2: Summary of Findings (Documentation) by Themes - Approaches to Talent Management in Case Company B

CASE B

Source of Document	ATM A	ATM B	ATM C	ATM D	ATM E	ATM F	ATM G	ATM H	ATM I
D1	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓
D2	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO
D3	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO
D4	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO
D5	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO
D6	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
D7	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
D8	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓
D9	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓
D10	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓
D11	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
D12	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO
D13	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO
D14	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
D15	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO
D16	✓	NO	NO	✓	NO	✓	NO	NO	✓
D17	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓	NO	NO
D18	✓	NO	NO	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓	NO
D19	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	✓
D20	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	✓	✓	✓	NO
TOTAL	**15**	**8**	**10**	**6**	**10**	**12**	**7**	**11**	**6**

Source: (Compiled by Researcher)

**** D: Document / ** NO: None / ** ATM: Approaches to Talent Management**

CASE B

I. Providing appropriate pay and other benefits or compensation (*i.e.*, rewards strategies)

As stated by the participants in Case B, offering a good salary and compensation (including, but not limited to, transportation, lodging, and insurance) is the essential technique utilised by organisations to recruit and retain top-tier talent. Bonuses, rather than basic salary, are the primary reason for the workers' disparity in compensation or pay levels. For example, the promise of bonus compensation and incentive payments encourages talented individuals to become members of an organisation's workforce. It was stated that "we guarantee a bonus pay to attract talent to stay with us," and that "at the end of the year, we always try to offer some bonus as part of the overall annual benefit to make the employees feel good, and thus encourage them to stay with us."

As an alternative to monetary pay, Case B revealed that various forms of incentive-based monetary compensation such as free shuttle bus service, hotel with meals included and insurance are used to recruit top-tier talent. It states, for instance, that "our organisation is located in an area that is more difficult to access, so we provide mini-buses to pick up our employees at designated pick-up points." Furthermore, the insurance provided by Case B is utilised as a recruiting tool. However, it is not well-liked by participants since it is seen as being expensive to the organisation. It stated, for example, that "we have just launched an idea of offering insurance coverage to employees." However, due to the high expense of providing this service to everyone, "we are only able to provide it to a limited number of roles," says the CEO.

It should be mentioned that offering money and other forms of remuneration is the most often employed technique for retaining top-tier personnel, making them happy and productive inside the organisation. Nevertheless, since it relies on the organisation's policies and funding, this may be restricted at some time. "To attract talent to be with us and stay with us, we have to provide them with enough money and other incentives," as stated, "but we cannot do more than this because we have a limited budget and resources." Thus, this finding concludes that the latter participating case organisation (*i.e.,* Case A) is more competitive than Case B because it is more likely to use monetary incentives to compete against its competitors. On the other hand, due to Case B's limited resources, it cannot compete in this manner or devise other methods of reaching the same goal.

II. Building strong internal relationships/supervisory relationships (*i.e.*, Employer-Employee relationship)

The participants agreed that developing strong internal ties between workers and supervisors improves the retention of talented individuals. These sentiments were expressed mainly by the owners and managers of Case B, with most of them stating that all their workers are a vital part of the company's family and were treated as such. It mentioned, for instance, "we look after our staff as part of the family". This is the policy of the owners because they think all workers are like their sons and daughters. "If we look after them well, it will make a big difference in their work...they will become more loyal to our organisation". A variety of initiatives, such as employee events, employee birthdays, New Year celebrations, and so on, are used to build these relationships. It further pinpointed that "talent will not stay if the workers are not in good relations." In addition, it is highlighted that participants are focused on building strong bonds and helping maintain talent inside the organisation.

III. Creating and Developing a talent pool (*i.e.*, Opportunities and Succession planning)

In addition to developing career ladders for employees, it has also been shown that one method of retaining top employees is through developing career routes for those already in the organisation. Talent inside the organisation must be aware of these succession plans, which should be more open, transparent, and accessible in the future. This method is believed vital for maintaining talent, as an organisation's ability to attract and retain top talent depends on its ability to provide a wide range of opportunities and career paths to its employees. When it comes to promotions, “every movement or relocation of our workforce has to be clear since it may affect other workers.” Additionally, according to the HR plan, Case B develops talent inside the organisation by selecting the best personnel at the operational level and promoting them to higher positions such as team leaders, captains, and supervisors, among other positions. They are assessed based on key performance indicators and their peers, team members and mentors' acceptability and approval. As talented individuals are given greater responsibility in their jobs, their personalities are likely to develop.

According to the findings in Case B, talent pipelines enable an organisation to accumulate "pools" of qualified candidates who can then be called upon to fill openings as they emerge within the organisation. The benefit of using this group is that they are already familiar with the organisation's values and culture. According to the plan, "we build our talent with the hope that they will help our organisation in the future, not only to understand the job but also to understand our organisation and keep up with our standard of work... we do not have to do much during induction." Finally, it can be concluded that the company (*i.e.*, Case B) can attract and retain outstanding individuals by creating an atmosphere that fosters the development of talent pipelines and acquire loyalty from skilled employees via the implementation of this programme.

IV. Giving authority and flexibility in decision-making

According to findings in Case B, to keep the best employees, organisations must offer individuals the power to make their own decisions and the freedom to make those decisions without interference from managers. "Giving them the authority to manage their work in the team is needed for talent because sometimes they do not want anyone outside the team to interfere in their work... without that trust, they may not be happy and thus not be loyal to the organisation," as participants stated. For instance, the documentation in Case B said that talent should be given the power and responsibility at work since they would love their time spent working for the organisation when they feel empowered. However, organisations contend that they should be constrained in how much power they have or how much freedom they have to the organisation's advantage. In addition, power should be restricted to avoid abuse of authority in decision-making, which may be difficult to supply for specific roles. In this situation, the organisation's management talent was given the autonomy and freedom to operate: “we let our managers and supervisors make appropriate decisions in their work and departments.”

V. Building employer branding/employer attraction

Additionally, the usage of employer branding to recruit internal and external talent was also mentioned by many respondents. Employer branding wants to constantly remind promising talent about themselves and make their brand name more identifiable and desirable to future employees and customers. To attract potentially bright workers, they would need to have a favourable reputation. As a result of this great advertising, 'possible brilliant employees' would be more inclined to work for them in the future. As previously said, “with branding, our primary goal is to impact consumers while also recruiting potential staff. If we become well-known, many prospective employees will approach us." This helps in the recruitment and retention of employees. Employee referrals, public relations, and ads are the most common methods the organisation uses to promote its brand.

VI. Providing appropriate and adequate training

One of how the company tries to keep employees is by providing them with proper training. By training, over half of those interviewed said they assist new and current skilled employees in adjusting to new or changing work schedules and responsibilities. As an example, the Case B training programme specified that they provide training for employees. This enables them to grasp their responsibilities better and to enhance their performance in the workplace. According to the participants, employees must be trained at the appropriate times, such as "members must learn how we work here and adapt to our organisation's style... The training takes place within at least a week of starting employment." When our new staff require more training, "we always supply it on request...... the needs of our workers are not our sole source of information; we also employ mentoring staff who may require more training themselves." The breadth of the answers offered throughout the interview showed that the company views training as a vital strategy for keeping personnel happy and in the future. The training programme included the courses, the position, and the time required to complete each. To put it another way, the importance of training cannot be overstated. Regardless of how talented an individual is, they must adapt to the organisational style of the company they are working for. In addition, it demonstrates to employees that the company sees them as vital and valuable resources.

VII. Recognising and valuing talented workers' performance within the organisation (*e.g.*, awards, certificates)

Recognition and appreciation of the performance of employees are believed to be a crucial component in inducing talent to remain with a company and contribute to its success. It said that everyone wants to be significant, particularly those with extraordinary abilities. These individuals want to be recognised as talented individuals, and their performances should not be overlooked. When employees know that the organisation recognises their efforts, they are more motivated to work hard and provide their best efforts. Case B provides acknowledgement in the form of prizes such as money, trip packages, increased responsibility, and the awarding of a certificate of excellent achievement, among other methods.

VIII. Putting the right people in the role of managing talent

Case B identified that putting the right people in managing talent will likely lead to increased talent retention. When it comes to talent management, Case B found that placing the proper individuals in the job at the right time is likely to result in more excellent talent retention. As a result of the findings of Case B, it was determined that the correct individuals should oversee managing talent: “we must find a person who has a long-term perspective on human resources and the ability to handle particular talents. Suppose we have knowledgeable people to look after talent. In that case, we can effectively retain talent." People who are capable of effectively managing talent are known as "managerial talent." These are those who hold roles such as CEOs, line managers, supervisors, and so forth. This is because these persons are in close contact with all workers. It is clear from Case B's findings that "owners and managers should be responsible for managing talent because they understand human needs... they are thus set to manage our talent."

6.4 Reflections from Data Findings and Analysis: Similarities and Differences among participating case companies (i.e., Case A & B)

This chapter reported on the factual findings and analysis of the qualitative data of the study which focused on the perceptions of stakeholders (i.e. owners, managers and employees) in connection to their views on talent and TM practices, their perceptions on the factors affecting TM practices during a period of turbulence, their perceptions on the role leadership plays in TM and the perceived factors facilitating competitive advantage. The use of a single data collection method is susceptible to error; therefore, the use of both methods–qualitative using semi-structured interviews and documentation methods was warranted in this study. It discussed and analysed the extent to which the data collected are consistent. The findings relate to the research questions set by this study. The study findings contribute to the current debate on HRM and TM practices by contextualising the challenges and enablers of HRM and TM adoption within SME setting and by broadening the understanding of the factors that influence the implementation process. To conclude, the main findings can be broadly summed up as follows:

It was found that the majority of employees have shown some level of understanding about the importance of adopting HRM and TM practices during the turbulent period of time. For instance, in Case A which took the inclusive stance to TM, participants believed that all workers who performed their duties and meet the company's expectations and objectives are considered talented. It appeared that there was a common and mutual understanding of what talent is throughout the organisation; from the top through to the bottom-line. TM is about finding the appropriate people to hire and ensuring that they have the proper skill set. According to Case A, TM is more about what they need to build in their staff and what skill sets they currently have to guarantee that they are providing the correct services to their clients and customers. To case A, everybody deserves a fair shot, an equal opportunity or a platform to showcase their talent in order to succeed. This means that for Case A, the focus of TM is on developing and aligning a team member's skill set with the organisation's strategic objectives.

However in case B, there seems to be a discrepancy between the responses of some participants within the company, concerning what talent is and what it means to be talented in the organisation. In contrast to Case A, this organisation took the exclusive stance to defining and identifying what talent is. There is no clear and precise definition of what or who a talent is to their organisation as firms have distinct characteristics and needs that depends on the stage of growth in which it operates such as its target markets. They believed that everyone has the potential to be talented, but it depends on the environment they are in; how talented they become is determined by the stimulation and guidance they receive. Thus, they do not think that everyone can be talented. Some responded that talent is a dynamic idea since it is performance-and-competence-driven. This means that when a firm grows, the defining criteria will change. Since talent is not fixed and unchanging, the criteria for defining it are not always static, and as a result, the skills picked are not always the same.

Findings showed that participants from the two (2) selected case companies appeared to agree that the advantages of implementing HRM and TM practices and strategies which aim at improving and enhancing talent identification, recruitment, selection and performance appraisals, are too good to be disregarded. Participants suggested that an organisation's readiness to adopt HRM and TM is vital for successful implementation. The qualitative results and findings showed TM as an effective human resource instrument. However, there is important inconsistency of views on a range of issues and challenges regarding the integration and implementation of TM practices, including a lack of shared understanding about how HRM and TM will bring about a strategic transformation and whether managers and leaders have the knowhow to deliver a strategically focused HRM practices (*e.g.*, Case B). It was noted that organisations respond to institutional pressure in different ways (Oliver, 1991), and as Boon *et al.* (2009) assert, how they implement TM is largely determined by the role of human agency, as well as additional factors such as leadership, the company's financial health and the modus operandi of the HR specialists. This was true for case SME (*e.g.*, Case A) in the study, who—despite the challenging business environment like Brexit and

Covid-19 (Tasoulis *et al*., 2019)—chose to invest in inclusive TM practices, rather than downsizing and laying off employees. This shows that although institutional pressures matter, they were not entirely deterministic in this case. The study concluded that TM decisions are mostly linked to key decision makers, including owners and HR specialists. Clearly, the findings further indicated that implementing HRM and TM is facing some challenges (*e.g*., Case B), and the existing HR and TM practices and the mind-sets of employees and managers are not helping the adoption process. This provides supporting evidence that it is difficult to assess the existing challenges and HR practices against the reliability of the employees' responses. The reality is that employee participation and consultation in the decision making process or in generating innovative ideas for driving HRM and TM implementation is rarely taken into account by the management.

Findings from both cases are lenses that seem to capture different perspectives of the current HR practices within SMEs in the UK and the efforts initiated so far to implement such practices especially in the phase of turbulence. It can be argued that both these conflicting and complementary findings were needed to convey viewpoints and to inform decision-makers / owners and raise their awareness. These findings are interesting and constructive because they clearly reveal that employees and owners / managers perceive and experience HRM and TM practices differently.

- **Talent Identification / Attraction**

With regards to talent attraction, the study revealed in a turbulent context, selected case SMEs employ a variety of informal, cost-sensitive and often personalised methods of talent acquisition. A significant finding that contradicts Valverde *et al*. (2013) is that the conceptualisation of talent in SMEs in the UK was not linked to their key positions but rather to more general criteria, indicating that talent equals the unique attributes of individual employees that fit into a specific life stage of an SME (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017), suggesting a divergence from the conceptualisation of talent in larger companies (Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2019). In addition, the selected case B had no proper practice in place for the recruitment of talented employees in place and recruits just to fill vacancies. The findings showed that head hunting takes place for senior level positions if the recruitment panel cannot find a suitable candidate. Recruitment first takes place internally and then externally and HODs have a say in what type of person they need to fill a vacant position. Structured recruitment at Case B is questionable as managers are not involved in the recruitment process.

- **Talent Development**

The study also highlighted that SMEs invest significantly in informal, cost-effective methods of training and development, despite the highly volatile contexts forcing many organisations to dramatically reduce their training expenditure. Selected Case A, for example, continued investing in talent development, driven both by employee and departmental needs. They utilised mainly ad-hoc seminars, coaching and on-the-job training. By embracing internal talent development in difficult times, these SMEs gained the benefits of a high-skilled workforce (Sainis *et al*., 2017), addressed talent shortages within the sector (Theriou and Chatzoudes, 2015) and not least won the appreciation of their workforce. In some respects, investment in talent development was viewed as an alternative incentive offered to talented workers, which could also assist SMEs in addressing wider TM challenges (Sparrow *et al*., 2014).

However, in Case B, there was a discrepancy between the responses of some of the participants concerning training and development as some responded that there were development programmes and others confirmed there was not. Since few of the participants responded that there were training and development programmes, it was concerning that not all HR managers were aware of their existence. Also, although there are education opportunities available for staff and internship opportunities, Case B fails to monitor existing talent.

- **Talent Retention**

Findings also indicate that talent retention is a key issue for selected case SMEs, which they seek to address by offering both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives to their workforce. SMEs (*e.g.*, Case A) tend to approach talent retention with an inclusive and egalitarian perspective, geared at reducing turnover and maintaining a positive relationship with workers (Holland and Scullion, 2021). Having invested substantial effort in attracting and developing talent—in a particularly challenging external environment that discourages entrepreneurship—Case A in the study placed strong emphasis on talent retention (Hatzis, 2018), ensuring that they held on to talents who could meet their global clients' expectations. In contrast, in Case B, the correct placement of employees in the right position was a concern as well as not rewarding or recognising staff members in non-monetary ways. Participants alluded to the fact that managers needed to be equipped with leadership skills training and that staff efforts should be recognised and rewarded regularly as a retention strategy.

Considering all the above statements, it is not easy to nail down the specific definition of talent or TM since each organisation has its style and culture and its own set of business requirements and goals. These viewpoints on the concept of talent or TM are two separate strains of thinking regarding talent in the empirical data.

6.5 Conclusion

The majority of those who attended agreed that the notion of talent should be integrated into their respective fields of expertise to be successful. A strong agreement emerged among most participants that their sector must have a TM strategy. For one thing, by conceptualising and operationalising talent in this sector, they may better categorise their employees in a meaningful manner and come up with targeted methods for addressing their requirements and ensuring that they remain effective (*e.g.*, in Case A). In addition, one of the grounds for recommending the usage of the word "talent" is that they require drives to be successful. "Staying competitively" was their primary objective, and they considered that increasing the number of "skilled workers in the organisation" was the best way to do this.

Case A, for instance, stated that "talent has to work well, attain an excellent standard, and be good at managing people... here in our company, we need those drivers to drive us to meet our goals and beat our rivals' competition." Case B, on the other hand, witnessed intense rivalry from both local and foreign markets and concluded that having a competent staff would be beneficial in combating this competition and compete effectively: "there are many competitors around us; our sector and market are great (more demand than supply); we need to hire the best people to help us stay competitive in the market," they said. The specialised nature of job roles in these two case study industries (*i.e.*, Engineering and Construction) motivated talent in this area. "Our job is not easy." Case A stated, "there are various related tasks: dealing with different types of clients, dealing with clients with different and (at times) difficult needs, managing difficult relations within and between departments." Case A went on to say, "all of our customers' demands must be handled as fast as possible, and individuals who deal with these activities must be multi-skilled in order to be effective."

Furthermore, according to the participating case companies that took part in the study, motivating co-workers to achieve high-performance levels was another feature that distinguished talent. They believed that high-performing employees would serve as role models for their peers because of their positive impact on the rest of the organisation’s workforce. This, it was said, would help to establish an atmosphere conducive to improved performance. As a result of the discussion that preceded and the extensive presentation of the results and analysis of the data gathered, the researcher believes that talent was regarded as one of the most important resources among the participating organisations. This is because they may aid in achieving the most outstanding results, encourage colleagues and customers to contribute to high performance, and raise the overall level of pleasure in the workplace. Consequently, all of these factors will contribute to organisational success and the organisation's ability to remain competitive for the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that there were a variety of measures taken by participating case firms during a turbulent time, all of which were targeted at enhancing the management of highly qualified people. Training, hiring the proper individuals to manage the company's talent pool, creating an employer brand, granting authority and flexibility are only a few of these strategies. Others include paying employees appropriately and offering various forms of remuneration. In addition, some organisations may want to use various methods to manage their workers' talents depending on the company's profile and policy, the trends or attitudes of talented employees, and current labour market circumstances.

As part of its investigation into applying people and TM methods within the SME market, this chapter examined the results and analysis of empirical research conducted on chosen SMEs in the UK during an uncertain time. Semi-structured interviews with participants and documentation analysis all contributed to the study's conclusions. Understanding the context of the word "talent" among participants was the starting point for this study's investigation of talent in SMEs. Also discussed was the relevance of talent to the organisation's ability to stay competitive. In addition, the difficulties of managing talent, such as retaining employees, were discussed. Finally, a variety of methods for managing talent were discussed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH DATA FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction

The study examined and analysed the concept of TM practices in SMEs in the UK during economic uncertainty. The study examined how talent is managed in the participating SME firms. Concerning TM, the study examined how case SMEs (*i.e.*, Case A and B) recruit, motivate and retain talent. Chapter 7 concluded that the most critical elements of TM are recruiting, motivating, and retaining talent. Owners, managers, and workers of the chosen SME took part in this research. The results from the literature review and analytical chapters are summarised in this chapter, which addresses the study questions and goals comprehensively.

7.2 Emerged Themes from Research Data Findings and Analysis

This section summarises the overarching topics that arose from the study. As a result, participants stated that they use a variety of strategies for managing talent in their organisations during times of turmoil. Most strategies are designed to retain talent. However, participants stated that it was critical to examine and integrate talent retention into other initiatives, including talent recruiting, selection, and development.

7.2.1 Talent Retention to Recruitment and Selection

One of the study results is that talent retention is influenced by the strategy used for recruiting and selection. Participants regarded talent selection and recruiting as critical processes that influenced talent retention. Human resource planning, job descriptions and requirements, talent sourcing, and talent selection methods are only a few mentioned ways. Planning for human resources was considered extremely important. Organisations must have an effective plan in place to recruit and develop talent. Case A explained that they have clear long-term plans for employees within the company, and these plans are revised annually, not to mention that every month during the meeting, they discuss any issues or additional requirements from departments at all levels, and the plans are revised at any time as circumstances dictate.

However, Case A emphasised the need to have a top-notch TM system to be successful by simply mentioning that to manage workers, they follow the planning guide effectively which is evaluated annually. This assists them in determining the appropriate number of employees for each job. And to accomplish their objective, they must plan. When the company's talented employees perceive a clear path forward, they are more receptive to staying. Identifying credible talent sources and preparing for "resignation" or "employee transfer," according to participants, is a critical component of this process. Participants responded that talent is attracted either internally or outside or in a hybrid of the two. While both approaches are essential, participants said they prefer to develop talent internally through creating a talent pipeline and only use external sources when they cannot find suitable candidates internally.

Case A, for example, stated that they seek individuals within the business first for higher or senior roles because they already understand their company's ethos; they've been with them for a long time at a lower level, and they have already moulded them to fit their working style. Internally sourcing talent is also a great way to motivate and inspire staff, which may be done through succession planning or establishing a pool of talented individuals inside the company. Case A, for example, further stated that as part of their succession planning, they must allow employees to advance in their line of work based on their performance. And if they understand they can advance, they will stay with them and develop themselves. If they continue to recruit people from outside, they will stay with them.

Internal talent acquisition is beneficial to the company since the employees are already acquainted with the organisation's principles, standards, and ethics. For example, Case B stated that they invest in internal recruiting because they are better prepared to grasp the nature and culture of the business prior to being assigned to a new job, and this knowledge may result in more effective and efficient results, whereas hiring from outside the organisation necessitates the preparation of training, which is both costly and time-consuming, which they cannot afford. However, participants noted that one drawback of internal recruiting is a lack of new ideas and a missed opportunity to hire more qualified people from outside the organisation. As a result, recruitment departments may choose a mix of external and internal recruits and choose the most qualified candidates.

Case B said that a budget shortfall resulted in the inability of the company to carry out its HR strategy. They stated, for example, that at times, there is insufficient financial assistance to ensure that the entire HRP programme is viable. However, they want to stick to the plan because achieving it would be fantastic. They can achieve a better quality of job performance and decrease employee turnover, particularly at the rank and levels where turnover is very high. However, in the absence of funding, they must accept failing to adhere to the HR strategy and manage their workers as best as they can. Concerning resigning workers, Case A mentioned that they ask the departing employee to serve a one-month notice period, during which they replace them according to the plan's provisions. All plans are developed in accordance with the company strategy's needs and the input from their workers...training needs, the quantity of staff, incentives and employee expectations are only some of the factors that need to be taken into account. Everything about the employee must be expressed clearly. The management team will be able to manage staff using this handbook.

Participants believe that the selection and decision-making procedures utilised are critical to replace workers when they retire or leave the company. According to those who have participated in the selection process, employees are chosen based on their suitability for the post and their compatibility with the organisation's culture. For instance, Case A said that they do not hire workers only based on their ability to work or their knowledge of how to work, but rather based on their ability to operate in a team environment.

Case B, on the other hand, expressed similar sentiments, stating that candidates chosen for their business must possess both standard abilities and the ability to change themselves in order to commit to the company's identity. For example, they examine the profiles of both internal and external applicants to determine their duration of stay at their prior business; if they remain less than one year, they will not consider employing them because they may leave them soon. "In summary, effective selection and decision-making may assist an organisation in selecting the best employee who will ultimately stay with the company for an extended amount of time. Individuals and jobs should be matched based on variables such as compatibility with the task, organisation, and workgroup compatibility. In addition, the application of knowledge, skills, and abilities should be utilised to establish the best match between the person and the job requirements, among other things.

Additionally, values and needs should be considered when determining the match between an individual and an organisation. Interpersonal characteristics and broad-based proficiencies should be considered when determining the fit between individuals and workgroups. When organisations hire talented employees who suit the organisation, the workgroup, and the role, such employees are more than likely to remain.

7.2.2 Talent Retention to Development

Developing talent was one of the methods explored by participants to retain talent; this was referred to as creating talent pipelines. This is accomplished via the use of excellent training programmes. Furthermore, the participating case businesses recommended that they develop their exceptional employees at various stages of the organisation. According to Case A, greater possibilities for employees to participate in the company's talent pipeline and growth routes mean more employees will stay in the company. Case A, on the other hand, expressed concern about a lack of openness and transparency, claiming that any transfer or advancement of their employees must be clear since it may impact other workers. Participants agreed that one of the keys to developing a strong talent pipeline is an effective training programme.

Case A, for example, said that they offered a training session for all employees, new and old. This assists them in understanding and improving their work function. The company mentioned training for new employees and advancement for current employees. The training process for new employees starts the moment they join their team. It is also necessary to organise training sessions at an opportune moment and sufficient time to develop talented, solid employees in the talent pipeline. Case A, for example, expressed that all members must understand how they operate and adapt to their way of doing things. This occurs within at least a week of beginning employment. However, whether new workers need further training or not, they always offer it upon request. They do not rely only on the employee's request; they have mentors, and these mentors may require training as well.

In addition, Participants acknowledged that they use induction or orientation programmes for new workers as a component of their talent development strategy. It is hardly unexpected that they created an induction programme for these new workers as part of their warm welcome. Meetings with the company executives, for example, induction handouts/induction packs, and a buddy, were also used as part of the induction programme. As Case A put it for approximately an hour, they introduce the business, regulations, promotion possibilities, perks, and everything else they need to know. After that, the different department heads are allowed to provide a tour of the company. That first image of their company should sway them into working with them.

An important finding is that talent development is viewed as a critical factor in retaining top talent in the organisations studied. Thus, one strategy that participating businesses use to retain talent is to develop a talent pipeline through internal training and development.

Participants stated that there is a constant need to grow and acquaint themselves with their new organisational style, regardless of their talent or skill. This demonstrates to the talent that the organisation values them as valuable resources. To summarise, participants agreed that talent recruitment, selection, and development are critical components of organisations' efforts to retain talent. No single human resource action can be taken in isolation; instead, they must all be connected to accomplish the organisation's objective.

7.3 Objectives of the Research - Revisited

This thesis aimed to contribute to the advancement of HRM and TM in the context of SMEs. As discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, when it comes to SMEs in tough times, the subject of HRM and TM, both as a practice and as an academic sub-discipline, lacks a firm conceptual basis and needs further empirical study. Thus, the overall goal was to contribute to TM by addressing the empirical and theoretical deficiencies that have hampered the field’s growth. The study began with a thorough assessment of the literature on HRM and TM to identify critical problems worth further investigation, which resulted in the following objectives:

1) To explore the application and concept of TM in SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19).

2) To explore the gaps in the current literature and contribute to a better theoretical understanding of HR and TM practices of SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19).

7.3.1 Objective One – Analysis and Discussion from both Cases (*i.e.*, A & B)

To explore the application and concept of TM in SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (e.g., Brexit and Covid-19)

1) **Talent Recruitment and Selection**

Documents including job descriptions and application forms were present. However, web-based recruiting was primarily used, supplemented by other sources. Interestingly, this result is similar to the findings of Wiesner and McDonald (2001), who indicated that written job descriptions were widely used. Furthermore, the predominance of web-based recruiting is consistent with Wiesner and Innes' (2010) ten-year re-examination, which revealed that online recruitment has quickly gained mainstream practice. In both cases, the results show that interviews were used in conjunction with other selection methods according to Kotey and Slade's (2005) research. Interviews took many different forms, from casual conversations to semi-structured face-to-face interviews. In addition, non-work-related criteria and unstated regulations have been observed in certain instances.

Even though additional selection tools were used, they were not always used following the job's nature. Selection is likely to be biased without clear criteria definitions, let alone whether interviewers have professional selection skills for assessing applicants' fit for organisations and actual capabilities. Assessors may be forced to rely on perceptions and experience because they lack the necessary training in SMEs' skills, resulting in bias. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that SMEs' selection processes remain informal, hurried, hasty, and biased, with no rigorous assessment.

Even though Case B of the chosen SMEs used unplanned and unscheduled recruiting, Case A's methods differed. The varied differences are explained by the nature of the work and the intended audience. To begin, based on prior observations and experiences, a specific set of workers may be more prone to high turnover than others. To ensure continuous functioning, recruiting for such positions is available all year. Second, it has a greater chance of being adopted if a specific kind of individual, such as skilled engineers, is in great demand in the labour market. Thirdly, when owners and managers have greater expectations or when the work itself is challenging, as with senior managers. One noteworthy result is that SMEs' recruiting sources at the non-managerial level tended to be more formal (see findings in Chapter 6).

Internal recruiting, acquaintance referrals and friend recommendations were likely to be used at the management level. Headhunting firms were utilised to fill critical jobs. Non-managerial staff recruitment was more often conducted via well-known channels such as the internet, newspapers, job fairs on college campuses, and social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. The findings of Kotey and Slade (2005) support this view that formal methods were more prevalent at the operational level. It corroborates Marlow’s (2000) findings, which indicated that advertising was more prevalent for non-management jobs, whereas agencies were used to recruit managers. The significance of management recruitment seems to be at odds with the informality of the chosen sources. Several variables may be attributed to this: job criteria, professional community, and the applicants' dependability and trustworthiness.

Managers must have an in-depth understanding of the work itself, the industry in which they work, and the specifics of their organisation. Thus, employees have a distinct edge over outsiders in terms of familiarity and fitness. Second, there may be limited opportunities to discover suitable individuals via broad sources with a sophisticated social structure. By contrast, recommendations from existing networks seem to be more efficient and successful, mainly when a local pool of professional talent and friends can access the individuals. Third, as Barrett and Mayson (2008) explain, suggested candidates are more trustworthy and credible than strangers: "Referrals are used because they are based on trust."

Formal selection methods were used for non-managerial workers when it came to recruitment and selection activities. For management personnel, the situation differed according to the source of recruiting and the job level. The degree of formality rose for younger managers hired via professional sources, as shown by extra selection rounds and assessors. For top managers hired via referrals and recommendations, the selection was often conducted informally by the owners. This may be because an informal environment encourages discomfort reduction and the development of openness.

Another possibility is that a thorough examination is unnecessary since the candidate is well-known or perhaps regarded as trustworthy. (Kotey and Slade, 2005).

2) Talent Training and Development

For example, on-the-job training was the most often used approach, induction programmes for new hires were common (for example, Case B), and long-term training and development options were unavailable to small businesses. Even though Case A of the selected SMEs had a wide range of T & D activities, ranging from informal training through regular meetings and on-site advice to extensive internal and external training conducted by specialists (see findings in Chapter 7), Case B's T & D practices are unstructured and focused on the near term. Case A of the examined SMEs had written T & D documentation, while Case B lacked training evaluation forms, suggesting that assessment and evaluation had received minimal attention.

Traditional methods such as in-house lectures and workshops, on the other hand, were often utilised. Richbell *et al.* (2010) discovered similar results. Despite the ubiquitous availability of apprenticeship programmes, it is fair to doubt their efficacy, which relies on the master's ability and willingness to instruct. In Case B, there was a scarcity of job rotation and career guidance. This indicates that most T&D programmes in Case B are focused on specific tasks to meet immediate needs rather than long-term goals, according to Cunningham's (2010) study results. A noteworthy finding is a disparity in patterns of unique T&D practices between management and non-managerial groups (see findings in Chapter 6). Internal, practical, skill-based training was often provided to grassroots workers in both patterns. On the other hand, managers were either infrequently taught in a single pattern or given a variety of training, external, intense, off-the-job, and management-focused T&D opportunities in the other.

Previous literature backs up the latter trend (Kotey and Slade, 2005). The first pattern demonstrates the informality and unstructured outlook of T & D processes in SMEs. The uncertainty and resistance regarding the adoption of formal procedures might be seen as a clear sign., which will be addressed later. Contrary to popular belief, limitations and resistance exist at both the organisational and individual levels. In Case B, for example, limited financial resources, a shortage and no presence of HR experts or specialists create obstacles to ongoing participation in T&D. (Lange *et al.*, 2000). As stated in the results Chapter, Case A of the chosen SMEs established a combined department that included HR and administrative responsibilities. It is to be anticipated that skilled HR experts would not constantly undertake HR-related tasks. Owing to a lack of HR personnel, adopting appropriate procedures and practices would be challenging.

Furthermore, employers', owners', and leaders' underestimation of the value of T&D, in addition to their decreased expectations of future returns, would stifle the adoption of these activities (Panagiotakopoulos, 2011). Individuals in SMEs may also face resistance. Lack of learning efforts and enthusiasm because of the unclear relationship between personal development, employability, earning ability, and involvement in T&D activities becomes a significant obstacle in people's thoughts (Panagiotakopoulos, 2011). In addition, a high workload decreases the amount of time and energy available for learning and training. According to the participants, training was misunderstood as representing an HR department's worth and contribution rather than as an opportunity to help employees develop. As a result, people are discouraged from participating in T&D programmes due to a lack of awareness of possible advantages and a misinterpretation of training goals (ibid, 2011). Finally, department heads' lack of support and cooperation makes it difficult to implement and implement sophisticated T&D procedures since they view T&D as an HR job rather than a part of their duties. There is a strong indication that in SMEs, the role of management at all levels in encouraging learning, training, and development does not get enough recognition or understanding.

3) Talent Reward and Retention Management

These results show three similar aspects in terms of rewards and retention practices: the extensive use of written documents, acceptable pay levels compared to the average level of the market, and the growing use of individual financial incentives. First, in Case B of the chosen SMEs, it is common for employers to determine pay unilaterally, leaving little room for negotiation. Second, remuneration consists of base salary and performance pay and certain discretionary bonuses and perks. There is a wide range of variations in the proportions of these two key elements depending on the nature of the task performed. Finally, seniority pay accounted for just a negligible portion of overall remuneration in Case B.

With the exclusion of bad performers, a yearly increase in basic pay was implemented within Case A of the SMEs. This is consistent with Singh and Vohra's (2009) results, which indicated that an annual increase, the most common type of reward and incentive, occurred in about half of the sample. According to the findings of this research, the actual rate was influenced by several variables, including market level, organisational profitability, pricing level, and individual performance. By the observations described above, incentives and retention policies in SMEs have made significant strides in recent years, propelled by market-oriented thinking, as seen by the widespread use of performance-related pay, annual increments, and the low importance placed on seniority pay in compensation schemes.

As previously stated, individual monetary incentives were extensively used in SMEs because using these incentives was the most effective way to motivate and reward staff, particularly at the non-managerial level. It goes against Bacon and Hoque's (2005) results, which concluded that individual incentives were almost non-existent. The present results indicate that the incentive system in SMEs is becoming more sophisticated. Such an upgrade may be motivated by the need to retain workers in widespread labour shortages. As a result, there was less reliance on non-monetary rewards and incentives for teams. Despite the limited usage of intrinsic incentives that concentrate on growth, recognition, work enrichment, and empowerment, it is essential to mention that owners and managers have begun to see the method and relevance of such awards in inspiring their workforces.

7.3.2 Objective Two – Analysis and Discussion from both Cases (*i.e.*, A &B)

To explore the gaps in the current literature and contribute to a better theoretical understanding of HR and TM practices of SMEs in the UK during turbulent times (e.g., Brexit and Covid-19)

After conducting an empirical study, it was discovered that the concept of talent is widely employed and accepted to varying degrees by SMEs (*i.e.*, Case A & B). Furthermore, there seems to be an effort to establish a link between the term's use and the organisation's strategy and ideals. Hence talent is regarded as one of the most important factors influencing an organisation's ability to succeed. The results seem to be congruent with those found by Stahl *et al.* (2012) that organisations cannot simply copy the best practices of other high-performing firms and apply them to their situations. Instead, it is recommended that each organisation practice is aligned with its goals and values.

As a subset of the greater SME industry, the outcomes of applying the concept of talent to the SME sector are discussed in this section. Many people believe that the concept of talent is very convoluted, difficult to describe, and lacking in a cohesive theoretical base. A critical factor in this lack of consensus is the perennial debate regarding the relative contribution of nature and nurture in developing talent (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, and Philippaerts, 2008). Although McKinsey Consultant Company created the term ‘war for talent’ in 1998 since the late 1990s, scholars and practitioners have devoted greater attention to the concept (Iles *et al.*, 2010). This is concerned with an organisation’s capacity to recruit and inspire talent to ‘join and remain.’ TM is an approach for managing talent. TM’s approach includes defining and identifying talent and recruiting, selecting, developing, and retaining employees (Armstrong, 2009).

It has been suggested that the initial task should be to define talent and develop criteria for identifying it. Once the criteria have been defined, additional recruiting, development, and retention efforts may begin (Stahl *et al*., 2012). Many prior studies on TM have primarily focused on defining talent within the domains of larger companies. However, as Iles (2013) and CIPD (2007) found, the word talent may imply various things to different organisations depending on the nature of the job. Similar to this, the researcher asserts that the term "talent" may have a different meaning when employed in the context of small businesses; in fact, Baum further advocated this (2008). According to Baum (2008), talent in the SME sector may differ from talent in other sectors. There are several examples of the importance of SMEs to global GDP; the researcher contends that its ongoing development is dependent on having the appropriate employees, particularly in the correct positions, especially in uncertain future times.

Labour is often in great demand in the SME industry and sector, with a broad labour force ranging from entry-level to senior-level roles. SMEs also depend heavily on low-skilled or unskilled labour (Duncan *et al.,* 2013). Despite the above, the study usually discovered that talent was used within participating case businesses. The SME sector has long been characterised, perhaps rightly, as being extremely demanding, providing poor salaries, employing unskilled employees, and so on (Duncan *et al.,* 2013). This raises the question of whether or not the concept of talent exists or is essential in this industry. According to findings presented in Chapter 6, the concept of talent exists and is used and applied by participating case companies to some degree despite misconceptions. In light of the many definitions of talent offered by the participants, talent is the primary driving factor behind the organisation's ability to cope with complexity. Consequently, this term may imply various things for different organisations or sizes.

Participants in Case B, for example, stated that they anticipated people classified as "talented" to make a difference in comparison to those labelled as "ordinary employees" and that this may help the organisation stay competitive. The findings of related research done by Lunn (1992) reinforced the assumption that talent outperformed the typical worker in all sorts of jobs across the board, concluding that talent performed 52% better on low-complexity tasks, 52% better on medium-complexity tasks, and 127% better on highly complex jobs. Although Iles (2013) said that most organisations have no idea how to identify talented employees, this is not always true. There was no doubt in the researcher's mind that Case A had a good idea of what talents were, and the phrase was widely understood. However, in Case B, different people's definitions of "talents" led to a lack of consensus on definitions and descriptions of talents (Tansley *et al.,* 2013).

Tansley (2011) claimed that the phrase 'talented employees' varies significantly depending on time, individuals, and location. Organisation-specific activity and the kind of industry have a significant role in talent definition, according to a CIPD (2007) research. Thus, although there was no consensus on the criteria of talented workers, in certain instances, the researcher concludes the definitions appeared to be influenced by elements such as the company's culture and its goals, the economic condition, and so on. Thus, in Case A, the participants seemed to be matching their definitions with organisational objectives and tactics. This helps explain why the definitions and applications differed so much among the participants (*i.e.,* Case A & B). While the criteria of talent selected by participants have been shown to differ, there is evidence that the definitions of talent among participating firms are comparable.

Case companies agreed that a person's talents were more important than their personality when discussing defining and identifying talent. Different views on talent definitions may be affected by organisational characteristics or strategy, nature of the organisation, client type, or the organisation’s competitive position (Tansley *et al.,* 2007). Additionally, the CIPD (2007) reported that organisations usually place a higher premium on defining their definitions of talent than on adhering to universal or mandatory standards. It seems that participating SME enterprises are no exception (CIPD, 2007).

The SME industry (*e.g.,* case businesses) needs people who fit in and believe in the organisation’s principles and ethos. They need dedicated people, particularly considering the unsocial working hours and highly demanding clients. They must show their potential or performance in employment roles to co-workers and the organisations in which they are employed. A commitment to the job and the sector and a willingness to learn and grow within the same organisation is also necessary for success. To sum up, in a turbulence-ridden economy, the SME sector needs a combination of expertise, devotion, and loyalty; this is expected to improve customer service. To explain and identify the concept of talent, several phrases are used. Meanwhile, this variation may be used to demonstrate a lack of consensus on terminology (Iles *et al.,* 2010).

Despite participants' differing perspectives on talent, there is an effort to match talent with the company's strategy and values. They recognised talent as the primary driver of organisational performance. Employees in critical positions who have excellent knowledge and talents are considered talented if they have high potential or are doing well in their jobs, are dedicated and driven to succeed, contribute to work performance, and influence their counterparts as role models. High performance and leadership will lead to company success. This definition was essentially like the one proposed by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012), who focused on talent characteristics and claimed that talent should have dedication, commitment, competence, and contribution to work.

In summary, participants felt that the most significant contribution of talent is dependent on the environment. As a result, identifying talent early is critical for developing talent to fit that strategic position (Stahl *et al.,* 2012). Furthermore, organisations may invest in the right people by recognising and rewarding talent (Huselid, 2005). As a consequence, a deliberate strategy to identify and recognise talent is needed. According to Collings and Melahi (2009), strategic TM should systematically identify key job positions. These strategic job positions may help the organisation stay competitive (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

7.4 Understanding the concept of HR and TM practices of SMEs in Case Companies (*i.e.*, A & B) in the UK during a turbulent period from the perspective of integrated Institutional Resource-Based Driven Approach

As Carlson and Rotondo (2001) point out, there is often a fundamental misalignment between what organisations can provide in career trajectories and what many people still implicitly demand from professional life. Grimshaw and colleagues (2008) contribute to the argument by arguing that recent changes in an organisational environment, connected with economic restructuring, have disintegrated the labour market as businesses postpone and shrink their operations. Consequently, employees are dislocated from their professional routes, with limited opportunities for training and advancement (ibid). According to Rousseau (1994), employees may lose faith in their company if they believe they will get less in return for their efforts in the future. The company may have made a modification that affects the employee's compensation or quality of life.

Anand (2011) claims that TM provides workers with the chance to grow and develop in their jobs and the ability to learn and acquire experience with the company. In turn, this has led to a rise in the number of employees who are content, engaged, and happy in their jobs and an increase in employees who have a positive impression of the company's culture of growth and career opportunities. Hall (1989) concludes that businesses must recognise and appreciate the crucial importance of managers familiar with and comprehending the organisation's purpose, values, and strategy when operating in a recessionary context. There are several ways to build a great management team, but they all revolve around developing and retaining top people. When faced with a challenging employment market, Stadler (2011) asserts that it is more crucial than ever for companies to find, develop, and hold on to top talent in key positions in the face of today's economic slump. Faced with this reality, organisations must treat talent as a crucial resource to maximise performance.

Because of the escalating rivalry in today's globe and the growing importance placed on employee expertise and knowledge in business strategy, Collings and Mellahi (2009) agree that TM has become a critical strategic problem in today's more globalised business environment. Collings states that organisations must guarantee they have the personnel in place to satisfy their present and future business ambitions. As such, assurance is needed that talent is successfully recognised, nurtured, and maintained (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). A company's culture and the institutions in which it operates have a significant effect in determining HR and TM motivations and practices. This is determined by their adherence to the status quo and their ability to foster and sustain views of a stable environment.

Several factors might limit a company's ability to innovate and compete in the marketplace, including government regulations, professional organisations, and social networks. These pressures may come in coercion, persuasion or even offers to join (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). There are several reasons why firms are interested in adopting and using TM, including institutional pressure. Management in this setting must be aware of how their actions affect the ability of organisations to attract, develop, and retain workers with exceptional talents. Talented employees may leave their current employers searching for additional opportunities for recognition and growth in the long run if a less scientific approach to TM is used, although this may be short-lived. Institutional mechanisms influence organisational isomorphism behaviour, as introduced in the theoretical background section of this thesis (*i.e.,* Chapter 2), given that the case organisations participating are well-established and recognised global corporations concerned with their legitimacy and position in their various institutional contexts and sectors.

People, pools, positions, and practice are the four philosophies that predominate in TM discourse (Sparrow *et al.,* 2014), and the central problem for each is to reach an agreement on what TM implies and how it can be distinguished from standard HRM practices (Scullion and Collings, 2010). The fundamental conflicts within each of these philosophical systems are as follows: a succession of essential tensions. Consider the people method, which concentrates TM on a small number of employees and is prone to managerial bias and limited rationality since it relies on the memory recall of key managers to determine who should be deemed talented (Sparrow and Makram, 2015). The pools approach entails identifying groups and clusters of individuals who have a differential impact on an organisation's performance. It considers organisational justice and stakeholder theory to propose an exclusive approach to TM. Organisational justice and stakeholder theory are both considered in this approach (Gelens *et al.*, 2014). Cooke *et al*. (2014) provide us with information on the detrimental effects that exclusive TM systems may have on people's emotional well-being, as well as the dangers of disregarding these effects. According to Becker and Huselid (2006), organisations make disproportional investments in those jobs that contribute to the firm's competitive advantage, resulting in a distinctive HRM architecture for the organisation.

Nonetheless, internal equality and consistent performance management continue to be a problem for all organisations, particularly those worldwide (Minbaeva and Collings, 2013). The practice method is the ultimate option, and it is also the emphasis of this work. The practice approach indicates that a comprehensive suite of HRM policies and practices is required, with the ability to develop the skills and competencies of global talent. The discipline of TM and its emphasis on distinctive architecture are directly linked to the development of sustained competitive advantage (Collings and Mellahi, 2013). The Resource-Based View (RBV) theoretical paradigm, which considers internal variables, both physical and intellectual, as important sources of competitive advantage, has had a considerable impact on TM (ibid). The authors of Stiles and Kulvisaechana (2003) argue that organisations' ability to achieve competitive advantage is not dependent, as has been traditionally assumed, on such factors as natural resources or technological advancements or economies of scale. These factors are becoming increasingly challenging to imitate. According to the RBV, competitive advantage is predicated on the organisation's precious, unique, and challenging to duplicate resources housed inside the organisation. Human capital is, in the most accurate meaning of the term, an 'invisible asset.'

According to Bersin (2009), TM in organisations helps with employee engagement and retention by providing workers with a passion for their jobs, an engaging atmosphere, and a consistent work experience that is tough for rivals to duplicate. TM is considered by Sparrow *et al*. (2014) to be a "bridge field" that incorporates concepts and ideas from marketing, operations, and HRM (Sparrow *et al.*, 2014). In each case, the focus is on human capital thinking, assuming that persons with exceptional abilities would bring value to their organisations and produce better outcomes (Sparrow and Makram, 2015).

As a result, organisations will strive to develop essential individuals who are appropriate for their environment and establish a nurturing atmosphere that is compatible with their talent aspirations (Chabault *et al.,* 2012). Accordingly, the resource-based vision of the company may be supported by TM systems, which are essential in the identification and development of precious, unique, inimitable, and non-replaceable resources (Barney, 2002). To be clear, Barney (2002) examines the subject of an organisation while conducting his resource-based analysis, *i.e.,* the structures, rules, and procedures to assist in using available resources (Barney, 2002). According to the TM viewpoint, TM systems should be developed to generate, capture, exploit, and safeguard the value created from an organisation's talent assets (Sparrow and Makram, 2015). In the words of Oliver (1997), RBV is anchored by a core set of assumptions that include the following: it is predicated on the assumption of economic motivation, which is based on management choice driven by efficiency; that the choices made are value-maximizing, and that managers would aim to optimise these choices; and that conclusion is achieved by a systematic evaluation (Oliver, 1997). When it comes to resource-based valuation, economic reasoning guides the process; the isolating mechanisms that prohibit these resources from being replicated result from causal ambiguity and social complexity. The business that owns the assets is likely to have a significant competitive advantage in expanding them, according to Peteraf (1993). This advantage is partly informational since it is founded on intricate and tacit understandings that are not readily available to outsiders and provide a competitive edge.

It encompasses the identification of critical resources and how those resources are mobilised within the systems themselves. As a precondition, we should be familiar with the organisation's strategy, values, purpose, culture, and history. Rather than relying on the behaviours of essential people, Bowman and Hird (2014) argue that the application of RBV to TM is based on collective interactions and path dependency. In this case, TM is filtered via a historical lens, which then serves to direct subsequent action. Consequently, for TM to be successful across cultures, it must include more significant motivations and economic gain and gain. When making choices, they must consider the institutional environment in which they are made, the nature of jobs, the significance of social standing, and the structure of income distribution (Vaiman and Brewster, 2015).

Diversity of viewpoints exists within the field of the institutional theory itself. According to rational choice institutionalism, organisations are common patterns of conduct that economic actors construct to overcome uncertainty (Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014). For these patterns to be shared, it is necessary that organisations see relative risks in the external environment and that new structures be built that will use elements of the previous regime in new and innovative ways. It is said by Steinmo *et al.* (1992) that institutions are path-dependent and are found in the historical preferences of stakeholders rather than being the outcome of logical decisions. It is believed that institutional transformation is impossible under this approach since institutions are static. Institutionalism is defined as the study of organisations as social entities that seek legitimacy in surroundings that have been socially built (Scott, 1987).

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), these rules are formed because of three critical isomorphic pressures: coercive, in which behavioural patterns are imposed;

mimetic, in which attempts are made to copy practices that are perceived to be superior; and finally, normative, in which practices are disseminated by professional organisations, such as professional bodies, universities, and consulting firms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), as shown in the theoretical framework in figure 7.5 below. For a feeling of legitimacy, organisations will adhere to the institutional frameworks they operate, whether consciously or unconsciously (Collings *et al.*, 2010). Within an institutional framework, Oliver (1997) argues that choices are value-laden and depend on the social environment, resulting in a limited acceptance of new ways of thinking, doing, and being. Therefore, workers may be reluctant to acquire new abilities or depart from more conventional methods of doing things (Oliver, 1997).

Whereas RBV argues that inimitableness is a mobility obstacle, institutional barriers are concerned with the degree to which resources are politically or culturally acceptable. The result is that institutional variations across nations influence every facet of an organisation's practice (Paauwe and Boselie, 2003). Those characteristics of organisations that enable collective action to achieve shared goals, such as trust and culture; social support; social exchange; psychological contract; and informal organisation of social and interfirm networks, focus on social capital research. Social capital is a term that refers to the characteristics of organisations that facilitate collective action to achieve shared goals (Tempest *et al.*, 2004). As a result, a diverse range of TM activities and systems produce and maintain specific resource characteristics consistent with RBV theory.

When it comes to the fight for talent, there is a wide variety of descriptors available nowadays. According to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2002), due to a demographic transition, skilled individuals will become scarcer, leading to higher recruitment expenses and more negotiation leverage for talent. As a result of globalisation and demographic shifts in the workforce, according to Branham (2005), the most pressing problem, apart from the general economic situation, is attracting and maintaining qualified employees. It has been stated that, according to a CIPD (2007) research, the most critical driver driving TM to the top of the corporate agenda is a current or predicted shortage of persons with needed abilities in the external labour market. It has been suggested by Scullion and Collings (2006) that the emergence of international TM is an intentional response to the rising problem of TM shortages.

Nevertheless, in a literal sense, Rvik's (2000) concept of "externally constructed issue descriptions" is prone to highlighting the symbolic roles of the problem definitions themselves. As a result, organisations would be more inclined to embrace popular management approaches because of the intense psychological effect rather than their sense of urgent external issues. Thus, the concerns discovered in the case study firms diverge significantly from Rvik's (2000) thesis in terms of significance.

- ***Mimetic Mechanism***: Mimetic action is the imitation of another action. A mimetic mechanism is a reaction to uncertainty or fads in management that involves copying the tactics and practices of rivals. Continual comparisons and how an organisation wants to be seen in the future lead organisations to imitate others. The experience of successful organisations serves as a model for other organisations, encouraging them to use the same management methods that were effective and helped them to establish a strong business identity. Second, a well-known reason is that the organisation may identify itself and differentiate itself from the competition by using creative ideas. Management of organisations is continually establishing and maintaining their identities, according to Blenkinsopp and Stalker (2004). This is true in terms of how others see them and their perceptions of themselves. According to Simmel (1973), organisations and their leaders must aspire to be individualistic and innovative.

As seen by the empirical findings of this study, none of the case study firms thought that they were mimicking or being led by other competitors in the same industry. As a result, their enterprises are pragmatists, and their commercial actions are rational, with the goal of profit, according to their perspective. They will never be motivated to adopt TM because of 'frivolous hobbies' and 'superficial ways'.

Case A made a similar statement, as seen in Chapter 6, who said that only actual internal demands could serve as the fundamental driving force and that mimicking other organisations could not be relied upon to provide consistently motivating factors. To avoid squandering their limited time and energy on formalistic nonsense, they would continually endeavour to achieve their requirements. In addition, those interviewed stated that both internal and external influences might create such a need.

According to the researcher, following the researcher's review of the literature and analysis of empirical data, the case study businesses are well-established and wellorganized SMEs that are exceptionally prominent and important in their respective business sectors. The researcher thinks that they all belong to a group of fashion setters in the so-called management fashion industry and that the data support this. Selected case SMEs agreed to experience the pain of vying for the best-talented personnel. Most of them named 'talent recruitment, attraction, and retention' the most important reason for using TMS. However, the findings also show that they are now dealing with legitimate issues. Those who took part in Case A, for example, said that they were subjected to pressure from both inside and outside their organisation, which led them to agree to TM. Within the organisation, there was a desire to keep their present talent to preserve, if not enhance, the total managerial competency while also fostering the development of new management experts. External pressure came in the form of a need to expand the company's pool of talent as well.

On the other hand, Case B participants said that they were aware of how tough the competition was on the talent market. The implementation of TM was thus prompted by the urgent need to react to current market competition and the need to retain and excite present employees. Therefore, the empirical data demonstrate that the case study firms primarily used TM as a tool for their business operations. Indeed, they recognised the worsening situation in the external talent market, just as Carrington (2004) asserts that companies have gradually come to understand the importance of attracting and keeping their talented workforce because of the enormous costs and difficulties associated with external recruitment. The use of TM as rhetoric does, in this sense, incorporate procedures classified as such and provide some answers to the objective difficulties. Despite this, Rvik's (2000) symbolic argument that corporations would implement a new management method merely because they are psychologically susceptible to the risks and issues stated by outside players does not seem to apply, at least not to the companies in the current case studies.

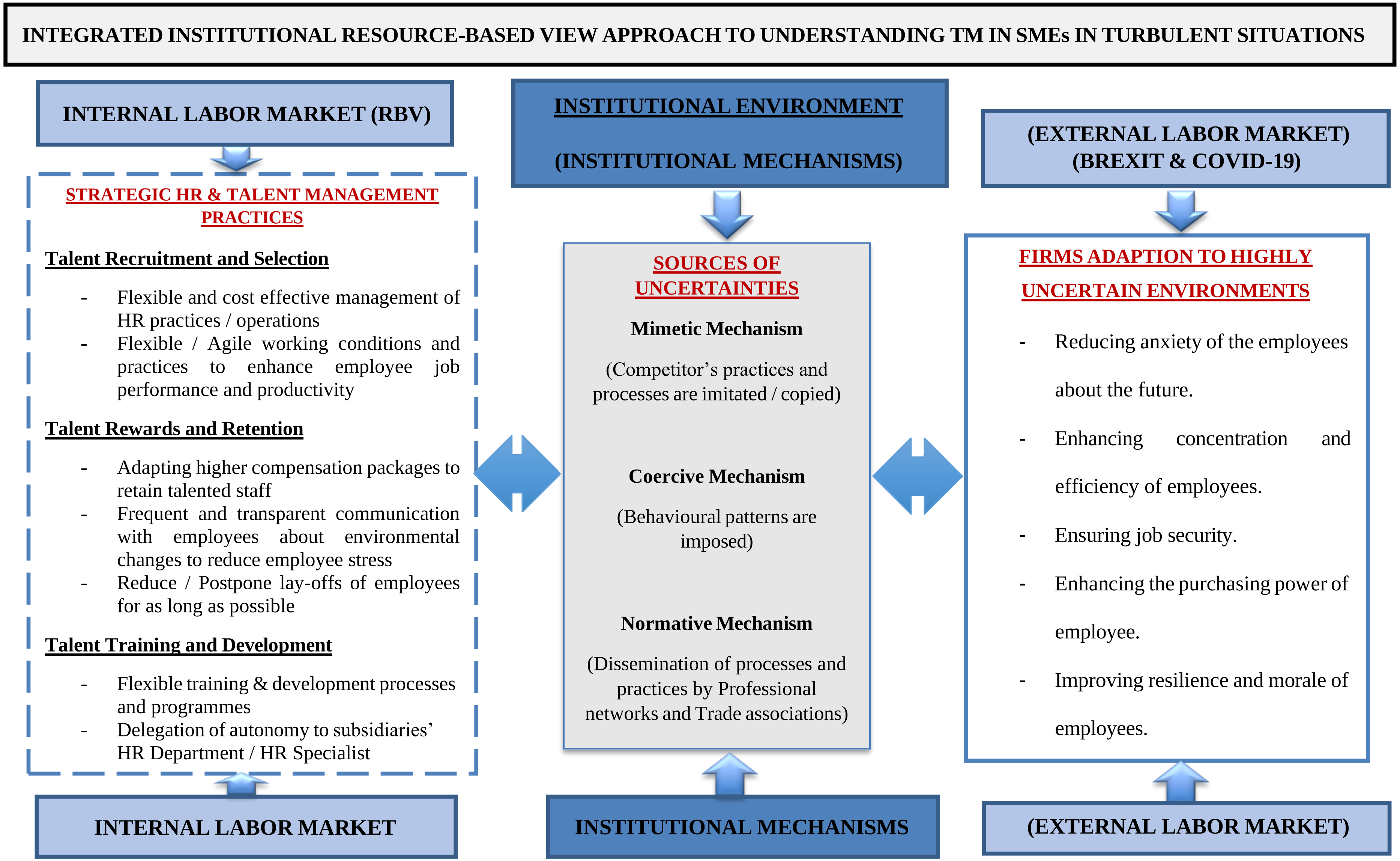
- ***Coercive Mechanism:*** Even while coercive mechanisms were not shown to be effective as a driving factor in the adoption of TM, they did seem to play a part throughout the whole process in the current research. The researcher inquired of the respondents as to whether their corporate headquarters impacted them throughout the adoption phase of TM. They said that, even though it was not large, the impact of the headquarters was still there and could not be ignored. The empirical data demonstrate that the impact or even pressure from headquarters does exist; nevertheless, it is not a determining factor in the installation and deployment of TM. Some researchers maintain a similar point of view. For example, Scullion and Starkey (2000) suggested that 'the essential problem for SMEs is not to discover the optimal HRM policy per se, but rather to establish the match between the firm's strategy, structure, and HRM approach.' They go on to say that "workforce fragmentation is only a symptom of this overall tendency." Dowling *et al*. (1999) point out that past studies of headquarter-subsidiary interactions tended to emphasise transfers of information and policy from headquarters to subsidiaries. However, this technique has a fundamental drawback: the erstwhile peripheral (subsidiaries) might evolve into autonomous centres for investments, critical operations, and influence.

- ***Normative Mechanism:*** The normative mechanism assumes that the degree of professionalisation of workers impacts the nature of the management control system and the practices associated with it. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), there are two causes of isomorphism. One comes from formal education, such as universities and professional training institutes, since they are essential players in developing organisational norms among professional managers and personnel. The researcher, on the other hand, discovered no empirical evidence for this claim. The interviews came from various professional backgrounds, including management, technical, sales, and marketing. For example, in Case A, HR professionals possessed degrees in various fields (*e.g.,* BA in geography) rather than solely in HRM. As a result, it is worthwhile to cast doubt on this claim. The second kind of network is professional organisations, such as professional and trade organisations. These organisations might serve as another medium for developing and disseminating normative principles governing organisational and professional behaviour. However, the empirical evidence does not support this line of reasoning once again.

As stated in the preceding chapters, the researcher's reasons for developing the integrated institutional resource-based TM framework were twofold. First, since earlier literature, TM has only provided fragmented ideas rather than a systematic method of TMS that can incorporate all the parts. The researcher develops this framework to expand the present literature further. Second, the framework may be used as a case for SMEs to identify aspects and connections between them. After examining this framework, it is not intended to be used as a theoretical notion.

Nonetheless, the degree to which study results and conclusions are generalizable in varied practical situations is a concern. The institutional resource-based viewpoint also indicates that practitioners in SMEs should bear in mind that this framework may eventually be beneficial for their businesses in terms of protecting knowledge-based resources against imitations in times of uncertainty. Practitioners may use this framework to analyse and compare their own operations around TM readily. The practitioners' components and processes may or may not be the same as those shown in this thesis. On the contrary, it is adaptable and may be used as a reference standard for firms to reflect on their people management strategies in accordance with it.

7.5 Study's Theoretical Framework


INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCE-BASED VIEW APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING TM IN SMEs IN TURBULENT SITUATIONS
INTERNAL LABOR MARKET (RBV)
STRATEGIC HR & TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
Talent Recruitment and Selection
- Flexible and cost effective management of HR practices / operations
- Flexible / Agile working conditions and practices to enhance employee job performance and productivity
Talent Rewards and Retention
- Adapting higher compensation packages to retain talented staff
- Frequent and transparent communication with employees about environmental changes to reduce employee stress
- Reduce / Postpone lay-offs of employees for as long as possible
Talent Training and Development
- Flexible training & development processes and programmes
- Delegation of autonomy to subsidiaries' HR Department / HR Specialist
INTERNAL LABOR MARKET
INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT
(INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS)
SOURCES OF UNCERTAINTIES
Mimetic Mechanism
(Competitor's practices and processes are imitated / copied)
Coercive Mechanism
(Behavioural patterns are imposed)
Normative Mechanism
(Dissemination of processes and practices by Professional networks and Trade associations)
INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS
(EXTERNAL LABOR MARKET)
(BREXIT & COVID-19)
FIRMS ADAPTION TO HIGHLY UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENTS
- Reducing anxiety of the employees about the future.
- Enhancing concentration and efficiency of employees.
- Ensuring job security.
- Enhancing the purchasing power of employee.
- Improving resilience and morale of employees.
(EXTERNAL LABOR MARKET)

7.6 Conclusion

According to the study, organisations will develop effective recruiting, developing, and retaining talent if they can correctly identify and describe talent. Pay, additional perks and incentives; building relationships; building talent pipelines, and organisational branding are the methods that seem to work in the SME sector. Organisational profiles, strategies and policies, employee trends, and labour market conditions all influenced the tactics adopted by the responding organisations. Organisational branding may be enhanced by various methods, such as, for example, the selection of advertising determined by the company's capability, financial constraints, and target audience. Furthermore, to improve the organisation's reputation among prospective or existing workers, the goal may be to simplify and concentrate on improved productivity, recruiting, retention, and commitment.

According to the findings, organisations should invest in talent development and retention for both short-and long-term success. An organisation's success depends on its ability to attract and retain the best and brightest employees by fostering a culture of self-sufficiency. Organisational culture dictates the methods for attracting, motivating, and retaining employees. Effective TM, particularly talent retention, requires the involvement of all HR activities/functions. The SME sector should use a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic methods to encourage talent. The extrinsic incentive method must be supplemented by creating a robust internal connection and a talent pipeline that allows workers to develop and grow (*e.g.*, pay).

As reported by the survey, developing excellent connections inside an organisation serves as a basis for recruiting and motivating existing employees to stay in their positions. To promote and sell the organisation's vision to both new employees and existing employees and surround talented individuals with excellent co-workers, the correct people need to be placed in this position. The belief is that if organisations provide good care for their employees, the employees will return or reciprocate the organisation's generosity (Kamoche, 2000). As a result, a strong working relationship inside the organisation is required. Many organisations, for example, are adopting this approach to recruit and inspire talent by creating family-like work environments for employees to have a sense of belonging to the company.

According to the findings of this investigation, the researcher believes this is the most cost-effective method of reaching the heart and minds of the talent. There is an idea that the significance of this approach will serve as a signpost (noticeboard) for companies. It may provide companies with "warnings" and the opportunity to learn the art of winning the "talent war" in the SME sector. These practice-based study results indicate that TM should be given top priority over managing skilled employees in organisations. They must comprehend why talent is so vital to businesses and how to manage it effectively. Making individuals feel at ease inside the organisation was one of the primary issues that emerged from how talent is handled.

To be successful, thrive and be competitive in the market, organisations must recognise that talent alone is not enough. Organisations must establish lofty goals and implement appropriate strategies and performance measures. All employees must be energised and aligned, as well so that they can perform at their best. In addition, managerial guidance and the ability to learn and grow are equally important. Thus, effective talent retention is achieved through a combination of initiatives such as offering a competitive compensation package, providing growth opportunities, providing challenging work, and managerial assistance (Horwitz *et al.*, 2003).

Building an organisation's reputation and offering management aid and support develops long-term drive (Tymon Jr. *et al.*, 2010). The participating businesses indicated that the two most challenging issues they face are talent recruitment and retention. However, attracting and motivating talent entails retaining the organisation's top employees. To sum it up: Participants made the connection between talent acquisition and development and retention. According to the findings of this study, talent retention requires a mix of HR actions (talent acquisition and selection, training, development, developing a talent pipeline, and motivation are just a few of the examples). The study looked at how the idea of talent is used in the SME sector. The research looked specifically at how participating companies identify and recognise talent within their respective industries. Research also looked at how they manage their personnel, especially retention and the issues it presents. The study conclusions and recommendations are given in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

Even if companies recognise the importance of HRM and TM in gaining a competitive advantage (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017), they handle talent uniquely (Tansley, 2011), resulting in a misunderstanding of the concept and its implementation (Thunnissen, 2016). Therefore, it was recommended to concentrate on various stakeholders' views via interview-based investigations (Dries, 2013). Furthermore, McDonnell *et al.* (2017) concluded that SME businesses should be prioritised (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016). This thesis tried to investigate and understand HRM and TM practices in SME firms in the UK during challenging times by following these recommendations. This chapter aims to summarise the study by providing conceptual results, highlighting issues, and suggesting areas for future research. Conclusion and summary of the research findings are presented in this chapter, with suggestions made. Finally, it examines the research contribution, which is evaluated in terms of methodological, literature, practical implications and discusses the study's limits.

8.2 Research Contributions

8.2.1 Contribution to the Body of Existing Literature

TM is increasingly important for SMEs, as it assists them in attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining talents (Piansoongnern *et al*., 2011). However, there is still a dearth of research in this area in SMEs (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Aiming to contribute to this field, the study focused on the major choices made by SMEs with regard to talent acquisition, development and retention, seeking to glean information about how they managed to remain competitive in turbulent markets (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19). Even though there has been research on TM for over a decade, a literature review revealed that talent definitions are still vague and imprecise (Thunnissen *et al*., 2014). Uncertainty over what constitutes "talent" has a detrimental influence on TM's implementation process and strategy. A significant portion of the misunderstanding stems from a dearth of empirical research and inquiry into how talent is utilised in the UK's SME sector, particularly during difficult times. For example, just a few studies, Baum, 2008; Hughes and Rog, 2008, concentrate on TM and the factors that influence TM, particularly in the SME sector.

The SME sector is highly reliant on low-skilled labour and is labour demanding (Duncan *et al*., 2013). Within these settings, talent identification, definitions, and practices emerge, and there is a need to check if talent is employable in this sector. If this is the case, what definition (s) and talent practices are appropriate for this industry? Thus, the findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge regarding TM, more precisely, the identification and management of people in the UK's SME sector. The absence of clear definitions and the notion of talent may impede the effective implementation of TM strategies. Thus, stakeholders need to define the idea of talent to make better judgments about who should be managed and how they should be managed.

The study discovered that the phrase is widely used in the SME sector, despite significant differences in participants' exact meanings (*e.g.*, Case A & B). Additionally, the study observed that these definitions appeared to be influenced by factors such as organisational culture, organisational goals and policies, and economic conditions. As a result, the word or idea of talent is suitable in the SME sector. As stated in the thesis introduction and background (*i.e.*, Chapter 1), talented workers significantly impact an organisation's long-term success and growth. As a result, it is expected that concentrating on these talented employees would assist the UK SME sector in remaining competitive in the face of recession, crises, or unstable environments (*e.g.*, Brexit and Covid-19).

The study investigated and provided empirical evidence of the impact of turbulent environment (*i.e.*, Brexit and Covid-19) on SME firms in the UK, their HRM and TM policies and practices in response to the uncertainty, and the changes in employees' experience of work. The study offered several contributions. First, it adds to the international HRM and TM literature by exploring HRM and TM practices in highly uncertain environments, which has rarely been studied (Wood *et al*., 2018). It extends TM literature in that it determines the TM nature and practices embedded in SMEs during a period of uncertainty (*i.e.*, Brexit and Covid-19). Secondly, drawing on a dual conceptual framework – integrated institutional resource-based view theory, the study made a distinctive contribution to the literature on TM in SMEs by providing a comprehensive picture of how the UK SME's internal resources and institutional context—an environment of ongoing talent scarcity—had a profound yet in deterministic influence on the nature and practice of HRM and TM. Thirdly, the study made a theoretical contribution in this context, exploring the practices of talent acquisition, development and retention adopted by the sampled SMEs in the UK, of whom were influenced by the turbulent environment (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017) persevering in their emphasis on TM. This context offered a unique insight as it was undertaken at a time when the country (*i.e.*, the UK) and SMEs were experiencing two of the most uncertain environmental situations (*i.e.*, Brexit and Covid-19). The study highlights the distinctive nature of TM in the SME context during turbulence, shedding light on an important and relatively underexplored area and contributing to knowledge of the discipline.

In addition to the conceptual contribution, the study also highlights important practical implications for stakeholders—SMEs, HR practitioners and policymakers, owners and managers. As the findings suggest, as a response to adversity, successful companies have recognised that building human capacity is key to success (Sainis *et al*., 2017). This study provides stakeholders (*i.e.*, owners, managers and employees) with insights into how effective TM practices can be considered a lifeline to organisational sustainability—particularly for SMEs in the contemporary challenging and fiercely competitive business environment (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). This highlights the potential of inclusive TM practices to be part of an effective workforce management strategy: stakeholders (policymakers and HR practitioners) must engage in the multiple areas of individual talent acquisition, development and retention.

The study also suggests that an inclusive TM approach can be strategic when it fits with the business strategy and organisational culture, and that senior SME managers in the UK choose this approach to managing talent because it fits better within their organisational context. Exclusive TM strategies can undermine employee morale, particularly in the case of untalented workers. Such approaches are therefore inappropriate, and indeed rare, in the SME context (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Another reason for this is the fact that such strategies carry an additional cost due to the huge investment required for the strategic development of identified talents (Chung and D'Announzio-Green, 2018). It must, however, be noted that in a volatile business environment, organisational disruption and change can force SMEs into adopting cost-cutting mechanisms that can reduce investment in the training and development of talented employees in key operational areas (Jiang and Iles, 2011). Therefore, in order to ensure that efforts towards talent acquisition, development and retention are not undermined by short-term pressures, SMEs in the UK must endeavour to meet their needs in cost-effective ways while at the same time placing egalitarian and inclusive emphasis at the forefront of their TM practice (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Organisational commitment to egalitarian and inclusive emphasis is crucial in the TM effort; in addition to enhancing employees' buy-in and perception of being valued, it also increases their commitment and retention, as well as the release of the unique knowledge and skills that the talent possesses (Ogbonna and Harris, 2015). In summary, the study suggest that inclusive TM is a strategic approach for effective TM implementation in SMEs.

8.2.2 Contribution to Practice

In today's ultra-competitive business climate, SMEs must guarantee that their goods and services please consumers and clients, encouraging repeat business. Identifying talented employees is one guaranteed method to achieve this goal. This is because talented personnel are often seen as individuals who may significantly contribute to the long-term competitive advantage and growth of an organisation via organisational performance and business-critical responsibilities. However, another aim should be to manage this talent properly. This part investigates how the study results relate to these two objectives and the consequences for business practice.

Furthermore, the study findings will be used as a guide for organisations in the SME sector and selected case businesses to successfully manage talent by defining and recognising talent. This should lead to a more precise personnel management strategy, especially during a difficult period. For example, in the SME industry, who should be considered a talent? Again, the resource should assist companies in the sector overcome the difficulties they face, making TM a more seamless process. Finally, this should assist them in achieving their objective of long-term competitiveness. Since the research focuses on talent and TM, practitioners in the SME sector may benefit from it. The study results will be utilised as a reference for SME industry organisations to help them hire, develop, and keep exceptional employees. Thus, talent recruitment and retention may be more straightforward as organisations face ongoing challenges (Changchit, 2014). The following are the contributions:

1. **Assist in Talent assessment criteria**

The research contributes to talent, mainly how it is applied in the SME sector. As a result, practitioners in specific cases may incorporate this conceptualization and framework into their management. The results, for example, may assist organisations within the sector in understanding the idea of talent and talented employees. The results might be immensely beneficial in aiding management in recognising potential talent inside the organisation (*e.g.*, HR planning, recruitment, and selection criteria). Training and associated costs must be factored into the model to develop talent that meets the organisation's needs. Because talent is more context-dependent than transferable abilities, its capacity may differ from one another depending on the organisation. For example, top performers or high potential employees are referred to in SMEs instead of larger enterprises.

The nature of the SME sector necessitates workers with knowledge and skills and service mindedness to provide the highest level of customer satisfaction. However, these characteristics are insufficient to be referred to as talent. There is also a need for managerial abilities and serving as a role model for others. To put it another way, they must communicate successfully with both their employees and their customers. Managers must remember that a single definition of talent may not be applicable in all circumstances. It must be tailored to the organisation's context (*e.g.*, culture, policy, purpose), industry features, economic condition, and so on. When evaluating the criteria for talent evaluation, the organisational background must be considered.

2. Improvement of talent recruitment processes

The results will be beneficial to practitioners gaining a better understanding of recruiting techniques, allowing them to attract better 'talented individuals.' Employing the proper strategy means that businesses will be more appealing to potential employees, providing them with the ability to fill vacancies with the most qualified individuals at the most appropriate time. Whether the organisation is seeking prospects for internal or external advancement, the company must choose the best strategy to reach the target demographic. Although traditional recruitment methods are used, nontraditional methods such as social media may play a significant role, according to the study. Thus, in today’s technologically advanced world, With the help of social media, businesses may better market themselves to recruit qualified candidates.

3. Improving talent pipelines

Managers can use the study’s findings to train and prepare employees for critical roles at all levels of the organisation. For the construction of talent pipelines, this template may be used. The study's findings indicate that organisations’ success is contingent upon their ability to develop talent. High-level capabilities that match the organisation's cultural needs should be added to this. Additionally, the study discovered that ‘acquiring talent’ from outside the organisation can be costly, and the inherent risks may conflict with the organisation's values. Consequently, organisations must build talent pipelines (also known as succession planning) for potential workers to grow and learn while working for them. Notably, the findings suggested that companies should talk about advancement opportunities and get feedback on areas that can grow or improve.

Two-way communication about the abilities that need to be developed is necessary. On the one hand, organisations must establish the skills necessary for employees to accomplish the organisation's goals. Then again, employees should be free to suggest their development opportunities. Developing exceptional individuals within the organisation is one sure way to build a robust talent pipeline. The bottom line is that companies need a more comprehensive range of personnel, from entry-level workers to executives. Companies should prioritise building a talent pool when planning their operations and make retaining adequate talent a top priority.

4. **Improving talent motivation approaches**

The results might potentially aid businesses to select effective motivational strategies for recruiting and retaining employees. In the SME sector, employee connections are critical in attracting and maintaining top personnel, even though competitive salary, incentives, and other benefits are the most prevalent recruiting and retention techniques. Managers may be able to help create an environment that fosters positive internal relationships. Occasionally, for example, informal contact between the supervisor and the employee is essential. Employees can form stronger bonds by participating in birthday parties, New Year's Eve parties, and sports days. Praise and acknowledgement of performance can aid in the development of internal relationships inside the organisation.

Furthermore, organisations must keep their promises and commitments and choose the appropriate individuals to be talent managers. There is also a need to focus on improving job satisfaction. One of the most common techniques for motivating talent is the chance to learn and develop in one’s profession, and organisations must establish an atmosphere in which such possibilities and opportunities exist. More significantly, to successfully inspire people, organisations must focus on motivational methods such as excellent internal interactions and relations, exciting and exceptional growth possibilities, a performance-oriented culture, and so on.

5. **Build talent management mindsets for leaders at all levels**

To remain competitive in economic globalisation or unpredictable situations such as Brexit and Covid-19, organisations must develop TM skills at all levels of management. Invariably, talent has been considered a critical resource that adds substantially to the organisation's ability to stay competitive. In addition, the SME sector needs talent since talent is regarded as the primary engine of a company's success. However, it was discovered that some companies had difficulty recruiting and maintaining top people, with one of the most pressing issues being talent retention. Hence, the researcher found that one case company did not correctly manage talent.

Consequently, they lacked a committed person in charge of talent. Therefore, the selected case companies and the SME sector need leaders at all organisational levels to manage talent (*e.g.*, HR planning, recruiting, developing). In this regard, the researcher suggests that every leadership role be dedicated and enthusiastic about successfully managing people and recruiting and keeping talent. In other words, talent must be the primary focus of the organisational mindset. This thesis may assist practitioners in gaining general knowledge of how TM may provide a long-term competitive edge in times of crisis. Investigating the function of TM from an integrated institutional resource-based approach may help firms improve their competencies and capabilities (*i.e.*, resource-based view). To that end, this research launches the institutional resource-based TM framework, which gathers a set of actions in TM practice to assist practitioners. Knowing the order and interdependence of the processes would aid practitioners in gaining a rational, logical, and complete knowledge of TM. They may evaluate and analyse their TM processes using the methodology provided in this thesis as a benchmark. Furthermore, it broadens knowledge of the impact of external events (such as Brexit and Covid-19) on TM practices in UK SMEs. Practitioners in SMEs should first identify and understand the TM system, which they should see as a critical strategic component in today's dynamic economy.

8.3 Research Conclusions

Several intriguing findings emerged from the examination into a competitive advantage, personnel management, talent retention, and development strategies. The study's participants, the great majority of whom were highly talented, gave their time to participate. It was noticed that participants had a variety of opinions and understandings of what it meant to be talented and what the term "talent" really meant. Despite this, most participants linked talent to specific talents, knowledge, and skills. Unlike Case B, Case A maintained a more inclusive view of talent, thinking that talent existed in all people and can be cultivated. Participants in Case B, on the other hand, had a more comprehensive perspective of talent, thinking that it is intrinsic and uncommon and that it is reserved for a select few who are also great achievers.

Because their higher-level personnel (*i.e.*, directors and owners) make the only decisions, Case B was revealed to have an exclusive perspective on talent, resulting in the talent being fixed inside the organisation. According to most Case A participants, employees believe that TM is vital in today's corporate climate, who understand TM to be matching the right talents and people to positions. TM's perceived elements were mainly connected with organisational structure and procedures and leadership and individual-level characteristics like recognition and empowerment. Thus, a pattern emerged, starting with an organisational structure that supports TM, followed by appropriate procedures for identifying and securing talent, and finally, effective leadership that drives the system while also assessing it and making corrections if required. Cass A believed in the usefulness of TM because of the potential improvement in productivity and financial success that may follow from matching the right talents to the appropriate employment. Also envisioned was that TM would contribute to the growth of the company and the creation of a more pleasant workplace.

Because of the firm's small and lack of financial strength, leadership in Case B failed to see the importance of TM, saying that the sort of structure used was improper for the industry in which the company functioned. Even though leadership recognised the significance of people's strategic positioning, TM methods could not provide the required benefits. Nevertheless, they concluded that TM has an essential position in the commercial world. Participants also discussed the elements that impact the retention of top-tier employees. The working atmosphere, recognition, global career prospects, leadership, and financial incentives all influenced talent retention. TM and retention were influenced by elements that were quite similar, with crossover happening in the areas of leadership and recognition. Case B's present TM procedures gave the perception of being stagnant.

Most participants stated that TM practices did not exist because the organisational structure did not support them, and the leadership cadre was indifferent. A similar outcome was found for the organisation's TM retention processes, with participants feeling that retention policies did not exist. Those who took part in Case B thought that leadership was critical throughout the TM process. However, the participants' views revealed that the role of leadership in TM was an evident difficulty. Regarding staff placement and retention, the decision-making authority rested solely with the senior management team.

Despite this, they failed to recognise TM's importance and make the connection between TM and competitive advantage. Leaders were weak in both the requisite abilities to be influential leaders and the necessary grasp of TM to put such a system into place. It was also determined that leadership did not have any talent retention procedures, despite having a clear awareness of the ramifications of losing outstanding workers. According to the report, they are not placing the appropriate people in the appropriate roles, and they do not grasp the skills and organisational culture necessary to optimise occupations and organisational structure. Participants in Case B expressed dissatisfaction with the existing leadership since they had differing viewpoints on the situation. They do not think that they are recognised or appreciated at work, and they believe that everyone is not treated fairly. At the time of the research, half of the workers in Case B reported seeking employment elsewhere. However, the majority opted to remain owing to a lack of job possibilities in the labour market and a lack of comfort and money.

Case Organisation B has been in existence for an extended period. The average tenure of their higher-level personnel was ten (10) years, whilst the average tenure of their middle-level employees was four (4) years. That the organisation has been effective in keeping its core and skilled staff is shown by this statistic. In contrast, participants' opinions suggest that improvements are needed in the organisation's attitude and culture, and retention will continue to be successful provided these changes are done efficiently. Finally, it was determined if the results had consequences for competitive advantage by interviewing participants about their beliefs of the relationships between TM and competitive advantage and the TM variables that assist it.

According to participants in Case A, TM was related with a competitive advantage since it enabled higher output, which in turn produced value and ultimately challenged rivals. On the other hand, the use of TM was not connected with a competitive advantage in Case B, according to the management team. The study of participants' judgments of which TM components contribute to competitive advantage re-enforced some of the earlier variables that were regarded as necessary in TM and provided some valuable insight into the problem. Successful leadership proved again that effective TM processes, strategic positioning of people, organisational culture, and broad TM knowledge were all critical components of gaining competitive advantage via TM. In addition, the research outcomes lead to a better understanding of stakeholders' views concerning TM in general.

The difference between TM's success and failure is determined by its leadership. Therefore, it is critical to consider how increased understanding of TM might benefit those in leadership positions. The requirement for leaders to possess the necessary talents to make sound TM judgments is also evident; nevertheless, further study is required to have a deeper understanding of TM. This objective includes including all stakeholders, transmitting TM knowledge, getting stakeholder acceptability, and creating a shared understanding of TM across the organisation. The second goal is to do the following: It is vital to assess critical issues to develop a suitable TM strategy for the kind of company and industry in which the organisation operates. The ability of SMEs to determine whether their efforts are reaching the appropriate people, whether they have the appropriate skills and culture for the organisation, and whether they have the necessary skills and talent to monitor performance and provide growth opportunities proactively are all critical considerations. They should take into consideration all these considerations. For example, employee retention and success are linked processes that need an awareness of why people stay on. They must also determine which crucial combination of these techniques would provide the most favourable conditions for gaining a competitive advantage in the market.

The findings of this research-validated a considerable amount of the existing TM literature, which was a significant finding. The leadership team was found to have misjudged the significance of TM and failed to strategically link it to the organisation's goals (Collings 2014). Leading by example (McDonnell *et al.,* 2017), financial incentives, training and advancement opportunities, a welcoming work environment, and recognition were all recognised as influencing retention in the study (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017). The need for TM to provide a competitive edge has been recognised (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.,* 2013). Previous authors proposed that future TM studies include the perspectives of all stakeholders (Dries, 2013). Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) made essential suggestions concerning the future direction of the TM field's growth based on their observations of different geographical locations and smaller enterprises.

Based on these recommendations, the research produced new knowledge and made a reasonable attempt to fix the previously identified gaps. To guarantee that stakeholders' understanding of TM is broadened, more empirical investigations in SME enterprises operating in other sectors (*i.e.,* not simply in the domains of the case companies) should be conducted. It is recommended that we research organisations that are actively recruiting talent, their methods of identifying and enticing individuals, and their success rate in comparison to their competition. The development of talent was identified as an issue that may be investigated more in the future. To be sure, organisations that are now focused on talent development, their methods of doing so, and how they assess their success, particularly when it comes to potential competitive advantage, must be carefully scrutinised. However, these concepts can allow organisations to change their TM strategy and choices in practice based on their thoughts and emotions.

It was determined that a structured TM system was required throughout the TM process. Most activities in a TM system are sequential and take place inside an organisation. According to the study's findings, there is a link between TM practices and business settings, suggesting that TM may be utilised to solve the issues that may arise because of an unpredictable business climate (*e.g.,* Brexit and Covid-19). Based on theoretical concepts and actual evidence, the integrated institutional resource-based TM framework was developed and verified. From the perspective of institutional resources, the researcher contends that TM should be a source of competitive advantage for the organisation. This is accomplished by aiding in understanding the source of competitive advantage from a TM standpoint, as provided by the integrated institutional resource-based TM framework.

8.4 Research Limitations

All research projects must define their scope of work, and each study contributes only a drop to the bucket of knowledge. Several of the study's anticipated constraints were discussed in the chapter on data collection, and additional issues surfaced during the fieldwork. While semi-structured interviews in two case studies supplied the expected depth of information, precise comparisons were sometimes problematic. This study has shortcomings in the following areas:

- The research and findings may reflect the viewpoints of the participating SME case companies. Thus, findings may or may not be generalisable from the UK's SME sector to those in other countries.

- While one could argue that this thesis produced more generalizable findings than other contextual studies, it would be incorrect to assume that the challenges faced by firms and the implementation, operation, and effectiveness of working practices, are identical (Edwards *et al.,* 2006). Additionally, generalizability was constrained by the geographic location of the participant sample. For example, the experiences of firms in Birmingham, West Midlands and Leeds, West Yorkshire may or may not be representative of firms in other parts of the UK.

- Further research could therefore validate the model developed in the study by applying it to a larger sample population. Even better, a survey approach could be developed to access a larger and more dispersed geographical sample.

- It should be noted that the practical data collecting approach utilised in this research (*i.e.,* semi-structured interviews) has both drawbacks and advantages. Although semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to get insight into participants' feelings and ideas and acquire vital in-depth information, they were time-consuming to conduct and required great work. Time and effort were required in substantial amounts, especially during the transcribing process.

- A further limitation was the number of interruptions during interviews. Interviews' attention and natural flow were affected in several cases because participants with a lot on their plates could not participate fully. Additionally, this study employed documentation analysis to triangulate the data to verify the validity and minimise bias in the research conclusions.

- As previously demonstrated, each type of business has inherent and intrinsic characteristics that may differ from one another. As a result, it is critical to emphasise that the current research collected empirical data from only well-established SMEs. However, different businesses may exhibit distinct TM and HRM characteristics, necessitating additional research into such organisations' TM policies and practices (Chuai *et al.,* 2009).

- Negotiating access to the case studies was relatively straightforward, given the trust between the researcher and the participants during the research phases preceding the case study stage. In addition, the personal interview stage enabled the researcher to assess the respondent firms' suitability for further study. However, the case studies' level of access and the availability of interviewees varied.

- One disadvantage of this study is the researcher's strict constraints and confidentiality requirements. For instance, to obtain approval to conduct research, none of the information needed to refer to in the thesis reveals the identity of the case businesses or respondents. Occasionally, this hampered the ability to provide more vivid and comprehensive explanations of issues.

Given the constraints outlined above, the interviews primarily served to confirm the existence of practices and, where possible, to probe participants about their experiences with these practices. While this was not the study's objective, it was not always clear why certain practices were implemented or to what extent they were successful at the managerial or employee level.

8.5 Recommendations for further research

All study builds on the findings of earlier studies and lay the groundwork for further investigation. As a result of this study, it has been shown that investigating TM systems and techniques in turbulent environments is a worthwhile and thorough avenue of investigation. Many subjects may be investigated in more depth. As a result of the fact that the researcher does not have total control over the study, qualitative research methodologies are particularly prone to causing loose ends. It is impossible to tackle every problem even with broad-based study, and being selective will result in specific problems being unanswered in the long run.

Since its inception, TM has gained widespread recognition and respect as the most effective strategic instrument for developing and managing highly skilled individuals. Workers who can significantly enhance an organisation's present and future performance and add to the organisation's competitiveness are strategic employees. It is necessary for organisations first to establish whether the concept is suitable before using TM methods to ensure that the notion is acceptable. The limitations portion of this study notes various holes in this study component that another research must fill. The following themes are being investigated to understand better the ideas of talent and transferable skills in the SME business:

1. Starting with the concept of HRM and TM in various types of organisations, as well as how talent is managed and structured, the researcher proposes that similar studies would significantly contribute to a better understanding of TM and its role in an organisation's pursuit of competitive advantage during uncertain times (Brexit and Covid-19). For example, this research consisted of a case study that provided fascinating results from two diverse kinds and sizes of organisations within the same sector (*i.e.*, SME). To conclude the importance of a TM in other organisations, it would be beneficial to examine and analyse several organisations and their TMS. Researching comparable organisations would also provide valuable information on the primary aspects that influence how a TMS is organised, such as the organisation's size, the industry in which it operates, and the overall state of the firm.

2. This study bolstered the argument that investigating TM systems and practices is a worthwhile and expansive area of research, with numerous subfields to

explore. The study collected data from two representative organisations. When it comes to additional research, one can either look outward and conduct an extensive survey laterally and conduct a comparative study in other sectors or inward and investigate some of the issues more deeply in a smaller number of instances.

3. This research heavily relies on an examination of the definition and management of talent from an organisational standpoint. As a result of observing this phenomenon, the study suggests that future research examines TM differently, particularly in defining talent. People at various levels of the organisation, including consumers and clients, specialists, and industry professionals, might contribute their insights. As a result, it would add knowledge about the industry from a broader perspective to the knowledge of TM, with the emphasis being on how workers and employees comprehend and prepare for the talents required by organisations.

4. Getting a deeper grasp of the perspectives of those who are not in the company's talent pool would be fascinating as well. More excellent knowledge in this area should enhance TM processes and help managers build an effective TM plan that considers the contributions of all workers.

5. It would also be good to compare the TM in different countries to determine the variations in talent definition and management practices. It would be helpful to compare the application of TM practices in various eastern and western cultures to get further insight into it.

6. Another strategy for expanding this study would be to conduct a larger-scale quantitative survey to examine any additional findings. For instance, interview data could be used to create a survey questionnaire. A comprehensive survey would enable more precise comparisons across sectors and businesses with diverse national origins. The chapter on the research design for this study suggested that qualitative interviews be used because they would be more effective at eliciting meaning than a questionnaire.

7. While expanding the study to a larger scale is possible, other issues may be addressed through more in-depth case studies. For example, given that policies are frequently recommended to be implemented in various ways, it would be fascinating to dig deeper into these variations by gathering data from other sectors and countries.

According to the authors, the study might be a part of a developing trend in modern SME literature to understand better HRM and TM in SMEs (Cunningham and Rowley 2013). Taking part in studies on HRM and TM among SMEs in the UK was both practical and demanding in such a turbulent climate. Even though this research provides an in-depth evaluation of HRM and TM innovation in SMEs, it is merely the tip of the iceberg. It is advised that more studies be conducted on this issue to understand better the function of SMEs in the economy and their impact on employment prospects. (Mayson and Barrett, 2014).

Even though this will be a complex undertaking, it will help fill a gap in the literature on HRM and TM practices in SMEs. Additionally, the researcher recommends that an integrated institutional resource-based perspective TM framework be evaluated and applied to comparable studies to validate and improve it. This type of research would be necessary to develop a theoretical model of a complete TMS that could be used to discuss TM. Although sufficient testing has not been conducted to demonstrate the integrated framework's complete applicability, it is the first attempt to create such a framework.

The outcomes of this study, it is believed, will add to research on TM practice in a range of contexts by improving knowledge of employee experiences and the role of TM practices in personal career development in sectors such as manufacturing, real estate, and retail. Results of this study may be used to augment earlier studies on TM practices in construction (for example, Watson 2016), real estate (for example, Phillips and Roper, 2009), and retail (for example, Phillips and Roper, 2016). Additionally, the results may be used to improve procedures and standards in a variety of disciplines, but further investigation is required. Finally, this comparative study would help us better understand the SME sector and the people who operate within it.

8.6 Final Thoughts

The TM procedure is time-consuming and complex (Turchick Hakak and Al Ariss, 2013). TM practices and activities must be effectively linked vertically and horizontally with the organisation's internal and external surroundings to be successful. This requires the commitment of key organisational stakeholders (Ariss *et al.*, 2014). SMEs have substantial hurdles in efficiently and effectively managing personnel (Schuler *et al.*, 2011). TM practices are very context-dependent, and they vary based on the organisation's size, staffing and people needs, and other factors. However, as seen by the case studies, employees' perspectives and aspirations have evolved. Previously, businesses could have assumed that employees would be "pleased to work for us," but today, the attitude is "what are you going to provide me in return for my coming to work for you?" This suggests that labour dynamics have evolved dramatically since the communist period, and enterprises must adapt quickly to remain competitive in the modern world.

According to the findings of the study's literature research, several methods for identifying talent are characterised by their specific criteria. Lifelong learning and training are vital for developing knowledge-based firms and the development of local and regional economies (Lange *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, a highly trained and adaptive workforce is required (Collings *et al.*, 2018). According to the research findings, preparing for and delivering training in SMEs may be very challenging, which is consistent with the literature. Low recruitment levels, a lack of in-house training, a lack of internal planning capacities, and restricted access to formal training all contribute to the difficulty of the situation (Panagiotopoulos, 2011). Each appointment is critical for SMEs because it boosts their chances of attracting and maintaining the talent they need to redefine and realise a new connection with their employees.

While SMEs may lack a straightforward strategy TM approach, their size may work to their advantage. Their knowledge of their employees and the local environment allows them to create new solutions that are tailored to their specific requirements (Nolan and Garavan, 2016). Establishing relationships with vital talent sources like educational institutions, encouraging employee knowledge generation, and tailoring retention incentives to the specific needs of top performers are all possibilities. It is also necessary for employees to feel appreciated, respected, and nourished to be engaged and productive. This strategy may be more accessible to SMEs. Suppose SMEs want to develop value via creative TM solutions. In that case, they must ensure that their approach to TM is compatible with their organisation's organisational structures, cultures, and HR and TM practices.

As an area of research, TM is still in its infancy. While practitioners and academics recognise its usefulness, there has been little progress in bridging theoretical and practical gaps, most notably in specific contexts (Collings *et al.*, 2018). As a result, this research examined the TM practices of SMEs in the UK in a volatile environment. While organisations increasingly recognise the value of hiring, developing, and retaining individuals with expertise or characteristics in their industry as talent, numerous organisations continue to lack a simple TM programme. However, Nolan and Garavan (2016) contend that size determinism is deceptive. Those successful organisations' size and procedural formality do not predict their success. Nevertheless, evidence supports this view that if SMEs can use their organisational and contextual expertise and react swiftly to HR and TM problems, their size may work to their benefit.

REFERENCES

- Abbas T., and Teddlie, C. (1998). Mixed methodology: combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Abbott, A. and Collins, D. (2002). A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of a “State of the Art” Talent Identification Model. High Ability Studies, 13(2), pp.157–178.
- Abbott, A. and Collins, D. (2004). Eliminating the dichotomy between theory and practice in talent identification and development: considering the role of psychology. Journal of Sports Sciences, 22(5), pp.395–408.
- Adamsky, H. (2003). Talent management: Something productive this way comes, www.erexchange.com.
- Adnan Shereen, M., Khan, S., Kazmi, A., Bashir, N. and Siddique, R. (2020). COVID-19 infection: origin, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses. Journal of Advanced Research, [online] 24, pp.91–98. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7113610/ [Accessed 1BC]. pp. 91-98.
- AFME (2017). ‘Bridging to Brexit: Insights from European SMEs, Corporates and Investors.’ London: Boston Consulting Group for Association for Financial Markets in Europe. Available at: https://www.afme.eu/globalassets/downloads/publications/afme-bcg-cc-bridging-to-Brexit-2017.pdf.
- Ahmad, H., (2015). Internal audit (IA) effectiveness: Resource-based and institutional perspectives. Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 9(9), pp.95-104.

- Ahammad, T., (2017). Personnel management to human resource management (HRM): How HRM functions. Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing, 13(9), pp.412-420.
- Akanni, L., and Gabriel, S. (2020). The Implication of Covid19 on the Nigerian Economy. Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA). Accessed on April 15th.
- Alakbarov, N. and Utkulu, U., (2020). Brexit Dilemma for the UK and the European Union: Expectations, Feared Scenarios, and Possible Effects. In Handbook of Research on Social and Economic Development in the European Union (pp. 157-187). IGI Global.
- Al Ariss, A., Cascio, W.F. and Paauwe, J. (2014). Talent management: Current theories and future research directions. Journal of World Business, 49(2), pp.173–179.
- Albonico, M., Mladenov, Z., and Sharma, R. (2020, June). "How the COVID-19 Crisis Is Affecting Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. McKinsey. https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20Sector/Our%20Insights/How%20the%20COVID%2019%20crisis%20is%20affecting%20UK%20small%20and%20mediu m%20size%20enterprises/How-the-COVID-19-crisis-is-affecting-UK-small-and-medium- size%20enterprises.pdf.
- Albrecht, S.L., Bakker, A.B., Gruman, J.A., Macey, W.H. and Saks, A.M., (2015). Employee engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage: An integrated approach. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.
- Aldermore (2017). SME Future Attitudes, Insight Report Q2, 2017. Available at: https://www.aldermore.co.uk/media/3813/sme-future-attitudes-report.pdf.

- Alkhafaji, A. and Nelson, R.A., (2013). Strategic management: formulation, implementation, and control in a dynamic environment. Routledge.
- Allen, D. G., Shore, L. M., and Griffeth, R. W. (2003). The role of perceived organisational support and supportive human resource practices in the turnover process. Journal of management, 29(1), 99-118.
- Allen, M.R., Ericksen, J. and Collins, C.J., (2013). Human resource management, employee exchange relationships, and performance in small businesses. Human Resource Management, 52(2), pp.153-173.
- Allen, N., (2018). 'Brexit means Brexit': Theresa May and post-referendum British politics. British Politics, 13(1), pp.105-120.
- Amalia, Y.A., Johnson-Mardones, D.F., Jonhsnon-Parson, Shen, W., Shin, Y.S., Swanson, J., (2014). Dialogue in narrative inquiry: collaboration in doctoral study in the USA. International book of interpretational research. USA: Springer.
- Ambrosini, V. and Bowman, C., (2010). The impact of causal ambiguity on competitive advantage and rent appropriation. British Journal of Management, 21(4), pp.939-953.
- Anand, M.R., Gupta, G.L. and Dash, R., (2012). The Eurozone crisis: its dimensions and implications. Economic Division in the Department of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Finance of Indian.
- Anderson, V. and CIPD. (2009). Research methods in human resource management. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, [online] 74(8), p.141. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2987281/.

- Anderson, C., (2010). Talent Management as Survival Skill. Chief Learning Officer, (3), 46-48.
- Anderson, V., Fontinha, R. and Fiona J. R. (2020). Research methods in human resource management: investigating a business issue. London, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Kogan Page.
- Anning-Dorson, T., (2021). Organizational culture and leadership as antecedents to organizational flexibility: implications for SME competitiveness. Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies.
- Ansar, N. and Baloch, A., (2018). Talent and talent management: definition and issues. IBT Journal of Business Studies, 14(2), pp.213-230.
- Ansell, C., Trondal, J., and Øgård, M. (2017). Governance in Turbulent times. United Kingdom: Oxford University press.
- Ansoff, I. (1990) Managing in Turbulent Environments, Igor Ansoff's Strategic Success Model, Singapore Institute of Management, pp. 1-4.
- Ansoff, I., and Mcdonnell, E. (1990) Implanting Strategic Management. Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, pp.185-8.
- Ansoff, H.I., Kipley, D., Lewis, A.O., Helm-Stevens, R. and Ansoff, R., (2018). Implanting strategic management. Springer.
- Argue, M., (2015). The importance of the strategic recruitment and selection process on meeting an organisations objectives (Doctoral dissertation, Dublin Business School).
- Armour, J. (2017). Brexit and financial services. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, [online] 33(suppl_1), pp.S54–S69. Available at: https://academic.oup.com/oxrep/article/33/suppl_1/S54/3066163#63027363.

- Armstrong, M. and Murlis, H. (1980). A handbook of salary administration. London: Kogan Page.
- Armstrong, M., and Baron, A. (2000). Performance management. Human resource management, 69-84.
- Armstrong, M., (2006). A handbook of Human resource management practices. 10th ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Armstrong, M., (2010). Armstrong's essential human resource management practice: A guide to people management. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Armstrong, M., and Taylor, S. (2014). Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Armstrong, A. and Portes, J. (2016). The economic consequences of leaving the EU. National Institute Economic Review, 236, pp.2–6.
- Armstrong, M. (2016). Armstrong’s handbook of management and leadership for HR: developing effective people skills for better leadership and management. London: Kogan Page.
- Armstrong, M. and Brown, D. (2019). Armstrong’s handbook of reward management practice improving performance through reward. London Kogan Page.
- Armstrong, M. and Taylor, S., (2020). Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Arthur, D. (2019). Recruiting, interviewing, selecting, & orienting new employees. New York: Harpercollins Leadership, An Imprint of Harpercollins.
- Arthur, D. (2020). Recruiting, Interviewing, Selecting, And Orienting New Employees. New York: Harpercollins Leadership.

- Arulrajah, A.A. and Opatha, H.H.D.N.P., (2016). Analytical and theoretical perspectives on green human resource management: A simplified underpinning.
- Athey, R. (2008). It’s 2008: Do You Know Where Your Talent Is? Why Acquisition And Retention Strategies Don’t Work. A Deloitte Research Study, Deloitte Development LLC.
- Avedon, M.J. and Scholes, G., (2010). Building competitive advantage through integrated talent management. Strategy-driven talent management: A leadership imperative, pp.73-121.
- Bachmann, A.S. (2006). Melting pot or tossed salad? Implications for designing effective multicultural workgroups. Management International Review, 46(6), pp.721–748.
- Bader, B., Schuster, T., and Dickmann, M. (2015). Danger and risk as challenges for HRM: How to manage people in hostile environments. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(15), 2015–2017. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1038116.
- Bahri, M., St-Pierre, J. and Sakka, O., (2011). Economic value added: a useful tool for SME performance management. International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management.
- Baia, E., Ferreira, J.J. and Rodrigues, R., (2020). Value and rareness of resources and capabilities as sources of competitive advantage and superior performance. Knowledge Management Research & Practice, 18(3), pp.249-262.
- Bailey, D. and Budd, L. (2017). The Political Economy of Brexit. London: Agenda Publishing.
- Bailey, D., and De Propris, L. (2017). Brexit and the UK Automotive Industry. National Institute Economic Review, 242(1), R51-R59.

- Bailey, D., and Tomlinson, P. R. (2017). Back to the Future? UK Industrial Policy after the Great Financial Crisis. In Economic Policies since the Global Financial Crisis (pp. 221-263). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baker, S.R., Bloom, N. and Davis, S.J. (2016). Measuring Economic Policy Uncertainty. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, [online] 131(4), pp.1593–1636. Available at: https://laurentferraradotorg.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/baker_bloom_davis_qje_16.pdf.
- Baker, S. R., Bloom, N., Davis, S. J., and Terry, S. J. (2020). COVID-induced economic uncertainty (No. w26983). Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Baker, T.H. and Judge, K., (2020). How to help small businesses survive COVID-19. Columbia Law and Economics Working Paper, (620).
- Bakhtin, M., (1986). Speech genres & other late essays (C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M., Emerson, C., Holquist, M. and McGee, V.W. (2010). Speech genres and other late essays. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Baldwin, R.E., (2015). Rebooting the Eurozone: Step 1-agreeing a crisis narrative (No. BOOK). Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR).
- Balint, P.J., Stewart, R.E., Desai, A. and Walters, L.C., (2011). Wicked environmental problems: managing uncertainty and conflict. Island Press.
- Balls, E., Sands, P., Hallam, E., Leape, S., Sethi, M. and Weinberg, N., (2018). Time for clarity: the views of British business on the path to Brexit. M-RCBG Working Paper Series, (84).

- Bamberg, M., (2010). Master narrative. In D. Herman, M. Jahn, & M. Ryan (Eds.), Routledge encyclopaedia of narrative theory (1–718). London: Routledge.
- Baporikar, N., (2021). Post-Pandemic Restorative Talent Management Strategy for SME Development. In Cases on Small Business Economics and Development During Economic Crises (pp. 80-96). IGI Global.
- Barett, R., and Mayson, S. (2007). Human Resource Management in Growing Small Firms. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 14, 307-320.
- Barkhatov, V., Pletnev, D. and Campa, A., (2016). Key success factors and barriers for small businesses: Comparative analysis. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 221, pp.29-38.
- Barrett, R. and Mayson, S. (2006). Exploring the intersection of HRM and entrepreneurship. Human Resource Management Review, 16(4), pp.443–446.
- Barnard, C. (2017). Law and Brexit. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 33(suppl_1), pp.S4–S11.
- Barnett, V. and O'Hagan, A., (2020). Setting environmental standards: the statistical approach to handling uncertainty and variation. Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. Journal of Management, [online] 17(1), pp.99–120. Available at: https://josephmahoney.web.illinois.edu/BA545_Fall%202019/Barney%20(1991).pdf.

- Barney, J.B., Ketchen Jr, D.J. and Wright, M., (2011). The future of resource-based theory: revitalization or decline?. Journal of management, 37(5), pp.1299-1315.
- Barney, J.B., Della Corte, V., Sciarelli, M. and Arikan, A., (2012). The role of resource-based theory in strategic management studies: Managerial implications and hints for research. Handbook of research on competitive strategy, pp.109-146.
- Barney, J.B. (2014). Gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. Harlow: Pearson.
- Barney, J.B. and Mackey, A., (2016). Text and metatext in the resource-based view. Human Resource Management Journal, 26(4), pp.369-378.
- Baron, R. A. (2003). Human Resource Management and Entrepreneurship: Some Reciprocal Benefits of Closer Links. Human Resource Management Review, 13, 253–256.
- Baron, A., and Armstrong, M. (2007). Human capital management. Achieving added value through people. UK: Kogan Page.
- Baron, A. and Armstrong, M. (2008). Human capital management: achieving added value through people. London; Philadelphia: Kogan Page.
- Baron, A., (2011). Measuring human capital. Strategic HR Review.
- Barron, A. and Boutary, M., (2020). The Brexit dilemma for small business: European companies respond. Journal of Business Strategy.
- Barrows, E. and Neely, A., (2011). Managing performance in turbulent times: analytics and insight. John Wiley & Sons.

- Barrows, Ed., and Neely, A. (2012). Managing Performance in Turbulent Times, Analytics and Insight. United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bartik, A.W., Bertrand, M., Cullen, Z., Glaeser, E.L., Luca, M. and Stanton, C., (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on small business outcomes and expectations. Proceedings of the national academy of sciences, 117(30), pp.17656-17666.
- Bartram, T., (2011). Employee management systems and organizational contexts: a population ecology approach. Management Research Review.
- Baum, T., (2002) Skills and training for the hospitality sector: a review of issues, Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 54(3), 343-364.
- Baum, T., (2006). Human resource management for tourism, hospitality and leisure: an international perspective. London: Thomson Learning.
- Baum, T., (2008). Implications of hospitality and tourism labour markets for talent management strategies. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 20(7), 721-729.
- Beardwell, J. and Claydon, T. (2007). Human resource management: a contemporary approach. Harlow, England; New York: Prentice-Hall Financial Times.
- Becker, G. S. (1962). Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis. The journal of political economy, 9-49.
- Becker, B. E., Huselid, M. A., Pickus, P. S., and Spratt, M. F. (1997). HR as a source of shareholder value: Research and recommendations. Human resource management, 36(1), 39-47.

- Becker, B.E., and Huselid, M.A. (2006). Strategic human resource management: Where do we go from here?. Journal of Management, 32, 898-925. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206306293668.
- Becker, B.E., Huselid, M.E. and Beatty, R.W. (2009). The Differentiated Workforce: Transforming Talent into Strategic Impact, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Beckett, S., (2015). Managerial Perceptions: The Role of Environmental Uncertainty in the Strategic Planning Process. In Proceedings of the 1993 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference (pp. 523-527). Springer, Cham.
- Beechler, S. and Woodward, I.C. (2009). The global "war for talent." Journal of International Management, 15(3), pp.273–285.
- Behrends, T. (2007). Recruitment Practices in Small and Medium Size Enterprises. An Empirical Study among Knowledge-intensive Professional Service Firms. Management revue, 18(1), pp.55–74.
- Beirman, D., (2020). Restoring tourism destinations in crisis: A strategic marketing approach. Routledge.
- Bell, D. N. (2017). 'Regional aid policies after Brexit', Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 33(suppl_1), S91-S104.
- Bell, E., Bryman, A. and Harley, B. (2019). Business Research Methods. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berg, T., Saunders, A., Schäfer, L., and Steffen, S. (2016).'Brexit and the Contraction of Syndicated Lending', Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2874724.

- Berg, B.L. and Lune, H. (2017). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Berg, B.L. and Lune, H. (2018). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. Boston: Pearson.
- Berger, L. A. (2004). Creating a talent management system for organization excellence: Connecting the dots. In D. R. Berger, & B. A. Lance, The Talent Management Handbook: Creating Organizational Excellence by Identifying, Developing, and Promoting Your Best People (pp. 3-19). United States of America: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Berger, L.A., and Berger, D.R. (2018). The talent management handbook. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bersin, J., (2006). Talent Management. What is it? Why now? Available from: http://www.bf.umich.edu/docs/KeyReferenceArticles.pdf. Accessed [on 29.08.2014].
- Bersin and Associates (2014). Talent Management systems 2014. Available from: https://www.bersin.com/uploadedFiles/Bersin/Research_Library_Subscribers/Res_Store_-_Table_Contents_Files/091014_TMSBundle2014-Final-TOC.pdf [Accessed on 07. 10.2016].
- BIS (2016). Business population estimates for the UK and regions. BIS.
- Björkman, I. and Lu, Y. (1999). The management of human resources in Chinese-Western joint ventures. Journal of World Business, 34(3), pp.306–324.
- Björkman, I. and Lervik, J.E. (2007). Transferring HR practices within multinational corporations. Human Resource Management Journal, 17(4), pp.320–335.

- Björkman, I. and Gooderham, P.N., (2012). International human resource management research and institutional theory. In Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Björkman, I., Ehrnrooth, M., Mäkelä, K., Smale, A. and Sumelius, J. (2013). Talent or Not? Employee Reactions to Talent Identification. Human Resource Management, 52(2), pp.195–214.
- Bjorkman, I., Ehrnooth, M., Makela, K. and Sumelius, J. (2017), "Talent Management in Multinational Corporations" Collings, D.G., Mellahhi, K. and Cascio, W.F. (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Talent Management, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp.461-477.
- Blaikie, N. (2007). Approaches to social enquiry: advancing knowledge. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blaikie, N.W.H. and Priest, J. (2019). Designing social research: the logic of anticipation. Medford, Ma Polity Press.
- Bloom, N., Bond, S. and Van Reenen, J. (2007). Uncertainty and Investment Dynamics. Review of Economic Studies, [online] 74(2), pp.391–415. Available at: https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/74/2/391/1574874 [Accessed 4 Nov. 2019].
- Bloom, N. (2009). The Impact of Uncertainty Shocks. Econometrica, [online] 77(3), pp.623–685. Available at: http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/%7Edbackus/GE_asset_pricing/Bloom%20uncer%20shocks%20Ec%2009.pdf.

- Bloom, N., Bunn, P., Chen, S., Mizen, P., Smietanka, P., Thwaites, G. and Young, G. (2018). Brexit and Uncertainty: Insights from the Decision Maker Panel. Fiscal Studies, 39(4), pp.555–580.
- Boermans, M.A. and Roelfsema, H., (2016). Small firm internationalization, innovation, and growth. International Economics and Economic Policy, 13(2), pp.283-296.
- Bonet, R., Cappelli, P. and Hamori, M., (2013). Labor market intermediaries and the new paradigm for human resources. Academy of Management Annals, 7(1), pp.341-392.
- Bonneton, D., Festing, M. and Muratbekova-Touron, M., (2020). Exclusive Talent Management: Unveiling the Mechanisms of the Construction of an Elite Community. European Management Review, 17(4), pp.993-1013.
- Boon, C., Paauwe, J., Boselie, P. and Den Hartog, D. (2009), "Institutional pressures and HRM: developing institutional fit", Personnel Review, Vol.38 No.5, pp.492-508.
- Boon, C., Den Hartog, D.N., Boselie, P. and Paauwe, J., (2011). The relationship between perceptions of HR practices and employee outcomes: examining the role of person–organisation and person–job fit. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22(01), pp.138-162.
- Boselie, P., Paauwe, J. and Jansen, P. (2001). Human resource management and performance: lessons from the Netherlands. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 12(7), pp.1107–1125.
- Boselie, P., Paauwe, J. and Richardson, R. (2003). Human resource management, institutionalization, and organisational performance: a

comparison of hospitals, hotels, and local government. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 14(8), pp.1407–1429.

- Boselie, P., Dietz, G. and Boon, C. (2005). Commonalities and contradictions in HRM and performance research. Human Resource Management Journal, [online] 15(3), pp.67–94. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2005.tb00154.x [Accessed 5 Apr. 2019].
- Boselie, P. and Paauwe, J. (2005). Human resource function competencies in European companies. Personnel Review, 34(5), pp.550–566.
- Boudreau, J. W., and Ramstad, P. M. (2007). Beyond HR. The new science of human capital, Boston, MA.
- Bowen, G.A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), pp.27–40.
- Boxall, P.F. (1992). Strategic Human Resource Management: Beginnings of a new theoretical Sophistication? Human Resource Management Journal, [online] 2(3), pp.60–79. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1748-8583.1992.tb00260.x.
- Boxall, P. (1993). The significance of human resource management: a reconsideration of the evidence. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 4(3), pp.645–664.
- Boxall, P. (1996). The Strategic HRM Debate and the Resource-Based View of the Firm. Human Resource Management Journal, 6(3), pp.59–75.
- Boxall, P. (1998). Achieving competitive advantage through human resource strategy: Towards a theory of industry dynamics. Human Resource Management Review, 8(3), pp.265–288.

- Boxall, P. and Steeneveld, M. (1999). Human Resource Strategy and Competitive Advantage: A Longitudinal Study of Engineering Consultancies. Journal of Management Studies, 36(4), pp.443–463.
- Boxall, P. and Purcell, J. (2000). Strategic human resource management: where have we come from, and where should we be going? International Journal of Management Reviews, [online] 2(2), pp.183–203. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2370.00037.
- Boxall, P., Macky, K. and Rasmussen, E. (2003). Labour Turnover and Retention in New Zealand: The Causes and Consequences of Leaving and Staying with Employers. Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 41(2), pp.196–214.
- Boxall, P.F. and Purcell, J. (2003). Strategy and human resource management. New York; London: Palgrave.
- Boxall, P. and Macky, K. (2009). Research and theory on high-performance work systems: progressing the high-involvement stream. Human Resource Management Journal, 19(1), pp.3–23.
- Boxall, P.F., Purcell, J. and Wright, P. (2010). The Oxford handbook of human resource management. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boxall, P. and Purcell, J., (2011). Strategy and human resource management. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Boxall, P., (2014). The future of employment relations from the perspective of human resource management. Journal of Industrial Relations, 56(4), pp.578-593.

- Boxall, P., Huo, M.L., Macky, K. and Winterton, J., (2019). High-involvement work processes and systems: A review of theory, distribution, outcomes, and tensions. Research in personnel and human resources management.
- Brahma, S.S. and Chakraborty, H., (2011). From industry to firm resources: Resource-based view of competitive advantage. IUP Journal of Business Strategy, 8(2).
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, [online] 3(2), pp.77–101. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. London: Sage.
- Brotherton, B. (2008). Researching hospitality and tourism: a student guide. London: Sage.
- Brotherton, B. (2015). Researching hospitality and tourism. London: Sage Publications.
- Brown, S. L., and Eisenhardt, K. M. (1998) Competing on the Edge: Strategy as Structured Chaos. Harvard Business School Press.
- Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Williams, S., (2004). The mismanagement of talent: Employability and jobs in the knowledge economy. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Brown, R., Mawson, S., and Mason, C. (2017). 'Myth-busting and entrepreneurship policy: the case of high growth firms', Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, 29, pp.414-443.
- Brown, R., Liñares-Zegarra, J.M. and Wilson, J.O., (2018). What happens if the rules change? The impact of brexit on the future strategic intentions of UK

SMEs. The Impact of Brexit on the Future Strategic Intentions of UK SMEs (March 1, 2018).

- Brown, R., Liñares-Zegarra, J. and Wilson, J.O., (2019). The (potential) impact of Brexit on UK SMEs: regional evidence and public policy implications. Regional Studies, 53(5), pp.761-770.
- Brown, R., Kalafsky, R.V., Mawson, S. and Davies, L. (2020). Shocks, uncertainty, and regional resilience: The case of Brexit and Scottish SMEs. Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit, 35(7), pp.655–675.
- Bruton, G. D., Su, Z., and Filatotchev, I. (2018). New venture performance in transition economies from different institutional perspectives. Journal of Small Business Management, 56(3), 374–391. https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12266.
- Bryant, P.C. and Allen, D.G., (2013). Compensation, benefits and employee turnover: HR strategies for retaining top talent. Compensation & Benefits Review, 45(3), pp.171-175.
- Bryman, A. (2008). Social Research Methods (3rd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2012), Social research methods. Oxford university press, Oxford.
- Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods. Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A and Bell, E (2003) *Business Research Methods New York*: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2011). Business Research Methods. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Bryson, A. and Forth, J., (2018). The impact of management practices on SME performance. National Institute of Economic and Social Research,(488).
- Buchanan, B. (1974). Building organisational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. Administrative science quarterly, 533-546.
- Buchanan, D.A. and Bryman, A. (2007). Contextualising Methods Choice in Organisational Research. Organisational Research Methods, 10(3), pp.483–501.
- Budhwar, P.S. and Debrah, Y.A. (2001). Human resource management in developing countries. London; New York: Routledge.
- Budhwar, P.S. and Debrah, Y.A. (2004). Human resource management in developing countries. London: Routledge.
- Budhwar, P., Tung, R.L., Varma, A. and Do, H., (2017). Developments in human resource management in MNCs from BRICS nations: A review and future research agenda. Journal of International Management, 23(2), pp.111-123.
- Bunker, B.B. and Alban, B.T., (2012). The handbook of large group methods: Creating systemic change in organizations and communities. John Wiley & Sons.
- Burke, M. E. (2005). 2005 Reward Programs and Incentive Compensation: Survey Report. Society for Human Resource Management.
- Burke, R.J. and Ng, E. (2006). The changing nature of work and organisations: Implications for human resource management. Human Resource Management Review, 16(2), pp.86–94.

- Burke, R. J., Koyuncu, M., Jing, W., and Fiksenbaum, L. (2009). Work engagement among hotel managers in Beijing, China: potential antecedents and consequences. Tourism Review, 64(3), 4-18.
- Burke, R.J., (2011). Human resource management in small-and medium-sized enterprises: benefits and challenges. In Human Resource Management in Small Business. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Burke, W.W. and Noumair, D.A., (2015). Organization development: A process of learning and changing. FT Press.
- Caldart, A.A., Ricart, J.E. and Carrera, A.A. eds., (2019). General Management in Latin and Ibero-American Organizations: A Humanistic Perspective. Routledge.
- Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A. and Zimmermann, A., (2020). International HRM insights for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for future research and practice. Journal of international business studies, 51(5), pp.697-713.
- Cania, L., (2014). The impact of strategic human resource management on organizational performance. Economia. Seria Management, 17(2), pp.373-383.
- Cappelli, P. (2008). Talent on Demand: Managing talent in an age of uncertainty. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press.
- Cappelli, P. (2008). Talent management for the twenty-first century. Harvard business review, 86(3), 74.
- Cappelli, P. (2009), “A supply chain model for talent management”, People and Strategy, Vol.32 No.3, pp.4-7.
- Cappelli, P. (2009). Talent on Demand – Managing Talent in an Age of Uncertainty. Strategic Direction, 25(3).

- Cappelli, P., and Keller, J.R. (2014). Talent Management: Conceptual Approaches and Practical Challenges. Annual Review of Organisational Psychology, 1, 305-331. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev- orgpsych-031413-091314.
- Cappelli, P., (2015). Why we love to hate HR… and what HR can do about it. Harvard Business Review, 93(7/8), pp.54-61.
- Carbery, R., (2015). Introduction to HRD. Human resource development: A concise introduction, pp.1-28.
- Carbery, R. and Cross, C. eds., (2015). Human resource development: A concise introduction. Red Globe Press.
- Cardeal, N. and Antonio, N.S., (2012). Valuable, rare, inimitable resources and organization (VRIO) resources or valuable, rare, inimitable resources (VRI) capabilities: What leads to competitive advantage?. Cardeal, N., António, (2012), pp.10159-10170.
- Cardon, S.C., and Stevens, E.C. (2004). Managing Human Resources in Small Organizations: What do we know? Human Resource Management Review, 14, 295-323.
- Cardon, M.S. and Valentin, S.D., (2017). 16 Training and Development in Small and Medium Enterprises. The Cambridge handbook of workplace training and employee development, p.363.
- Cardy, R.L. and Lengnick-Hall, M.L., (2011). Will they stay or will they go? Exploring a customer-oriented approach to employee retention. Journal of Business and Psychology, 26(2), pp.213-217.
- Carlson, D.S., Upton, N. and Seaman, S. (2006). The Impact of Human Resource Practices and Compensation Design on Performance: An Analysis of

Family-Owned SMEs. Journal of Small Business Management, 44(4), pp.531–543.

- Carnevale, A.P. and Smith, N., (2013). Workplace basics: The skills employees need and employers want. Human Resource Development International, 16(5), pp.491-501.
- Carrigan, M., McEachern, M., Moraes, C. and Bosangit, C., (2017). The fine jewellery industry: Corporate responsibility challenges and institutional forces facing SMEs. Journal of Business Ethics, 143(4), pp.681-699.
- Carver, M., and Kipley, D. (2010) Ansoff's Strategic Issue Management System: A validation for use in the Banking Industry during high Turbulent Environments. Business Renaissance Quarterly, Summer 2010, pp 59-76.
- Cascio, W.F. and Boudreau, J.W. (2016). The search for global competence: From international HR to talent management. Journal of World Business, [online] 51(1), pp.103–114. Available at: https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/elsevier/the-search-for-global-competence-from-international-hr-to-talent-MrKpD7a0fH.
- Chadee, D. and Raman, R. (2012). External knowledge and performance of offshore IT service providers in India: the mediating role of talent management. Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 50(4), pp.459–482.
- Chadwick, C. and Flinchbaugh, C., (2021). Searching for competitive advantage in the HRM-firm performance relationship. Academy of Management Perspectives, 35(2), pp.181-207.
- Chakraborty, D. and Biswas, W., (2019). Evaluating the impact of human resource planning programs in addressing the strategic goal of the firm: An organizational perspective. Journal of advances in management research.

- Chambel, M. J., and Fortuna, R. (2015). Wage reduction of Portuguese civil servants and their attitudes: The psychological contract perspective. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(22), 2853–2871. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1004099.
- Chandler, G. N., and McEvoy, G. M. (2000). Human Resource Management, TQM, and Firm Performance in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 43–57.
- Chang, S., Leung, W.K., Yao, F.K. and Gong, Y., (2021). Firm employee relations system and financial performance: Unfolding the Dual-Causal relationship and the associated temporal and resource boundary conditions. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, pp.1-38.
- Chapman, E.F., Sisk, F.A., Schatten, J. and Miles, E.W., (2018). Human resource development and human resource management levers for sustained competitive advantage: Combining isomorphism and differentiation. Journal of Management & Organization, 24(4), pp.533-550.
- Chhabra, N.L. and Sharma, S., (2014). Employer branding: strategy for improving employer attractiveness. International Journal of Organizational Analysis.
- Chigara, H., (2021). Resource Based View and competitiveness: An empirical study of the. international Journal of economic Performance (IJEP).
- Chung, K.L. and D'Annunzio-Green, N., (2018). Talent management practices in small-and medium-sized enterprises in the hospitality sector: An entrepreneurial owner-manager perspective. Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.

- CIPD. (2006). Change agenda: Talent Management Understanding the dimentions. London, UK.
- CIPD (2006). Talent management: Understanding the dimensions, October, London: Charted Institute of Personnel and Development.
- CIPD (2007). Research insight: Talent management. London, UK.
- CIPD (2007). Learning and Development report. Available from: http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EB18FA28-BD40-4D47-81B9 660034D280C1/0/learndevsr.pdf. [Accessed on 09. 07. 2015].
- CIPD. (2009). The war on Talent? Talent management under threat in uncertain times. Part 1. Retrieved 28/02/2013, from http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/DFC760F8-F37C-4548-9470 5154073FE4EC/0/warontalent.pdf
- CIPD (2010). The talent perspective. What does it feel to be talent-managed? Available from: http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/95D2D604-36C6-450A-996A-01F45F0B17C5/0/5262_Talent_Perspective.pdf [Accessed on 07 09 2015].
- CIPD (2011). Employment Relations. Available from: http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/employment-relations_2011.pdf [Accessed on 10.04.2015]
- CIPD (2012a). Annual survey report 2012 Resourcing and talent planning. UK.
- CIPD (2013). Labour Market Outlook. Available from: http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/labour-market-outlook_2013-autumn.pdf. [Accessed on 06. 05. 2015].
- CIPD (2012b). Learning and talent development 2012 (pp. 42). UK.
- CIPD (2012c). Learning, talent and innovation in Asia. UK.

- CIPD (2012). Learning, talent and innovation in Asia. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- CIPD (2013). International resourcing and recruitment. Retrieved 25th June, 2014, from http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/international-resourcing-recruitment.aspx
- CIPD (2014). Learning and Development Report Available from: https://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/learning-and-development_2014.pdf. [Accessed 10. 06. 2015]
- CIPD (2015). Resourcing and Talent Planning. Available from: http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/resourcing-talent-planning_2015.pdf. [Accessed on 11.03.2016]
- Clandinin, D. J., and Connelly, F. M. (2000). Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. ISBN: 978-0-787-97276-9.
- Clandinin, D.J. (2013). Engaging in Narrative Inquiry (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315429618
- Clandinin, D.J., Lessard, S., and Caine, V. (2018). The relational ethics of narrative inquiry. ISBN9781315268798 New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315268798.
- Clarke, V. and Braun, V., (2014). Thematic analysis. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), Encyclopaedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research (6626-6628). Netherlands: Springer.
- Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis: A computer program. Routledge.
- Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. Psychological bulletin, 112(1), 155.

- Coleman, S., Cotei, C. and Farhat, J., (2013). A resource-based view of new firm survival: New perspectives on the role of industry and exit route. Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, 18(01), p.1350002.
- Collings, D.G., Scullion, H. and Morley, M.J. (2007). Changing patterns of global staffing in the multinational enterprise: Challenges to the conventional expatriate assignment and emerging alternatives. Journal of World Business, 42(2), pp.198–213.
- Collings, D.G. and Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. Human Resource Management Review, 19(4), pp.304–313.
- Collings, D.G., Scullion, H. and Vaiman, V. (2011). European perspectives on talent management. European J. of International Management, 5(5), p.453.
- Collings, D.G. (2012). International Human Resource Management: Policies and Practices for Multinational Enterprises. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23(7), pp.1509–1511.
- Collings, D.G. and Scullion, H., (2012). Global staffing. In Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Collings, D.G. and Mellahi, K. (2013). Commentary on: “Talent—innate or acquired? Theoretical considerations and their implications for talent management.” Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.322–325.
- Collings, D.G., (2014). Integrating global mobility and global talent management: Exploring the challenges and strategic opportunities. Journal of World Business, 49(2), pp.253-261.

- Collings, D.G. (2014). Toward Mature Talent Management: Beyond Shareholder Value.Human Resource Development Quarterly, 25(3), 301-319. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21198.
- Collings, D.G., Scullion, H. and Vaiman, V., (2015). Talent management: Progress and prospects. Human Resource Management Review, 25(3), pp.233-235.
- Collings, D.G., Kamel Mellahi, Cascio, W.F., Festing, M., Harsch, K., Schä fer L. and Scullion, H. (2017). Talent Management in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises. Oxford University Press.
- Collings, D.G., Mellahi, K. and Cascio, W.F., (2019). Global talent management and performance in multinational enterprises: A multilevel perspective. Journal of management, 45(2), pp.540-566.
- Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2003). Business Research: a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Collins, J., and Hussey, R. (2006). Business Research: A Practical Guide For Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Collins, J. and Hansen, M.T., (2011). Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos and Luck-Why some thrive despite them all. Random House.
- Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2013). Business Research: a Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students. 4th ed. Basingstoke: Hampshire.
- Connelly, F. M., and Clandinin, D. J., (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. C. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.). Handbook of complementary methods in education research (477-488). Washington: AERA.
- Cook, S., (2010). Customer care excellence: How to create an effective customer focus. Kogan page publishers.

- Cook, S.N. and Yanow, D., (2011). Culture and organizational learning. Journal of Management Inquiry, 20(4), pp.362-379.
- Cooke, F.L., Wood, G., Psychogios, A.G. and Szamosi, L.T. (2011). HRM in emergent market economies: evidence and implications from Europe. Human Resource Management Journal, 21(4), pp.368–378.
- Cooke, F.L., (2018). Concepts, contexts, and mindsets: Putting human resource management research in perspectives. Human Resource Management Journal, 28(1), pp.1-13.
- Correia, T., Dussault, G. and Pontes, C. (2015), "The impact of the financial crisis on human resources for health policies in three southern-Europe countries", Health Policy, Vol.119 No.12, pp.1600-1605.
- Coutu, D. L. (2002). How resilience works. Harvard Business Review, 80(5), 46–55.
- Cowling, M. (2009). The Impact of Entrepreneurship Training and Small Business Experience on Future Entrepreneurial Activity in the UK. Institute for Employment Studies. http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/impact-entrepreneurship-training-and-small- business-experience-future-entrepreneurial.
- Cowling, M., Liu, W. and Ledger, A., (2012). Small business financing in the UK before and during the current financial crisis. International Small Business Journal, 30(7), pp.778-800.
- Cowling, M., Liu, W., Ledger, A. and Zhang, N., (2015). What really happens to small and medium-sized enterprises in a global economic recession? UK evidence on sales and job dynamics. International Small Business Journal, 33(5), pp.488-513.

- Cowling, M., Liu, W. and Zhang, N., (2018). Did firm age, experience, and access to finance count? SME performance after the global financial crisis. Journal of Evolutionary Economics, 28(1), pp.77-100.
- Cowling, M., Brown, R., and Rocha, A. (2020). Did You Save Some Cash for a Rainy COVID-19 Day? The Crisis and SMEs. International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship, 38(7), 593–604.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed methods approach. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012). Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative. Research, global edition. 4th ed. S.L.: Pearson Education Limited.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches. Los Angeles [Etc.] Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). Research design: qualitative, quantitative & mixed methods approach. 4th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W. and L, V. (2018). Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks Sage Publications.

- Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches. 4th ed. Los Angeles Etc.: Sage, Cop.
- Crocitto, M., Arthur, M.B. and Rousseau, D.M. (1998). The Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organisational Era. The Academy of Management Review, 23(1), p.176.
- Croucher, R., Stumbitz, B., Quinlan, M. and Vickers, I., (2013). Can better working conditions improve the performance of SMEs? An international literature review.
- Crowley-Henry, M., O'Connor, E.P. and Suarez-Bilbao, B., (2021). What goes around comes around. Exploring how skilled migrant founder–managers of SMEs recruit and retain international talent. Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research.
- Cunningham, L.X. and Rowley, C. (2010). Small and medium-sized enterprises in China: a literature review, human resource management and suggestions for further research. Asia Pacific Business Review, 16(3), pp.319–337.
- Curtice, J., (2017). Why leave won the UK's EU referendum. J. Common Mkt. Stud., 55, p.19.
- D’Annunzio-Green, N. (2008). Managing the talent management pipeline. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 20(7), pp.807–819.
- D’Annunzio-Green, N. and Teare, R., (2018). Reflections on the theme issue outcomes: Is talent management a strategic priority in the hospitality sector?. Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.

- Dartey-Baah, K. and Harlley, A., (2010). Job Satisfaction and Motivation: Understanding its impact on employee commitment and organisational performance. Academic Leadership: The Online Journal, 8(4), p.39.
- Darvish, H., Najafi, Z. and Zare, R., (2012). Evaluate the level of talent management competencies and its relationship with intention to quit the organization. Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research, 2(10), pp.10068-10076.
- Debrah, Y. (2001). Rethinking comparative and cross-national human resource management research. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 12(3), 497-515. 10.1080/09585190122291.
- Deery, M. and Jago, L., (2015). Revisiting talent management, work-life balance and retention strategies. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.
- De Kok, J., Vroonhof, P., Verhoeven, W., Timmermans, N., Kwaak, T., Snijders, J. and Westhof, F., (2011). Do SMEs create more and better jobs. Report prepared by EIM for the European Commission DG Enterprise and industry, Brussels, European Commission.
- Delery, J. E., and Doty, D. H. (1996). Modes of theorizing in strategic human resource management: Tests of universalistic, contingency, and configurational performance predictions‖, Academy of Management Journal, 39 (4), 802-835.
- Delery, J.E. (1998). Issues of fit in strategic human resource management: Implications for research. Human Resource Management Review, 8(3), pp.289–309.

- Delery, J. and Gupta, N., (2016). Human resource management practices and organizational effectiveness: internal fit matters. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.
- Delery, J.E. and Roumpi, D., (2017). Strategic human resource management, human capital and competitive advantage: is the field going in circles?. Human Resource Management Journal, 27(1), pp.1-21.
- Deloitte (2005), Becoming a Magnet for Talent: Global Talent Pulse Survey Results, Canadian edition.
- Deloitte (2010) Talent Edge 2020: Blueprints for the New Normal, New York: Deloitte.
- Deloitte (2017). Global Shared Services – 2017 Survey Report. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/process-and-operations/us-globalshared- services-report.pdf on February 15, 2019.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2003). Strategies of qualitative inquiry. Thousand Oaks; London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, Cop.
- Denzin, N.K. and Giardina, M.D. (2010). Qualitative inquiry and human rights. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press.
- Devins, D. and Johnson, S. (2002). Engaging SME managers and employees in training: lessons from an evaluation of the ESF Objective 4 Programme in Great Britain. Education + Training, 44(8/9), pp.370–377.
- Dhingra, S., Huang, H., Ottaviano, G., Pessoa, J.P., Sampson,T., Van Reenen, J. (2017a) 'The costs and benefits of leaving the EU: trade effects', Economic Policy, 32, pp.651–705,

- Dhingra, S., Ottaviano, G. I., Rappoport, V., Sampson, T., and Thomas, C. (2017b). 'UK trade and FDI: A post-Brexit perspective', Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper Number 1487.
- Dickmann, M., (2021). International Human Resource Management–Historical Developments, Models, Policies and Practices in MNCs (p. 225). Sage.
- DiMaggio, P.J. and Powell, W.W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organisational Fields. American Sociological Review, [online] 48(2), pp.147–160. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2095101?seq=1.
- DiMaggio, P.J. and Powell, W.W., (2012). The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields [1983]. Contemporary sociological theory, 175.
- Dobre, O.I., (2013). Employee motivation and organizational performance. Review of applied socio-economic research, 5(1).
- Doh, J., Rodrigues, S., Saka-Helmhout, A. and Makhija, M., (2017). International business responses to institutional voids. Journal of International Business Studies, 48(3), pp.293-307.
- Dowling, P. J., Marion F. and Allen D. E. (2008) International Human Resource Management, Managing people in a multinational context. Edition: South-Western, Cengage Learning, fifth edition, p. 65.
- Dowling, P.J., Festing, M. and D, A. (2017). International human resource management. Andover, Hampshire, United Kingdom: Cengage Learning EMEA.

- Dries, N., Vantilborgh, T. and Pepermans, R., (2012). The role of learning agility and career variety in the identification and development of high potential employees. Personnel Review.
- Dries, N. (2013a). Talent management, from phenomenon to theory: Introduction to the Special Issue. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.267–271.
- Dries, N. (2013b). The psychology of talent management: A review and research agenda. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.272–285.
- Driffield, N. and Karoglu, (2016). 'Brexit and foreign investment in the UK', Unpublished Paper, University of Warwick. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2775954
- Duberley, J.P. and Walley, P. (1995). Assessing the adoption of HRM by small and medium-sized manufacturing organisations. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 6(4), pp.891–909.
- Dubey, R., Gunasekaran, A., Childe, S.J., Fosso Wamba, S., Roubaud, D. and Foropon, C., (2021). Empirical investigation of data analytics capability and organizational flexibility as complements to supply chain resilience. International Journal of Production Research, 59(1), pp.110-128.
- Dul, J. and Hak, T. (2015). Case study methodology in business research. London New York Routledge.
- Duncan, T., Scott, D.G. and Baum, T., (2013). The mobilities of hospitality work: An exploration of issues and debates. Annals of tourism research, 41, pp.1-19.

- Dundon, T. and Wilkinson, A. (2009), “Employee participation”, Redman, T. and Wikinson, A. (Eds.), Contemporary Human Resource Management: Text and cases, FT, Prentice Hall, Essex, pp.405-424.
- Dundon, T. and Wilkinson, A., (2018). HRM in small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs). In Human resource management (pp. 194-211). Routledge.
- Duttagupta, R. (2005): Identifying and managing your assets: Talent management, London: PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., and Lowe, A. (2002). Management research: an introduction, 342.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P. (2011). Management research. London: Sage.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P. (2013). Management research. Los Angeles; London: Sage.
- Edgecliffe-Johnson, A. (2020). Coronavirus lay-offs split corporate America. [online] Financial Times. Available at: http://www.ft.com.
- Edwards, P. and Ram, M., (2019). HRM in small firms: Balancing informality and formality. the Sage Handbook of Human Resource Management, 2nd Ed. London: Sage, pp.522-542.
- Edwards, T., Tregaskis, O. and McDonnell, A. (2020). Towards an understanding of configurational and national influences on international integration in the HR function in MNCs. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, pp.1–26.
- Eggers, F., (2020). Masters of disasters? Challenges and opportunities for SMEs in times of crisis. Journal of business Research, 116, pp.199-208.

- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1991). Better Stories and Better Constructs: The Case for Rigor and Comparative Logic. The Academy of Management Review, 16(3), p.620.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review. The Academy of Management Review, 14(1), pp.57–74.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., and Brown, S. L. (1998). 'Competing on the edge: Strategy as structured chaos', Long Range Planning, 31, pp.786-789.
- ERC (2020). State of Small Business Britain 2020. Economic and Social Research Council. https://www.enterpriseresearch. ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/92744-ERC-State-of-Small- Business-2020-Final.pdf
- Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2016). Qualitative methods in business research. Los Angeles, California; London, England: Sage.
- European Commission (2009). European SMEs Under Pressure: Annual Report on EU Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises 2009, Brussels, Belgium: European Commission.
- European Commission (2016). 'Annual Report on European SMEs 2015/2016, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs', European Commission, Brussels.
- European Commission. (2017), European economy: The ESM stability support programme: Greece, first and second reviews, Institutional Papers 064, Union Europe, Luxembourg.
- European Commission. (2020), "User guide to the SME definition", available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/state-aid/sme/smedefinitionguide_en.pdf (accessed 20 October 2020).

- Evans, R. (1999): Changing roles for HR professionals in the next century, ACA journal, 42(6), 30-34.
- Evans, W.R. and Davis, W.D. (2005). High-Performance Work Systems and Organisational Performance: The Mediating Role of Internal Social Structure. Journal of Management, 31(5), pp.758–775.
- Evans, J.M., Grudniewicz, A., Baker, G.R. and Wodchis, W.P., (2016). Organizational context and capabilities for integrating care: A framework for improvement. International journal of integrated care, 16(3).
- Farndale, E., Scullion, H. and Sparrow, P. (2010). The role of the corporate HR function in global talent management. Journal of World Business, [online] 45(2), pp.161–168. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S109095160900073X.
- Farndale, E., Pai, A., Sparrow, P. and Scullion, H. (2014). Balancing individual and organisational goals in global talent management: A mutual-benefits perspective. Journal of World Business, [online] 49(2), pp.204–214. Available at:https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1090951613000801 [Accessed 1 Aug. 2019].
- Farndale, E. and Sanders, K. (2016). Conceptualising HRM system strength through a cross-cultural lens. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28(1), pp.132–148.
- Farndale, E. and Paauwe, J., (2018). SHRM and context: why firms want to be as different as legitimately possible. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.
- Federation of Small Businesses (2020). UK Small Business Statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.fsb.org.uk/uk-small-business-statistics.html.

- Feldman, E.R., (2020). Corporate strategy: Past, present, and future. Strategic Management Review, 1(1), pp.179-206.
- Ferreira, J.J., Azevedo, S.G. and Ortiz, R.F., (2011). Contribution of resource-based view and entrepreneurial orientation on small firm growth. Cuadernos de Gestión, 11(1), pp.95-116.
- Ferreira, J. and Fernandes, C., (2017). Resources and capabilities' effects on firm performance: what are they?. Journal of Knowledge Management.
- Ferreira, J.J., Fernandes, C.I. and Ferreira, F.A., (2022). What makes organizations unique? Looking inside the box. Journal of Business Research, 139, pp.664-674.
- Festing, M., (2012). International human resource management and economic theories of the firm. In Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Festing, M., Schäfer, L. and Scullion, H. (2013). Talent management in medium-sized German companies: an explorative study and agenda for future research. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(9), pp.1872–1893.
- Festing, M. and Schäfer, L. (2014). Generational challenges to talent management: A framework for talent retention based on the psychological-contract perspective. Journal of World Business, [online] 49(2), pp.262–271. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1090951613000862 [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].
- Festing, M., Kornau, A. and Schäfer, L., (2015). Think talent–think male? A comparative case study analysis of gender inclusion in talent management

practices in the German media industry. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(6), pp.707-732.

- Festing, M., Harsch, L., Schafer, L., and Scullion, H. (2017). Talent management in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises. In D.G. Collings, K. Mellahi & W.F. Cascio (Eds.), Oxford Handbook of Talent Management (pp. 478-493). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Field, S. and Franklin, M. (2016). Micro-data Perspectives on the UK Productivity Conundrum. OECD Observer.
- Financial Times (2017a) ‘Investment in UK car industry plummets amid Brexit uncertainty’, 2nd July. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/0c3427b2-5ce1-11e7-9bc8-8055f264aa8b.
- Financial Times (2017b) ‘Car Industry ask May for ‘urgent clarity’ on Brexit’, 1st November. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/a3420266-bf31-11e7-9836-b25f8adaa111
- Financial Times (2018) ‘Brexit divide is shaping consumer spending’, 10th January. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/17dbbfba-f60d-11e7-8715-e94187b3017e
- FSB (2017) ‘Keep Trade Easy: What Small Firms Want from Brexit,’ FSB Brexit Research Series#FSBBREXIT. Available at: https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/keep-tradeeasy_-what-small-firms-want-from-Brexit-21-march-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=0
- FSB Scotland (2017) ‘A Skilful Exit: What Small Firms Want from Brexit.’ Available at: https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/brexit-labour-and-skills---scottishdoc. pdf?sfvrsn=0&sfvrsn=0.

- Fuschetti, K. and Pollack, J.M., (2011). Addressing personal and family transitions in small businesses: effective human resource management practices. In Human Resource Management in Small Business. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gallagher, C.V., Bruton, K., Leahy, K. and O'Sullivan, D.T., (2018). The suitability of machine learning to minimise uncertainty in the measurement and verification of energy savings. Energy and Buildings, 158, pp.647-655.
- Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Dries, N. and González-Cruz, T.F. (2013). What is the meaning of "talent" in the world of work?. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.290–300.
- Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Nijs, S., Dries, N. and Gallo, P. (2015). Towards an understanding of talent management as a phenomenon-driven field using bibliometric and content analysis. Human Resource Management Review, 25(3), pp.264–279.
- Gallardo-Gallardo, E., and Thunnissen, M. (2016). Standing on the shoulders of giants? A critical review of empirical talent management research. Employee Relations, 38(1), pp. 31-56.
- Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Thunnissen, M., and Scullion, H. (2017). Special issue of International Journal of Human Resource Management. A contextualized approach to Talent Management: Advancing the field. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1275292.
- Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Thunnissen, M. and Scullion, H., (2020). Talent management: context matters. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 31(4), pp.457-473.

- Garavan, T., Shanahan, V., Carbery, R. and Watson, S., (2016). Strategic human resource development: Towards a conceptual framework to understand its contribution to dynamic capabilities. Human Resource Development International, 19(4), pp.289-306.
- Gay, M. and Sims, D.M. (2006). Building tomorrow's talent: a practitioner's guide to talent management and succession planning. Bloomington, Ind.: Author house.
- Gelens, J., Dries, N., Hofmans, J. and Pepermans, R., (2013). The role of perceived organizational justice in shaping the outcomes of talent management: A research agenda. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.341-353.
- Ghauri, P. N., and Firth, R. (2009). The formalization of case study research in international business. Der Markt, 48(1–2), 29–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12642-009-0003-1.
- Ghauri, P. N., and Gronhaug, K. (2010). Research methods in business studies: A practical guide. Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Ghauri, P., Tasavori, M., and Zaefarian, R. (2014). Internationalisation of service firms through corporate social entrepreneurship and networking. International Marketing Review, 31(6), 576–600. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-09-2013-0196.
- Ghosal, V. and Ye, Y. (2014). Uncertainty and the employment dynamics of small and large businesses. Small Business Economics, 44(3), pp.529–558.
- Ghosal, V. and Ye, Y. (2015). Uncertainty and the Employment Dynamics of Small and Large Businesses. IMF Working Papers, 15(4), p.1.

- Ghosh, P., Satyawadi, R., Joshi, J.P. and Shadman, M., (2013). Who stays with you? Factors predicting employees' intention to stay. International journal of organizational analysis.
- Giancola, F.L. (2009). Wage Rigidity During Recessions. Compensation & Benefits Review, 41(5), pp.27–33.
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. and Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of Data Collection in Qualitative research: Interviews and Focus Groups. British Dental Journal, [online] 204(6), pp.291–295. Available at: https://www.nature.com/articles/bdj.2008.192.
- Gill, J., Johnson, P. and Clark, M. (2010). Research methods for managers. London; Sage.
- Government of UK. (2006). Company Act. Retrieved July 27, 2012, from Office of Public Sector Information: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060046_en.pdf.
- Gratton, L. and Al, E. (1999). Strategic human resource management: corporate rhetoric and human reality. New York: Oxford University.
- Gratton, L. (2000). Living strategy: putting people at the heart of corporate purpose. London; New York: Financial Times.
- Gratton, L. (2003). Strategic human resource management: corporate rhetoric and human reality. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Gratton, L. and Ghoshal, S. (2003). Managing Personal Human Capital: European Management Journal, 21(1), pp.1–10.
- Gratton, L. (2015). Living strategy: putting people at the heart of corporate purpose. London: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

- Gray, B., Purdy, J.M. and Ansari, S., (2015). From interactions to institutions: Microprocesses of framing and mechanisms for the structuring of institutional fields. Academy of management review, 40(1), pp.115-143.
- Gray, D.E. (2018). Doing Research in the Real World. 4th ed. London; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Gray, H., (2018). Turbulence and order in economic development: Institutions and economic transformation in Tanzania and Vietnam. Oxford University Press.
- Gray, D.E. (2021). Doing research in the real world. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Grbich, C. (2012). Qualitative data analysis: an introduction. London: Sage.
- Grbich, C. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction. London: Sage Publications.
- Griffin, R.W., Phillips, J.M. and Gully, S.M., (2016). Organizational behavior: Managing people and organizations. Cengage Learning.
- Grinnell, R.M. and Unrau, Y.A. (2018). Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Growth Capital Review, Great Britain: Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Rowlands, C. (2009). The provision of growth capital to the UK small and medium-sized enterprises. London: TSO. ISBN: 9780115155253
- Guest, D.E. (2011). Human resource management and performance: still searching for some answers. Human Resource Management Journal, 21(1), pp.3–13.
- Guest, G., Macqueen, K.M. and Namey, E.E. (2012). Applied Thematic Analysis. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

- Guest, D.E., Paauwe, J. and Wright, P.M. (2012). HRM and performance: Achievements and challenges. John Wiley & Sons.
- Guillén, M.F., Powell, W.W. and Dimaggio, P.J. (1992). The New Institutionalism in Organisational Analysis. Reis, (59), p.344.
- Gunnigle, P., Lavelle, J., and McDonnell, A. (2007). Human Resource Practices in Multinational Companies in Ireland: A Large-Scale Survey. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1077266 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1077266
- Gupta, V., MacMillan, I. C., and Surie, G. (2004). 'Entrepreneurial leadership: developing and measuring a cross-cultural construct', Journal of Business Venturing, 19, pp.241-260.
- Guthridge, M., Komm, A. B., and Lawson, E., (2006). The people problem in talent management. McKinsey Quarterly, 2, 6–9. 282
- Guthridge, M., Komm, A. B., and Lawson, E., (2008). Making talent a strategic priority. McKinsey Quarterly, 1, 48–59.
- Guthridge, M., and Lawson, E., (2008). Divide and survive. Segmenting the talent. Available from: www. peoplemanagement.co.uk/features.[Accessed on 25 05 2014].
- Hamel, G. and Prahalad, C.K. (1994). Competing for the future. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hamel, G. and Prahalad, C.K. (1996). Competing for the Future. Harvard Business School Press.
- Hamilton, L. and Corbett-Whittier, C. (2013). Using case study in education research. Los Angeles, Calif; London: Sage.

- Hammersley, M. (2008). Questioning Qualitative Inquiry: Critical Essays. Los Angeles, Sage.
- Hargis, M.B. and Bradley III, D.B., (2011). Strategic human resource management in small and growing firms: Aligning valuable resources. Academy of Strategic Management Journal, 10(2), p.105.
- Harney, B. and Dundon, T. (2006). Capturing complexity: developing an integrated approach to analysing HRM in SMEs. Human Resource Management Journal, 16(1), pp.48–73.
- Harney, B. (2014). Strategic HRM research and practice in Ireland. Dublin Orpen Press.
- Harney, B. and Nolan, C., (2014). HRM in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs). Strategic HRM: Research and practice in Ireland, pp.153-169.
- Harney, B. (2021). Accommodating HRM in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): A Critical Review. Economic and Business Review, 23(2).
- Harney, B. and Alkhalaf, H., (2021). A quarter-century review of HRM in small and medium-sized enterprises: Capturing what we know, exploring where we need to go. Human Resource Management, 60(1), pp.5-29.
- Harrison, R.T. and Baldock, R., (2015). Financing SME growth in the UK: meeting the challenges after the global financial crisis. Venture Capital, 17(1-2), pp.1-6.
- Harsch, K. and Festing, M. (2019). Dynamic talent management capabilities and organisational agility—A qualitative exploration. Human Resource Management.

- Harsch, K. and Festing, M., (2020). Dynamic talent management capabilities and organizational agility—A qualitative exploration. Human Resource Management, 59(1), pp.43-61.
- Hatum, A., (2010). Next generation talent management: Talent management to survive turmoil. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hayton, J.C., Hornsby, J.S. and Bloodgood, J., (2013). Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship through HR practices. In How can HR drive growth?. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Helleiner, E., (2011). Understanding the 2007–2008 global financial crisis: Lessons for scholars of international political economy. Annual review of political science, 14, pp.67-87.
- Heneman, H. G. Ill, and Berkley, R. A. (1999). Applicant Attraction Practices and Outcomes among Small Businesses. Journal of Small Business Management, 37, 53-74.
- Henneman, R.L., Tansky, J.W. and Camp, S.M. (2000). Human Resources Management Practices in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Unanswered Questions and Future Research Perspectives. Entrepreneur Theory and Practice, 11-26.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I. and Bailey, A. (2015). Qualitative research methods. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I. and Bailey, A. (2020). Qualitative Research Methods. S.L.: Sage Publications.
- Heppell, T., Crines, A. and Jeffery, D., (2017). The United Kingdom referendum on European Union membership: The voting of conservative

parliamentarians. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 55(4), pp.762-778.

- Herbane, B., (2010). Small business research: Time for a crisis-based view. International small business journal, 28(1), pp.43-64.
- Holland, P., Sheehan, C. and De Cieri, H. (2007). Attracting and retaining talent: exploring human resources development trends in Australia. Human Resource Development International, 10(3), pp.247–262.
- Holmes, B., (2018). Speaking to a global future: The increasing value of language and culture to British business post-Brexit. In Languages after Brexit (pp. 61-74). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Hopley, L. (2021). The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on UK SMEs and Their Response. Enterprise Research Centre. https:// www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/publications/the-impact-of- the- COVID-19-pandemic-on-uk-smes-and-their-response/
- Hornsby, J.S. and Kuratko, D.F. (1990). Human Resource Management as Small Businesses Grow. American Journal of Business, 5(1), pp.31–38.
- Horvathova, P. (2009). The talent management and its usage at human resources management in enterprises. Perspectives of Innovations, Economics and Business, 2(2), pp.76–79.
- Horváthová, P. (2011). Talent management a jeho využití při řízení lidských zdrojů v organizaci. Ekonomická revue - Central European Review of Economic Issues, 13(2), pp.77–96.
- Horváthová, P. and Mikušová, M. (2011). Talent management and its use by Organisations in the Moravian-Silesian Region. Acta academica karviniensia, 11(2), pp.44–56.

- Horváthová, P. (2011). Talent management. Praha: Wolters Kluwer. ISBN 978-80-7357-665-3.
- Horwitz, F., Budhwar, P. and Morley, M.J., (2015). Future trends in human resource management in emerging markets. In Handbook of human resource management in emerging markets. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Hughes, J.C. and Rog, E., (2008). Talent management: A strategy for improving employee recruitment, retention and engagement within hospitality organizations. International journal of contemporary hospitality management.
- Human Capital Institute (2011). Human Capital Institute Stakeholder Survey.
- Huselid, M. A. (1995): ‘The impact of human resource management on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance’, Academy of Management Journal, 38(3), pp 635-672.
- Huselid, M.A., Jackson, S.E., and Schuler, R.S. (1997). Technical and Strategic Human Resources Management Effectiveness as Determinants of Firm Performance. Academy of Management Journal, 40(1), pp.171–188.
- IFC (International Finance Corporation) (2009). “The SME Banking Knowledge Guide,” The World Bank Group, Washington D.C.
- Iles, P. (2008). Talent balancing: staffing your company for long-term success. Human Resource Development International, 11(2), pp.215–218.
- Iles, P., Chuai, X. and Preece, D. (2010). Talent Management and HRM in Multinational companies in Beijing: Definitions, Differences, and Drivers. Journal of World Business, 45(2), pp.179–189.
- ILO. (2020). COVID-19 and the world of work. Second edition (Updated estimates and analysis). ILO Monitor, Internation Organization of Labor (ILO).

- Ingham, J., (2006). Closing the talent management gap: Harnessing your employees' talent to deliver optimum business performance. Strategic HR Review.
- Iredale, R. (2001). International migration of the highly skilled. Oxford Blackwell.
- Jackson, S.E., Schuler, R.S. and Jiang, K., (2014). An aspirational framework for strategic human resource management. Academy of Management Annals, 8(1), pp.1-56.
- Jenkins, M., (2014). Innovate or imitate? The role of collective beliefs in competences in competing firms. Long range planning, 47(4), pp.173-185.
- Jessop, B. (2016). The Organic Crisis of the British State: Putting Brexit in its Place. Globalizations, [online] 14(1), pp.133–141. Available at: https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/83122/1/E_2016l_Brexit_Organic_Crisis.pdf [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].
- Jessop, B. (2017). 'The organic crisis of the British state: Putting Brexit in its place', Globalizations, 14, pp.133-141.
- Jiang, T. and Iles, P., (2011). Employer-brand equity, organizational attractiveness and talent management in the Zhejiang private sector, China. Journal of Technology Management in China.
- Johnstone, S., Saridakis, G. and Wilkinson, A., (2019). The global financial crisis, work and employment: Ten years on. Economic and Industrial Democracy, 40(3), pp.455-468.
- Jones, J.T., Whitaker, M., Seet, P.-S. and Parkin, J. (2012). Talent management in practice in Australia: individualistic or strategic? An exploratory study. Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 50(4), pp.399–420.

- Jooss, S., Burbach, R. and Ruël, H., (2021). Examining talent pools as a core talent management practice in multinational corporations. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 32(11), pp.2321-2352.
- Juergensen, J., Guimón, J., and Narula, R. (2020). European SMEs amidst the COVID-19 crisis: Assessing impact and policy responses. Journal of Industrial and Business Economics, 47(3), 499– 510.
- Kabue, L.W. and Kilika, J.M., (2016). Firm resources, core competencies and sustainable competitive advantage: An integrative theoretical framework. Journal of management and strategy, 7(1), pp.98-108.
- Kabwe, B.C., (2011). The conceptualisation and operationalisation of talent management: tyhe case of European internationally operated businesses (Doctoral dissertation, University of Central Lancashire).
- Kaewsaeng-on, R. (2011). Guideline for Increasing Service Efficiency of Hotel Under Patong Hotel Association. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Suratthani Rajabhat University 2(2), 251-270.
- Kamoche, K. (2000). From boom to bust: the challenges of managing people in Thailand. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 11(2), 452-468. doi: 10.1080/095851900339954.
- Kravariti, F., Oruh, E.S., Dibia, C., Tasoulis, K., Scullion, H. and Mamman, A., (2021). Weathering the storm: talent management in internationally oriented Greek small and medium-sized enterprises. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.
- Kravariti, F., Voutsina, K., Tasoulis, K., Dibia, C. and Johnston, K., (2021). Talent management in hospitality and tourism: a systematic literature review

and research agenda. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.

- Katou, A.A., (2012). Investigating reverse causality between human resource management policies and organizational performance in small firms. Management Research Review.
- Kaufman, B., (2010). The theoretical foundation of industrial relations and its implications for labour economics and Human Resource Management. Industrial and Labour Relations Review,64(1), 74-108.
- Kaufman, B.E., (2015). Evolution of strategic HRM as seen through two founding books: A 30th anniversary perspective on development of the field. Human Resource Management, 54(3), pp.389-407.
- Kaufman, B.E., (2015). Market competition, HRM, and firm performance: The conventional paradigm critiqued and reformulated. Human Resource Management Review, 25(1), pp.107-125.
- Kaufman, B.E., (2015). The RBV theory foundation of strategic HRM: Critical flaws, problems for research and practice, and an alternative economics paradigm. Human Resource Management Journal, 25(4), pp.516-540.
- Kaushik, M. and Guleria, N., (2020). The impact of pandemic COVID-19 in workplace. European Journal of Business and Management, 12(15), pp.1-10.
- Khan, A. and Khan, R. (2011). The dual responsibility of the HR specialist. Human Resource Management International Digest, 19(6), pp.37–38.
- Khilji, S. E., and Schuler, R. S. (2017). Talent management in the global context. In D. G.Collings, K. Mellahi, & W .F. Cascio (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of talent management. (pp. 399–420). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Kim, M., Song, J. and Triche, J., (2015). Toward an integrated framework for innovation in service: A resource-based view and dynamic capabilities approach. Information Systems Frontiers, 17(3), pp.533-546.
- Kinicki, A. J., McKee-Ryan, F. M., Schriesheim, C. A., and Carson, K. P. (2002). Assessing the construct validity of the job descriptive index: a review and meta-analysis. Journal of applied psychology, 87(1), 14.
- Kipley, D. and Lewis, A. O. (2009) The Scalability of H. Igor Ansoff's Strategic Management Principles for Small and Medium Sized Firms. International Journal of Global Business and Economics, 3 (1), pp. 77-93.
- Kipley, D. and Lewis, A. O. (2009) Ansoff Strategic Success Paradigm – Empirical Evidence Supports its Success with Firms Competing in a Turbulent Environment. Why then is it Absent from Academic Strategic Management Textbooks? Organization and Management Quarterly, Silesian University of Technology, 4 (8), pp. 71-88.
- Kipley, D., Lewis, A., and Jewe, R. (2012). Entropy – disrupting Ansoff's five levels of environmental turbulence. Business Strategy Series, 13(6), 251–262. https://doi.org/10.1108/17515631211286083.
- Kipley, D., Helm-Stevens, R. and Lookinbee-Kipley, M., (2018). The impact of environmental turbulence on organizational learning. Archives of Business Research, 6(3).
- Kitching, J. and Marlow, S., (2013). HR practice and small firm growth: balancing informality and formality. In How Can HR Drive Growth?. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klaas, B.S., Semadeni, M., Klimchak, M. and Ward, A.K., (2012). High-performance work system implementation in small and medium enterprises: A

knowledge-creation perspective. Human Resource Management, 51(4), pp.487-510.

- Klaas, B.S., (2012). Outsourcing and HRM. In Managing Human Resources in North America (pp. 129-142). Routledge.
- Klaas, B.S., Olson-Buchanan, J.B. and Ward, A.K., (2012). The determinants of alternative forms of workplace voice: An integrative perspective. Journal of management, 38(1), pp.314-345.
- Koch, J. L., and Steers, R. M. (1978). Job attachment, satisfaction, and turnover among public sector employees. Journal of vocational behavior, 12(1), 119-128.
- Kotey, B., and Slade, P. (2005). Formal Human Resource Management Practices in Small Growing Firms. Journal of Small Business Management, 43 (1), 16-40.
- Kotter, J.P., Brown, T., Martin, R.L. and Rigby, D.K., (2021). HBR's 10 Must Reads on Change Management, Vol. 2 (with bonus article" Accelerate!" by John P. Kotter). Harvard Business Press.
- Kramer, R., McGraw, P., and Schuler, R. S. (1997). Human Resource Management in Australia, South Melbourne Australia: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Kramar, R., (2014). Beyond strategic human resource management: is sustainable human resource management the next approach?. The international journal of human resource management, 25(8), pp.1069-1089.
- Kravariti, F., Oruh, E.S., Dibia, C., Tasoulis, K., Scullion, H. and Mamman, A., (2021). Weathering the storm: talent management in internationally oriented Greek small and medium-sized enterprises. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.

- Krishnan, T. and Scullion, H. (2017). Talent management and dynamic view of talent in small and medium enterprises. Human Resource Management Review, 27(3), pp.431–441.
- Lahey, D., (2014). Predicting success: Evidence-based strategies to hire the right people and build the best team. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lai, Y., Saridakis, G., Blackburn, R. and Johnstone, S. (2016). Are the HR responses of small firms different from large firms in times of recession? Journal of Business Venturing, 31(1), pp.113–131.
- Lamb, D. and Cogan, N., (2016). Coping with work-related stressors and building resilience in mental health workers: A comparative focus group study using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 89(3), pp.474-492.
- Latham, G. P. (2009).Becoming the evidence-based manager: Making the science of management work for you. Boston, MA: Davies-Black.
- Latham, G. P. (2012). What we know and what we would like to know about human resource management certification.Human Resource Management Review,22,269–270.
- Lawler, E. E., III. (1971). Pay and organisational effectiveness. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lawler III, E.E., (2010). Talent: Making people your competitive advantage. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lawler, E. E. (2008). Strategic talent management: Lessons from the corporate world. Madison, WI: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved January, 7, 2010.

- Lawler, J. (2008). Strategic human resource management. Handbook of Organization Development, 353.
- Lawler III, E., (2010). Performance Management: creating an effective appraisal system. Centre for effective organisations. Marshall School of Business University of Southern California.
- Lawrence, W., N. and Robson, K. (2018). Basics of social research: qualitative and quantitative approaches. Don Mills, Ontario: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- Lee, H., Kelley, D., Lee, J. and Lee, S., (2012). SME survival: The impact of internationalization, technology resources, and alliances. Journal of small business management, 50(1), pp.1-19.
- Lee, N., and Brown, R. (2017). Innovation, SMEs and the liability of distance: the demand and supply of bank funding in UK peripheral regions. Journal of Economic Geography, 17(1), 233-260.
- Lee, N., Morris, K., and Kemeny, T. (2018). Immobility and the Brexit vote. Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 11(1), 143-163.
- Leedy, P.D. and Ormrod, J.E. (2010) Practical Research Planning and Design, 9th Ed. Pearson: New Jersey.
- Lengnick-Hall, C.A., Beck, T.E. and Lengnick-Hall, M.L., (2011). Developing a capacity for organizational resilience through strategic human resource management. Human resource management review, 21(3), pp.243-255.
- Lenton, A., (2021). Investigating the theory and practice of inclusive talent management (Doctoral dissertation, Kingston University).

- Liu, Y., (2013). Sustainable competitive advantage in turbulent business environments. International Journal of Production Research, 51(10), pp.2821-2841.
- Lopes, S.A., (2016). High performers are not superheroes: bridging exclusive and inclusive talent management approaches for law firm sustainability. International Journal of the Legal Profession, 23(2), pp.207-231.
- Luan, C.-J., Tien, C., and Chi, Y.-C. (2013). Downsizing to the wrong size? A study of the impact of downsizing on firm performance during an economic downturn. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(7), 1519–1535. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.725073
- Luckman, S. (2016). Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. Feminism & Psychology, 26(3), pp.387–391.
- MacDougall, A.E., Baur, J.E., Novicevic, M.M. and Buckley, M.R., (2014). Toward the pattern-oriented approach to research in human resources management: A review of configurational and category theorizing, methods, and applications. Research in personnel and human resources management.
- Madhani, P.M., (2010). Resource based view (RBV) of competitive advantage: an overview. Resource based view: concepts and practices, Pankaj Madhani, ed, pp.3-22.
- Madhani, P.M., (2012). Marketing and supply chain management integration: a resource-based view of competitive advantages. International Journal of Value Chain Management, 6(3), pp.216-239.
- Maindonald, J.H. (2011). Qualitative Research from Start to Finish by Robert K. Yin. International Statistical Review, 79(3), pp.499–500.

- Mair, J., and Marti, I. (2009). Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh. Journal of Business Venturing, 24(5), 419–435. https://doi.org/ 10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.04.006.
- Maisel, L. and Cokins, G., (2013). Predictive business analytics: Forward looking capabilities to improve business performance. John Wiley & Sons.
- Malik, A. and Sanders, K., (2021). Managing human resources during a global crisis: A multilevel perspective. British Journal of Management, 10, pp.1467-8551.
- Manimala, M.J. and Bhati, A., (2011). Talent acquisition and retention in social enterprises: Innovations in HR strategies. IIM Bangalore Research Paper, (328).
- Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A., (2012). Human Resource Management. London: CIPD.
- Marinakou, E. and Giousmpasoglou, C., (2019). Talent management and retention strategies in luxury hotels: evidence from four countries. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.
- Marr, B. and Gray, D., (2012). Strategic performance management. Routledge.
- Martínez-Ferrero, J. and García-Sánchez, I.M., (2017). Coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism as determinants of the voluntary assurance of sustainability reports. International Business Review, 26(1), pp.102-118.
- Masi, A.C. and Blaikie, N. (1995). Approaches to Social Enquiry. Contemporary Sociology, 24(2), p.273.
- Mason, R. B. (2007). The external environment's effect on management and strategy. Management Decision, 45(1), 10–28. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740710718935.

- Mason, C.M., Carter, S. and Tagg, S., (2011). Invisible businesses: The characteristics of home-based businesses in the United Kingdom. Regional Studies, 45(5), pp.625-639.
- Mason, C., (2015). Spatial variations in enterprise: the geography of new firm formation. In Deciphering the Enterprise Culture (Routledge Revivals) (pp. 94-126). Routledge.
- Mathis, R.L., Jackson, J.H., Valentine, S.R. and Meglich, P., (2016). Human resource management. Cengage Learning.
- McDonnell, A. and Gunnigle, P., (2009). Performance management. In Human Resource Management (pp. 201-219). Routledge.
- McDonnell, A., Lamare, R., Gunnigle, P. and Lavelle, J. (2010), Developing tomorrow's leaders – evidence of global talent management in multinational enterprises, Journal of World Business, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 150-60.
- McDonnell, A., Hickey, C. and Gunnigle, P., (2011). Global talent management: exploring talent identification in the multinational enterprise. European Journal of International Management, 5(2), pp.174-193.
- McDonnell, A. (2011). Still fighting the "war for talent"? Bridging the science versus practice gap. Journal of Business and Psychology, 26(2), 169-173.
- McDonnell, A. and Collings, D.G., (2011). The identification and evaluation of talent in MNEs (Doctoral dissertation, Routledge).
- McDonnell, A., Collings, D.G., Mellahi, K. and Schuler, R. (2017). Talent management: a systematic review and future prospects. European J. of International Management, 11(1), p.86.
- McEvoy, G.M. and Buller, P.F., (2013). Human resource management practices in mid-sized enterprises. American Journal of Business.

- McGee, V.W. (1986). “Mikhaiul Bakhtin: speech genres and other late essays”. University of Texas Press.
- Mellahi K and D Collings (2010) The barriers to effective global talent management: The example of corporate élites in MNEs. Journal of World Business 45(2), 143–149.
- Mellahi, K., Demirbag, M., Collings, D. G., Tatoglu, E., and Hughes, M. (2013). Similarly different: A comparison of HRM practices in mne subsidiaries and local firms in Turkey. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(12), 2339–2368. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.781434.
- Mellahi, K., Frynas, J.G., Sun, P. and Siegel, D., (2016). A review of the nonmarket strategy literature: Toward a multi-theoretical integration. Journal of management, 42(1), pp.143-173.
- Mendez, L.A.F. (2013) Senior Managers and SMEs’ Propensity to Quality Improvement Programs – A Comparative Analysis. E+M Economics and Management. Vol. 16, Iss. 4, pp. 89-103. ISSN 1212-3609.
- Meyers, M. C., Van Woerkom, M., and Dries, N. (2013). Talent—Innate or acquired? Theoretical considerations and their implications for talent management. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), 305-321.
- Meyers, M.C. and Van Woerkom, M., (2014). The influence of underlying philosophies on talent management: Theory, implications for practice, and research agenda. Journal of World Business, 49(2), pp.192-203.
- Meyskens, M., Carsrud, A.L. and Cardozo, R.N., (2010). The symbiosis of entities in the social engagement network: The role of social ventures. Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 22(5), pp.425-455.

- Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., and Axelrod, B. (2001). The war for talent. Harvard Business Press.
- Michiels, A., (2017). Formal compensation practices in family SMEs. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development.
- Mihalcea, A., (2017). Employer branding and talent management in the digital age. Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy, 5(2), pp.289-306.
- Miller, D., and Friesen, P. H. (1984). Organizations: A quantum view. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Miller, D., (2011). Miller (1983) revisited: A reflection on EO research and some suggestions for the future. Entrepreneurship theory and practice, 35(5), pp.873-894.
- Miller, D., (2019). The resource-based view of the firm. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management.
- Minbaeva, D. and Collings, D.G., (2013). Seven myths of global talent management. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(9), pp.1762-1776.
- Minniti, M., (2008). The role of government policy on entrepreneurial activity: productive, unproductive, or destructive?. Entrepreneurship theory and Practice, 32(5), pp.779-790.
- Mirza, M. S. (2018). How agile is your HR function? Score yourself on the HR agility scale. https://www.insidehr.com.au/how-agile-is-your-hr-function-score-yourself-onthe-hr-agility-scale/.
- Mitha, S., (2020). UK COVID-19 diary: Policy and impacts. National Tax Journal, 73(3), pp.847-878.

- Moake, T.R., Morrell, D.L., Williams, R.I. and Dunne, T.C., (2021). The Breadth and Depth of Small Business Human Resource Practices: Do High Performers Differ From Low Performers?. Journal of Small Business Strategy, 31(5), pp.92-99.
- Moore, N. (2020). Chloroquine for COVID-19 Infection. Drug Safety, 43(5), pp.393–394.
- Morley, M., and Collings, D.G. (2004). Contemporary databases and new directions in HRM in MNCs. International Journal of Manpower, Volume 25(6), pp.487–499., Issue 6. Bradford, England: Emerald Group Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-6610514519.
- Morley, M.J., Scullion, H., Collings, D.G., and Schuler, R.S. (2015). Talent management: a capital question. European Journal of International Management, 9(1), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2015.066668.
- Morley, M., Poor, J., Heraty, N., Alas, R., and Pocztowski, A. (2016). Developments in Human Resource Management in Central and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective. In M. Dickmann, C. Brewster, and P. Sparrow (Eds.), International Human Resource Management – Contemporary Human Resource Issues in Europe (pp. 73-99). New York: Routledge.
- Morley, M.J. and Heraty, N. eds., (2021). Comparative Human Resource Management: Contextual Insights from an International Research Collaboration. Routledge.
- Muogbo, U.S., (2013). The impact of strategic human resource management on small and medium sized enterprises (A study of some selected paint manufacturing firms in Anambra State Nigeria). Global Journal of Management and Business Studies, 3(3), pp.323-340.

- Munger, M.C. and North, D.C. (1991). Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. Southern Economic Journal, 58(1), p.296.
- Najeeb, A., (2014). Institutional theory and human resource management.
- Nesta (2017). The State of Small Business: Putting UK Entrepreneurs on the Map. London: Nesta.
- Newell, S., (2005). Recruitment and selection. Managing human resources: Personnel management in transition, pp.115-147.
- Nigel, G., and Stoneman, P. (2016). Researching social life. Los Angeles; London; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington Dc Sage.
- Nijs, S., Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Dries, N. and Sels, L., (2014). A multidisciplinary review into the definition, operationalization, and measurement of talent. Journal of World Business, 49(2), pp.180-191.
- Nijssen, M., and Paauwe, J. (2012). HRM in turbulent times: How to achieve organizational agility? The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23(16), 3315–3335. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.689160.
- Nilsson, S., Ellström, P. (2012) Employability and talent management: Challenges for HRD. European Journal of Training and Development. Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 26-45. ISSN 2046-9012. DOI: 10.1108/03090591211192610.
- Nolan, C. and Garavan, T., (2012). May. Lost in translation? Critiquing the HRD discourse in the small firm. In 13th Annual Conference of the University Forum for HRD (pp. 23-25).
- Nolan, C.T. and Garavan, T.N., (2016). Human resource development in SMEs: A systematic review of the literature. International Journal of Management Reviews, 18(1), pp.85-107.

- Nolan, C.T. and Garavan, T.N., (2016). Problematizing HRD in SMEs: A “critical” exploration of context, informality, and empirical realities. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 27(3), pp.407-442.
- Nolan, C.T., (2017). IHRD in small firms and internationalising SMEs. In Handbook of International Human Resource Development. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- North, D. C. (1990). ‘Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.’ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nyamubarwa, W. and Chipunza, C., (2019). Debunking the one-size-fits-all approach to human resource management: A review of human resource practices in small and medium-sized enterprise firms. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 17(1), pp.1-6.
- OECD. (2016). ‘The economic consequences of Brexit: a taxing decision’, OECD Economic Policy Paper, Number 16.
- OECD (2019), "Definition of SMEs", in Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2019: An OECD Scoreboard, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/23e0823c-en.
- OECD. (2019). OECD SME and entrepreneurship outlook (2019). Paris.
- OECD (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19): SME Policy Responses. OECD. https://read.oecd- ilibrary.org/view/?ref=119_119680-di6h3qgi4x&title=COVID-19_SME_Policy_Responses.
- OECD (2022), Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2022: An OECD Scoreboard, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/e9073a0f-en.
- Office for National Statistics. (2020). The impact of the coronavirus so far: The Industries That Struggled or Recovered. Office for National Statistics.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/articles/theimpactofthe.

- Ogbonna, E. and Harris, L.C., (2015). Subcultural tensions in managing organisational culture: a study of an E nglish P remier L eague football organisation. Human Resource Management Journal, 25(2), pp.217-232.
- Oliver, C. (1991), "Strategic responses to institutional processes", Academy of Management Review, Vol.16 No.1, pp.145-179.
- Oltra, V., Vivas-López, S. (2013) Boosting organizational learning through team-based talent management: what is the evidence from large Spanish fi rms. The international Journal of Human resource Management. Vol. 24, Iss. 9, pp.1853-187. ISSN 0958-5192. DOI:10.1080/09585192.2013.777540.
- Ozili, P.K. and Arun, T. (2020). Spillover of COVID-19: Impact on the Global Economy. SSRN Electronic Journal. [online] Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3562570.
- Paauwe, J. and Boselie, P. (2003). Challenging "strategic HRM" and the relevance of the institutional setting. Human Resource Management Journal, 13(3), pp.56–70.
- Paauwe, J. (2007). HRM and performance: in search of balance. : Tilburg university.
- Paauwe, J. and Farndale, E., (2012). International human resource management and firm performance. In Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Paauwe, J. and Farndale, E., (2017). Strategy, HRM, and performance: A contextual approach. Oxford University Press.

- Paauwe, J. and Boon, C., (2018). Strategic HRM: A critical review. Human resource management, pp.49-73.
- Pant, H.V., (2019). PM Boris Johnson's first test will be to pull the UK out of the Brexit quagmire.
- Pandya, V.M., (2012), September. Comparative analysis of development of SMEs in developed and developing countries. In The 2012 International Conference on Business and Management (Vol. 6, No. 7, pp. 1-20).
- Parker, J., Arrowsmith, J., Young-Hauser, A., Hodgetts, D., Carr, S.C., Haar, J. and Alefaio-Tugia, S., (2022). Perceptions of living wage impacts in Aotearoa New Zealand: towards a multi-level, contextualised conceptualisation. Personnel Review, (ahead-of-print).
- Parry, E. and Tyson, S., (2013). Managing people in a contemporary context. Routledge Patel, P.C. and Cardon, M.S., 2010. Adopting HRM practices and their effectiveness in small firms facing product-market competition. Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management, 49(2), pp.265-290.
- Patel, P.C., and Cardon, M.S. (2010). Adopting HRM practices and their effectiveness in small firms facing product-market competition. Human Resource Management, 49(2), 265-290. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20346.
- Pauli, U. (2015). In what to invest after surviving – the investment structure of growing SMEs. Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation, 11(4), 93-114. https://doi.org/10.7341/20151144.

- Pauli, U. and Pocztowski, A., (2019). Talent management in SMEs: An exploratory study of polish companies. Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review, 7(4), pp.199-218.
- Patel, P.C., and Cardon, M.S. (2010). Adopting HRM practices and their effectiveness in small firms facing product-market competition. Human Resource Management, 49(2), 265-290. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20346.
- Pearson, C. A. (1995). The turnover process in organizations: An exploration of the role of met-unmet expectations. Human Relations, 48(4), 405-420.
- Pearson, C. M., and Clair, J. A. (1998). Reframing crisis management. The Academy of Management Review, 23(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/259099.
- Peppers, D. and Rogers, M., (2016). Managing customer experience and relationships: A strategic framework. John Wiley & Sons.
- Perrin, T., (2004). Look closer: Managing today’s talent to create tomorrow’s leaders.
- Pfeffer, J. (1994). Competitive Advantage Through People. California Management Review, 36(2), pp.9–28.
- Pfeffer, J., and Sutton, R. I., (2006). Hard facts, dangerous half-truths, and total nonsense: Profiting from evidence-based management. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Piansoongnern, O., Anurit, P. and Kuiyawattananonta, S., (2011). Talent management in Thai cement companies: A study of strategies and factors influencing employee engagement. African Journal of Business Management, 5(5), pp.1578-1583.

- Pocztowski, A. (Ed.). (2008). Zarządzanie talentami w organizacji. Kraków: Wolters Kluwer Polska.
- Pocztowski A., and Pauli U. (2013). Professionalization of HRM in SMEs. Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi (Human Resource management), 3-4, 9-22.
- Polkinghorne, D. E., (1988). Narrative knowing and the human sciences. State University of Albany: New York Press.
- Pollitt, C., (2013). The logics of performance management. Evaluation, 19(4), pp.346-363.
- Pope, C. and Mays, N. (1995). Qualitative Research: Reaching the parts other methods cannot reach: an introduction to qualitative methods in health and health services research. BMJ, 311(6996), pp.42–45.
- Porter, L. W., Steers, R. M., Mowday, R. T., and Boulian, P. V. (1974). Organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. Journal of applied psychology, 59(5), 603.
- Porter, M.E. (1980), Competitive Strategy, The Free Press, New York, NY.
- Porter, M.E., (2011). Competitive advantage of nations: creating and sustaining superior performance. simon and schuster.
- Portes, J. and Forte, G. (2017). The economic impact of Brexit-induced reductions in migration. Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 33(suppl_1), pp.S31–S44.
- Powell, W.W. and DiMaggio, P.J. eds., (2012). The new institutionalism in organizational analysis. University of Chicago press.
- Preece, D., Iles, P., and Chuai, X. (2011). Talent management and management fashion in Chinese enterprises: Exploring case studies in Beijing. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22(16), 3413-3428.

- Preece, D., Iles, P. and Chuai, X., (2013). Talent management and management fashion in Chinese enterprises: exploring case studies in Beijing. In Society and HRM in China (pp. 199-214). Routledge.
- Price, J. L., and Mueller, C. W. (1986). Absenteeism and turnover of hospital employees. JAI press.
- Priem, R.L. and Butler, J.E. (2001). Is the Resource-Based "View" a Useful Perspective for Strategic Management Research? The Academy of Management Review, 26(1), pp.22–40.
- Priem, R.L., Butler, J.E. and Li, S., (2013). Toward reimagining strategy research: retrospection and prospection on the 2011 AMR decade award article. Academy of Management Review, 38(4), pp.471-489.
- Prouska, R., Psychogios, A. and Wilkinson, A.J. (2018). Employee Involvement in a Transition Context: Lessons from Central and Eastern European Economies. Academy of Management Proceedings, 2018(1), p.13228.
- Psychogios, A.G. and Garev, S., (2012). Understanding Complexity Leadership Behaviour In SMEs: Lessons From A Turbulent Business Environment. Emergence: Complexity & Organization, 14(3).
- Psychogios, A., Brewster, C., Missopoulos, F., Kohont, A., Vatchkova, E. and Slavic, A. (2014), "Industrial relations in South-Eastern Europe: disaggregating the contexts", The International Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol.25 No.11, pp.1592-1612.
- Psychogios, A., Szamosi, L.T., Prouska, R. and Brewster, C. (2016). A three-fold framework for understanding HRM practices in South-Eastern European SMEs. Employee Relations, 38(3), pp.310–331.

- Purce, J., (2014). The impact of corporate strategy on human resource management. New Perspectives on Human Resource Management (Routledge Revivals), 67.
- Rabbi, F., Ahad, N., Kousar, T. and Ali, T., (2015). Talent management as a source of competitive advantage. Journal of Asian business strategy, 5(9), pp.208-214.
- Rashid, S. and Ratten, V., (2021). Entrepreneurial ecosystems during COVID-19: the survival of small businesses using dynamic capabilities. World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development.
- Rauch, A., and Hatak, I. (2016). A meta-analysis of different HR-enhancing practices and performance of small and medium sized firms. Journal of Business Venturing, 31, 485-504. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2016.05.005.
- Rauno Huttunen, Hannu L T Heikkinen and Syrjä lä L. (2002). Narrative research: voices of teachers and philosophers. Jyvä skylä , Finland: Sophi.
- Raymond, L., Marchand, M., St-Pierre, J., Cadieux, L. and Labelle, F., (2013). Dimensions of small business performance from the owner-manager's perspective: a re-conceptualization and empirical validation. Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 25(5-6), pp.468-499.
- Raynard, M., Johnson, G. and Greenwood, R., (2015). Institutional theory and strategic management. Advanced strategic management: A multi-perspective approach, pp.9-34.
- Razouk, A.A. (2011). High-performance work systems and performance of French small-and medium-sized enterprises: Examining causal order. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22(2), 311-330. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.540157.

- Rebmann, T., Wang, J., Swick, Z., Reddick, D., and del Rosario Jr, J. L. (2013). Business continuity and pandemic preparedness: US health care versus non-healthcare agencies. American Journal of Infection Control, 41(4), e27-e33.
- Redman, T. and Wilkinson, A. (2001). Contemporary human resource management: text and cases. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Rhodes, C., (2017). Business statistics. Briefing paper, (06152).
- Riessman, C. (1993). Narrative Analysis: Qualitative research methods. California: Sage.
- Riessman, C., (2008). Narrative methods for human sciences. California: Sage.
- Rigotti, T., Yang, L.Q., Jiang, Z., Newman, A., De Cuyper, N. and Sekiguchi, T., (2021). Work-related psychosocial risk factors and coping resources during the COVID-19 crisis. Applied psychology= Psychologie appliquée, 70(1), p.3.
- Rocha, R.S. and Granerud, L., (2011). The search for legitimacy and organizational change: The agency of subordinated actors. Scandinavian Journal of Management, 27(3), pp.261-272.
- Rodgers, P., Stokes, P., Tarba, S., and Khan, Z. (2019). The role of non-market strategies in establishing legitimacy: The case of service MNEs in emerging economies. Management International Review,), 59(4), 515–540. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-019-00385-8
- Roper, S., Vorley, T., and Nelles, J. (2020). Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Innovate UK Award Holders: Wave 2 (No. 2). Enterprise Research Centre: Innovation Caucus. https://www. enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Wave- 2-Final-Report_ERC- and-Innovation-Caucus-Research-Report. pdf.

- Saad, H. and Mayouf, M., (2018). Talent Management Strategies and Practices in Five Star Hotels: An Exploratory Study. International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality, 12(2), pp.32-49.
- Saldaña, J. (2011). Fundamentals of qualitative research. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salimi, M. and Della Torre, E., (2021). Pay incentives, human capital and firm innovation in smaller firms. International Small Business Journal, p.02662426211043237.
- Santana, M. and Valle-Cabrera, R., (2021). New Directions in the Future of Work: An Introduction. In New Directions in the Future of Work. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Saridakis, G. and Cooper, C., (2013). 1. Editorial introduction. How Can HR Drive Growth?, p.1.
- Saridakis, G., Lai, Y. and Cooper, C.L., (2017). Exploring the relationship between HRM and firm performance: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. Human resource management review, 27(1), pp.87-96.
- Saridakis, G., Idris, B., Hansen, J.M. and Dana, L.P., (2019). SMEs' internationalisation: When does innovation matter?. Journal of Business Research, 96, pp.250-263.
- Saunders, M.N., Thornhill, A. and Lewis, P. (2009), Research Methods for Business Students, FT Prentice-Hall, London.
- Saunders, M.N. and Townsend, K. (2016), “Reporting and justifying the number of interview participants in organisation and workplace research.” British Journal of Management, Vol.27 No.4, pp.836-852.

- Schenkel, A., and Teigland, R. (2017). Why doesn’t downsizing deliver? A multi-level model integrating downsizing, social capital, dynamic capabilities, and firm performance. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28(7), 1065–1107. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1130734.
- Schmidt, V.A., (2010). The European Union's eurozone crisis and what (not) to do about it. Brown J. World Aff., 17, p.199.
- Schneider, B. and Bowen, D.E., (2010). Winning the service game. In Handbook of service science (pp. 31-59). Springer, Boston, MA.
- Schuler, R. S. and Jackson, S. E. (1987), ―Linking competitive strategies with human resource management practices‖, Academy of Management Executive, 1 (3), 207-219.
- Schuler, R.S. and Jackson, S.E. (2005). A Quarter-Century Review of Human Resource Management in the U.S.: The Growth in Importance of the International Perspective. Management revue, 16(1), pp.11–35.
- Schuler, R.S., Jackson, S.E. and Tarique, I. (2011). Global talent management and global talent challenges: Strategic opportunities for IHRM. Journal of World Business, [online] 46(4), pp.506–516. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1090951610000684.
- Schuler, R.S., Jackson, S.E. and Tarique, I.R., (2011). Framework for global talent management: HR actions for dealing with global talent challenges. In Global talent management (pp. 33-52). Routledge.
- Schuler, R. and Jackson, S.E., (2014). Human resource management and organizational effectiveness: yesterday and today. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.

- Schuler, R.S., (2015). The 5-C framework for managing talent. Organizational Dynamics, 44(1), pp.47-56.
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. The American economic review, 1-17.
- Schultz, T. W. (1971). Investment in Human Capital. The Role of Education and of Research.
- Scott, W.R., (2013). Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities. Sage publications.
- Scullion, H. and Linehan, M. (2005). International human resource management: a critical text. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scullion, H., and Collings, D.G. (2006). Global staffing. London; New York: Routledge.
- Scullion, H., Collings, D.G., and Caligiuri, P. (2010), Global talent management, Journal of World Business, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 105-8.
- Scullion, H., and Collings, D.G. (2011). Global talent management. New York: Routledge.
- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. Qualitative Inquiry, 5(4), 465–478.
- Sekaran, U. (2003). Research methods for business . Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sekaran, U., and Bougie, R., (2010) Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach. 5th Edition, illustrated. John Wiley & Sons.

- Shahzad, K., Arenius, P., Muller, A., Rasheed, M.A. and Bajwa, S.U., (2019). Unpacking the relationship between high-performance work systems and innovation performance in SMEs. Personnel Review.
- Shaw, J. (2011). Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions - Introducing improved statistics on the UK enterprise population. Economic & Labour Market Review, 5(4), pp.47–67.
- Shaw, J.D., (2021). The resource-based view and its use in strategic human resource management research: The elegant and inglorious. Journal of Management, 47(7), pp.1787-1795.
- Sheehan, M. (2014). Human Resource management and performance: Evidence from small and medium-sized firms. International Small Business Journal, 32(5), 545-570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242612465454.
- Sheehan, M., Grant, K. and Garavan, T., (2018). Strategic talent management: A macro and micro analysis of current issues in hospitality and tourism. Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.
- Shereen, M. A., Khan, S., Kazmi, A., Bashir, N., and Siddique, R. (2020). COVID-19 infection: Origin, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses. Journal of Advanced Research, 24(2020), 91-98.
- Shore, L.M., Cleveland, J.N. and Sanchez, D., (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. Human Resource Management Review, 28(2), pp.176-189.
- Shoss, M. K. (2017). Job insecurity: An integrative review and agenda for future research. Journal of Management, 43(6), 1911–1939. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317691574.
- Silverman, D. (2013). Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook. London: Sage.

- Silverman, D. (2019). Interpreting qualitative data. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Pub.
- Simpson, M., Padmore, J. and Newman, N., (2012). Towards a new model of success and performance in SMEs. International journal of entrepreneurial Behavior & Research.
- Skuza, A., Scullion H., and McDonnell, A. (2013). An analysis of the talent management challenges in a post-communist country: the case of Poland. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(3), 453-470, https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.694111.
- Skuza, A., Scullion, H. and Collings, D.G. (2016), "Talent management in Europe", Dickmann, M., Brewster, C. and Sparrow, P. (Eds.), International Human Resource Management: Contemporary HR Issues in Europe, Routledge, New York, NY, pp.329-353.
- Skuza, A. (2018). Zarządzanie talentami a orientacja na uczenie się przedsiębiorstw. Poznań: Wydawnictwo UEP. Slater, P. E. (1966). Microcosm. Wiley, New York.
- Smallbone, D., Deakins, D., Battisti, M. and Kitching, J. (2012). Small business responses to a major economic downturn: Empirical perspectives from New Zealand and the United Kingdom. International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship, 30(7), pp.754–777.
- Smith, J., (2017). The United Kingdom's Journeys into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown. Routledge.
- Sokro, E., (2012). Impact of employer branding on employee attraction and retention. European Journal of Business and Management, 4(18), pp.164-173.

- Sparrow, P., Farndale, E. and Scullion, H. (2013). An empirical study of the role of the corporate HR function in global talent management in professional and financial service firms in the global financial crisis. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(9), pp.1777–1798.
- Sparrow, P., Scullion, H. and Tarique, I. (2014), “Introduction: challenges for the field of strategic talent management”, Sparrow, P., Scullion, H. and Tarique, I. (Eds), Strategic Talent Management: Contemporary Issues in International Context, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.3-35.
- Sparrow, P. and Cooper, C., (2014). Organizational effectiveness, people and performance: new challenges, new research agendas. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance.
- Sparrow, P., Scullion, H., Tarique, I., (Eds.). (2014). What is the value of talent management? Contemporary issues in international contexts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sparrow, P., Scullion, H. and Tarique, I., (2014). Strategic Talent Management Contemporary Issues in International Context. Cambridge University Press.
- Sparrow, P., Hird, M. and Cooper, C.L., (2015). Strategic talent management. In Do we need HR? (pp. 177-212). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Sparrow, P. and Scullion, H. (2015). Strategic talent management: contemporary issues in an international context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sparrow, P.R. and Makram, H. (2015). What is the value of talent management? Building value-driven processes within a talent management architecture. Human Resource Management Review, 25(3), pp.249–263.

- Sparrow, P., Cooper, C. and Hird, M., (2016). Do we need HR?: Repositioning people management for success. Springer.
- Sparrow, P., Brewster, C. and Chung, C., (2016). Globalizing human resource management. Routledge.
- Srivastava, M., Franklin, A. and Martinette, L., (2013). Building a sustainable competitive advantage. Journal of technology management & innovation, 8(2), pp.47-60.
- Stahl, G. K., Bjorkman, I., Farndale, E., Morris, S. S., Stiles, P., Trevor, J., (2007). Global talent management: How leading multinationals build and sustain their talent pipeline, Faculty & research working paper. Fontainebleau, France: INSEAD.
- Stahl, G., Björkman, I., Farndale, E., Morris, S.S., Paauwe, J., Stiles, P., Trevor, J. and Wright, P., (2012). Six principles of effective global talent management. Sloan Management Review, 53(2), pp.25-42. Vol. 53, Iss. 2, pp. 24-33. ISSN 1532-9194.
- Stahl, G.K., Bjorkman, I., Farndale, E., Morris, S.S., Paawe, J., Stiles, P., Trevor, J. and Wright, P. (2016a). Six principles of effective global talent management. IEEE Engineering Management Review, [online] 44(3), pp.112–119. Available at: https://www.xbhr.com/news/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Effective-Global-Talent-Management.pdf [Accessed 20 Oct. 2019].
- Stahl, G.K., Bjorkman, I., Farndale, E., Morris, S.S., Paawe, J., Stiles, P., Trevor, J. and Wright, P. (2016b). Six principles of effective global talent management. IEEE Engineering Management Review, [online] 44(3), pp.112–119. Available at:

https://www.xbhr.com/news/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Effective-Global-Talent-Management.pdf.

- Stainton, A. (2005). 'Talent management: latest buzzword or refocusing existing processes?' Competency & emotional intelligence, Vol. 12, No.4, summer, pp 39-43.
- Stake, R.E. (2010). Qualitative research: studying how things work. New York: Guilford Press.
- Stavrou, E.T., Brewster, C. and Charalambous, C., (2010). Human resource management and firm performance in Europe through the lens of business systems: best fit, best practice or both?. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21(7), pp.933-962.
- Steger, M.B., (2017). Globalization: A very short introduction (Vol. 86). Oxford University Press.
- Stephan, U., Uhlaner, L.M. and Stride, C., (2015). Institutions and social entrepreneurship: The role of institutional voids, institutional support, and institutional configurations. Journal of International Business Studies, 46(3), pp.308-331.
- Stephan, U., Zbierowski, P., and Hanard, P. (2020). Entrepreneurship and COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities (No. 2; KBS COVID-19 Research Impact Papers). King's Business School. https://www.kcl.ac.uk/business/assets/PDF/research-papers/country-report-uk entrepreneurship- and-COVID-19- challenges-and-opportunities-an-assessment-of-the-short-and-long-term- consequences-for-uk-small-businesses.pdf.

- Stefaniak, J., Baaki, J. and Blake, A.M. (2012). An examination of the decision-making process used by organisational leaders during the Great Recession. Performance Improvement Quarterly, 24(4), pp.81–102.
- Stokes, P., Liu, Y., Smith, S., Leidner, S., Moore, N. and Rowland, C., (2016). Managing talent across advanced and emerging economies: HR issues and challenges in a Sino-German strategic collaboration. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27(20), pp.2310-2338.
- Stone, R.J., Cox, A. and Gavin, M., (2020). Human resource management. John Wiley & Sons.
- Storey, J. (2007). Human resource management: a critical text. London: Thomson.
- Storey, D.J., Saridakis, G., Sen-Gupta, S., Edwards, P.K. and Blackburn, R.A. (2010), "Linking HR formality with employee job quality: the role of firm and workplace size", Human Resource Management, Vol.49 No.2, pp.305-329.
- Storey, D.J. and Greene, F.J. (2010). Small business and entrepreneurship. New York, NY: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Storey, D.J., (2016). Understanding the small business sector. Routledge.
- Stredwick, J., (2013). An introduction to human resource management. Routledge.
- Streeck, W. (2009). Reforming capitalism: Institutional change in the German political economy. Oxford University Press.
- Stringer, L., (2016). The Healthy Workplace: How to Improve the Well-Being of Your Employees---and Boost Your Company's Bottom Line. Amacom.

- Stroh, L.K. and Caligiuri, P.M. (1998). Increasing global competitiveness through effective people management. Journal of World Business, 33(1), pp.1–16.
- Subramaniam, K. G. (2018). Strategies for reducing employee stress and increasing employee engagement. Walden University.
- Suder, G., Reade, C., Riviere, M., Birnik, A., and Nielsen, N. (2019). Mind the gap: The role of HRM in creating, capturing and leveraging rare knowledge in hostile environments.
- The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 30(11), 1794–1821.https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1351462.
- Sullivan-Taylor, B. and Branicki, L. (2011). Creating resilient SMEs: why one size might not fit all. International Journal of Production Research, 49(18), pp.5565–5579.
- Swailes, S., (2013). The ethics of talent management. Business Ethics: A European Review, 22(1), pp.32-46.
- Swailes, S., Downs, Y. and Orr, K., (2014). Conceptualising inclusive talent management: Potential, possibilities and practicalities. Human Resource Development International, 17(5), pp.529-544.
- Takeuchi, R., Lepak, D.P., Wang, H. and Takeuchi, K. (2007). An empirical examination of the mechanisms mediating between high-performance work systems and the performance of Japanese organisations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 92(4), pp.1069–1083.
- Tanner, T., Lewis, D., Wrathall, D., Bronen, R., Cradock-Henry, N., Huq, S., Lawless, C., Nawrotzki, R., Prasad, V., Rahman, M. and Alaniz, R., (2015).

Livelihood resilience in the face of climate change. Nature Climate Change, 5(1), pp.23-26.

- Tansky, J.W. and Heneman, R.L. (2006). Human resource strategies for the high growth entrepreneurial firm. Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Pub.
- Tansley, C., Newell, S. and Williams, H. (2001). Effecting HRM-style practices through an integrated human resource information system. Personnel Review, 30(3), pp.351–371.
- Tansley, C., Harris, L., Stewart, J., and Turner, P. (2006). Talent management: Understanding the dimensions. Change Agenda. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).
- Tansley, C., Turner, P., Carley, F., Harris, L., Sempik, A., Stewart, J., (2007). Talent: Strategy, management, measurement. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).
- Tansley, C. and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008). Talent: strategy, management, measurement. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term “talent” in talent management? Industrial and commercial training, 43(5), 266-274.
- Tarique, I., Schuler, R. and Gong, Y. (2006). A model of multinational enterprise subsidiary staffing composition. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 17(2), pp.207–224.
- Tarique, I. and Schuler, R.S. (2010). Global talent management: Literature review, integrative framework, and suggestions for further research. Journal of World Business, 45(2), pp.122–133.

- Tarique, I. and Schuler, R., (2012). Global talent management literature review. White paper: SHRM Foundation.
- Tarique, I. eds., (2021). Contemporary Talent Management: A Research Companion. Routledge.
- Tasavori, M., Zaefarian, R. and Ghauri, P.N., (2015). The creation view of opportunities at the base of the pyramid. Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 27(1-2), pp.106-126.
- Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (2010). SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Tatoglu, E., Glaister, A.J. and Demirbag, M. (2016). Talent management motives and practices in an emerging market: A comparison between MNEs and local firms. Journal of World Business, 51(2), pp.278–293.
- Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods: the search for meanings. New York: Wiley.
- Taylor, T., Doherty, A. and McGraw, P., (2015). Managing people in sport organizations: A strategic human resource management perspective. Routledge.
- Taylor, S.J., Bogdan, R. and Devault, M.L. (2016). Introduction to qualitative research methods. Wiley.
- Teece, D. J. (2007) Explicating dynamic capabilities: the nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) Enterprise performance. Strategic Management Journal, Published online in Wiley InterScience, pp. 1-32.
- Teece, D., Peteraf, M. and Leih, S., (2016). Dynamic capabilities and organizational agility: Risk, uncertainty, and strategy in the innovation economy. California management review, 58(4), pp.13-35.

- Teece, D. and Leih, S., (2016). Uncertainty, innovation, and dynamic capabilities: An introduction. California Management Review, 58(4), pp.5-12.
- Teddie, C. and Abbas Tashakkori (2009). Foundations of mixed methods research: integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioural sciences. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Thornton, P.H., Ocasio, W. and Lounsbury, M., (2012). The institutional logics perspective: A new approach to culture, structure and process. OUP Oxford.
- Thunnissen, M. (2012). Global Talent Management (Global HRM)20122Hugh Scullion and David G. Collings. Global Talent Management (Global HRM). Routledge, 2011. 216 pp., ISBN: -13: 978-0415871716. Personnel Review, 41(6), pp.852–854.
- Thunnissen, M., Boselie, P., and Fruytier, B. (2013). A review of talent management: 'infancy or adolescence?'. The International Journal of Human Resource Management: Talent Management, 24(9), pp. 1744-1761.
- Thunnissen, M., Boselie, P. and Fruytier, B. (2013). Talent management and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach. Human Resource Management Review, 23(4), pp.326–336.
- Thunnissen, M., and Arensbergen, P. V. (2015). A multi-dimensional approach to talent. Personnel Review, 44(2), 182-199. doi: doi:10.1108/PR-10-2013-0190.
- Thunnissen, M. and Van Arensbergen, P., (2015). A multi-dimensional approach to talent: An empirical analysis of the definition of talent in Dutch academia. Personnel Review.

- Thunnissen, M.A.G., (2015). Talent management in academia: An exploratory study in Dutch universities using a multi-dimensional approach (Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University).
- Thunnissen, M. (2016). Talent management. Employee Relations, 38(1), pp.57–72.
- Thunnissen, M., (2016). Talent management: For what, how and how well? An empirical exploration of talent management in practice. Employee Relations.
- Thunnissen, M. and Buttiens, D., (2017). Talent management in public sector organizations: A study on the impact of contextual factors on the TM approach in Flemish and Dutch public sector organizations. Public Personnel Management, 46(4), pp.391-418.
- Timming, A.R. (2011). What do tattoo artists know about HRM? Recruitment and selection in the body art sector. Employee Relations, 33(5), pp.570–584.
- Tomlinson, M. (2012). Graduate Employability: A Review of Conceptual and Empirical Themes. Higher Education Policy, 25(4), 407.
- Towers Perrin. (2006). Winning strategies for a global workforce. Exec. Rep., Towers Perrin, Philadelphia.
- Towers Perrin. (2009). Managing Talent in Tough Times: A Tipping Point for Talent Management? : Towers Watson.
- Trost, A., (2014). Talent relationship management: Competitive recruiting strategies in times of talent shortage. Springer Science & Business.
- Truss, C. and Gratton, L. (1994). Strategic human resource management: a conceptual approach. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 5(3), pp.663–686.

- Truss, C., Gratton, L., Hope-Hailey, V., McGovern, P. and Stiles, P. (1997). Soft and Hard Models of Human Resource Management: A Reappraisal. Journal of Management Studies, [online] 34(1), pp.53–73. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/38176140_Soft_and_Hard_Models_of_Human_Resource_Management_A_Reappraisal.
- Truss, C. (2001). Complexities and Controversies in Linking HRM with Organisational Outcomes. Journal of Management Studies, 38(8), pp.1121–1149.
- Tulgan, B. and Martin, C.A., (2001). Managing Generation Y: Global citizens born in the late seventies and early eighties. Human Resource Development.
- Tymon, W.G., Stumpf, S.A. and Doh, J.P. (2010). Exploring talent management in India: The neglected role of intrinsic rewards. Journal of World Business, 45(2), pp.109–121.
- Ulrich, D. (1997). Human resource champions: The next agendas for adding value and delivering results, Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ulrich, D. and Smallwood, N., (2012). What is talent?. Leader to leader, 2012(63), pp.55-61.
- Ulrich, D. and Dulebohn, J.H., (2015). Are we there yet? What's next for HR?. Human Resource Management Review, 25(2), pp.188-204.
- UNDP (2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. A socio-economic analysis. [online] UNDP. Available at: http://www.undp.org pp. 4-12.
- Vaiman, V. (2010). Talent Management of Knowledge Workers: Embracing the Non- Traditional Workforce. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Vaiman, V., and Holden, N. (2011). Talent management in Central and Eastern Europe. Global Talent Management, 178.
- Vaiman, V., Scullion, H., and Collings, D. (2012). Talent management decision making. Management Decision, 50(5), 925-941.
- Vaiman, V. and Collings, D.G., (2013). Talent management: advancing the field. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(9), pp.1737-1743.
- Vaiman, V. and Collings, D.G., (2014). Global talent management. In The Routledge companion to international human resource management (pp. 236-251). Routledge.
- Vaiman, V. and Brewster, C., (2015). How far do cultural differences explain the differences between nations? Implications for HRM. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 26(2), pp.151-164.
- Vaiman, V., Sparrow, P., Schuler, R. and Collings, D.G. eds., (2018). Macro talent management: A global perspective on managing talent in developed markets. Routledge.
- Valverde, M., Ryan, G. and Soler, C. (2006). Distributing HRM responsibilities: a classification of organisations. Personnel Review, 35(6), pp.618–636.
- Valverde, M., Scullion, H. and Ryan, G. (2013). Talent management in Spanish medium-sized organisations. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24(9), pp.1832–1852.
- Vance, R. J. (2006). Employee engagement and commitment: A guide to understanding, measuring and increasing engagement in your organization. SHRM Foundation.

- Van Reenen, J. (2016) 'Brexit's long-run effects on the UK economy', Brooking Papers on Economic Activity, Fall, pp367-383.
- Van Woerkom, M. and Meyers, M.C., (2015). My strengths count! Effects of a strengths-based psychological climate on positive affect and job performance. Human Resource Management, 54(1), pp.81-103.
- Varum, C.A. and Rocha, V.C. (2011). Employment and SMEs during crises. Small Business Economics, 40(1), pp.9–25.
- Varum, C.A. and Rocha, V.C., (2013). Employment and SMEs during crises. Small Business Economics, 40(1), pp.9-25.
- Vlad Vaiman and Vance, C. (2010). Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Vohra, V., (2016). Towards a framework of contextual human resource management practices for internationalising SMEs. Journal for International Business and Entrepreneurship Development, 9(3), pp.324-341.
- Vroom, V.H. (1964). Work and motivation. San Francisco (Calif.): Jossey-Bass Publ., Cop.
- Wagner, R., and Harter, J. K. (2006). 12: The elements of great managing (Vol. 978, No. 1 59992). Gallup Press.
- Walker, J.W. and LaRocco, J.M., (2002). Talent pools: The best and the rest.(Perspectives). Human Resource Planning, 25(3), pp.12-15.
- Ward, M. and Rhodes, C., (2014). Small businesses and the UK economy. Standard Note: SN/EP/6078. Office for National Statistics.
- Warsame, A.A., (2020). The impacts of COVID 19 on small and medium enterprises. European Journal of Business and Management, 12(25), pp.96-106.

- Weaven, S., Quach, S., Thaichon, P., Frazer, L., Billot, K. and Grace, D., (2021). Surviving an economic downturn: Dynamic capabilities of SMEs. Journal of Business Research, 128, pp.109-123.
- Welter, F. and Smallbone, D., (2011). Institutional perspectives on entrepreneurial behavior in challenging environments. Journal of Small Business Management, 49(1), pp.107-125.
- Werner, J.M., (2021). Human resource development: talent development. Cengage Learning.
- Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. S.L.: S.N.
- Wernerfelt, B. (2016). Adaptation, specialization, and the theory of the firm: foundations of the resource-based view. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- West, D.C., Ford, J.B. and Ibrahim, E., (2015). Strategic marketing: creating competitive advantage. Oxford University Press, USA.
- WHO (2020). Timeline of WHO’s response to Covid-19. World Health Organisation. [online] www.who.int. Available at: http://www.who.int.
- WHO. (2020). This statement is updated on an ongoing basis, in response to evolving events and common media queries. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from World Heath Organization (WHO): https://www.who.int/news- room/detail/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19.
- Wickramasinghe, V. and Perera, G. (2012). HRM practices during the global recession (2008-2010). Strategic Outsourcing: An International Journal, 5(3), pp.188–212.

- Wiener, Y., and Vardi, Y. (1980). Relationships between job, organization, and career commitments and work outcomes—An integrative approach. Organisational Behavior and Human Performance, 26(1), 81-96.
- Wilden, R., Gudergan, S.P., Nielsen, B.B. and Lings, I., (2013). Dynamic capabilities and performance: strategy, structure and environment. Long range planning, 46(1-2), pp.72-96.
- Willens, C. (2009). Armstrong’s Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (11th ed.)20092Michael Armstrong. Armstrong’s Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (11th ed.). London: Kogan Page 2009. 1088 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7494-5242-1 UK £39.50 (paperback). Industrial and Commercial Training, 41(6), pp.344–346.
- Williams, T. A., Gruber, D. A., Sutcliffe, K. M., Shepherd, D. A., & Zhao, E. Y. (2017).Organizational response to adversity: Fusing crisis management and resilience research streams. Academy of Management Annals, 11(2), 733–769. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0134.
- Wilkinson, A., and Wood, G. (2017). Global trends and crises, comparative capitalism and HRM. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28(18), 2503–2518. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1331624.
- Willig, C. (2013). Introducing qualitative research in psychology: adventures in theory and method. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Willig, C. and Wendy Stainton Rogers (2017). The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology. 2nd ed. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

- Wood, G. and Budhwar, P. (2016). Brexit and Beyond: The BJM and Unforeseen Events. British Journal of Management, 27(4), pp.680–681.
- Wood, G., Cooke, F. L., Demirbag, M., and Kwong, C. (2018). International human resource management in contexts of high uncertainties. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29(7), 1365–1373. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192. 2018.1477547.
- World Bank Group, (2016). The World Bank Group A to Z 2016. World Bank Publications.
- World Bank (2020). The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World. Retrieved from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/ feature/2020/06/08/the- global-economic-outlook-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic-a-changed-world.
- Wright, P.M., and McMahan, G.C. (1992). Theoretical Perspectives for Strategic Human Resource Management. Journal of Management, 18(2), pp.295–320.
- Wright, P.M., McMahan, G.C. and McWilliams, A. (1994). Human resources and sustained competitive advantage: a resource-based perspective. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 5(2), pp.301–326.
- Wright, P.M., Dunford, B.B. and Snell, S.A. (2001). Human resources and the resource-based view of the firm. Journal of Management, [online] 27(6), pp.701–721. Available at:http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=cahrswp [Accessed 17 Oct. 2019].
- Wright, P.M., Gardner, T.M. and Moynihan, L.M. (2003). The impact of HR practices on the performance of business units. Human Resource Management

Journal, [online] 13(3), pp.21–36. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2003.tb00096.x [Accessed 26 Feb. 2019].

- Wright, C. (2008). Reinventing human resource management: Business partners, internal consultants, and the limits to professionalization. Human Relations, 61(8), pp.1063–1086.
- Wright, P.M. and McMahan, G.C., (2011). Exploring human capital: putting 'human'back into strategic human resource management. Human resource management journal, 21(2), pp.93-104.
- Wright, M., Wilson, N., Gilligan, J., Bacon, N. and Amess, K. (2016). Brexit, Private Equity and Management. British Journal of Management, 27(4), pp.682–686.
- Wright, P.M. and Ulrich, M.D., (2017). A road well traveled: The past, present, and future journey of strategic human resource management. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 4, pp.45-65.
- Yin, R.K. (1993). Applications of case study research. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. (1994). Case study research: Design and methods . Beverly Hills.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). Case study research: design and methods. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R.K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods. 4th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Yin, R.K. (2012). Applications of case study research. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

- Yin, R.K. (2014). Case study research and applications: Design and methods. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yunis, M., Jung, J. and Chen, S., (2013). TQM, strategy, and performance: a firm-level analysis. International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management.
- Zakaria, N., Zainal, S.R.M. and Nasurdin, A.M., (2011). Investigating the role of human resource management practices on the performance of SME: A conceptual framework. Journal of global management, 3(1), pp.74-92.
- Zheng, C., Morrison, M. and O’Neill, G. (2006). An empirical study of high-performance HRM practices in Chinese SMEs. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 17(10), pp.1772–1803.
- Zheng, D., Chen, J., Huang, L. and Zhang, C., (2013). E-government adoption in public administration organizations: integrating institutional theory perspective and resource-based view. European Journal of Information Systems, 22(2), pp.221-234.
- Zikmund, W. G (2003). Business Research Methods. 7th Edition. USA. Thomson-South Western.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

First Phase Data Collection: Interview Guides / Questions for the Study

SECTION 'A'

RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

1. What is your nationality?

2. Which position do you currently hold?

3. Job type
   a) Permanent []
   b) Temporary []
   c) Fixed term []
   d) Contract []

4. How many years have you worked in your company?

1-2 years [] 2-5 years [ ] 5-10 years [ ] 10 years and above [ ]

COMPANY PROFILE

5. How many years has your company been in business or established?

   □ Less than 3years □ 3 -7 years □ 7- 15 years □ More than 15 years

6. What best describes your company type?

   □Private □Public □Partnership □Family-Owned Business

7. Is the company (please tick as appropriate)

   □Nationally □Internationally

8. Number of employees in the company approximately.

   □ 50 -100 □ 101-250 □ 251 or more

9. What is the sector or industry of your company?

Industry / Sector	**Tick**
Services, Tourism / Leisure	
Finance, Insurance	
Manufacturing and Allied, Energy and petroleum, Mining	
Transportation and Public Utilities Automobile sector	
Retail Trade or Wholesale Trade	
Real Estate, Construction	
Other (Please tick)	

SECTION 'B'

TALENT MANAGEMENT

1. Does the company have a specialist HR manager?
   i. Yes []   ii. No []

2. Does your company have a formal HR department?
   i. Yes []   ii. No []

3. What are the known HR-related challenges and issues in your company? How are they solved in your company?

4. Does your company have a talent management system? Why did your company establish a talent management system?

5. Does your company have an official definition of "Talent" and "Talent Management"? How is the best worker/talent defined in your company?

6. In your opinion, what is the difference between Talent Management and HRM?

7. What are the HR and Talent Management practices present in your company?

8. Is there any connection between talent management and your company business strategy? How does your company align talent management and business strategy?

9. What is the top priority of your company — how could talent help support this goal?

10. Why do you think having talent is important to your company?

11. Which position or role takes the responsibility in managing and retaining talent in your company? What do they do?

12. Are you involved in managing talent in the company? How? Who else is involved in this role? What do they do?

13. Do the company's top executives (including CEO and other managers) or employees participate in talent management initiatives or programs? What talent management programs do they usually participate in? What role do they play?

14. What is HR's role in your company talent management initiatives? What is the Business role in company talent management initiatives?

15. What methods have your company been using to identify and attract talent? What are the most effective methods? And why?

16. What methods have your company been using to develop talent? What are the most effective methods? And why?

17. What methods have your company been using to retain talent? What are the most effective talent retention methods? And why?

18. How long do your employees stay with the company on average until they leave? Do you know what the main reasons for leaving are? Or why do some the employee stay with the company for a long time?

19. How does your company measure or evaluate talent management outcomes? If your company would like to evaluate its talent management result, what criteria would it like to use or have been using?

20. What factors have the most impact on your company talent management effectiveness?

21. What challenges are your company facing in managing talent? How does it deal with the issues of managing talents?

22. What challenges and problems are your company facing in retaining talents? How does it deal with the issues of retaining talents?

SECTION 'C'

MANAGING TALENTS IN TURBULENT SITUATIONS – (*e.g.*, BREXIT)

1. How do you feel about Brexit in general? What do you think the outcome of Brexit will be for the UK? And why?

2. Do you think the Brexit process (*i.e.*, the period for Brexit) has any impact on your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

3. Do you think the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

4. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on talented employees in your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

5. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on talented employees in your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

6. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on the talent management system of your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

7. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on the talent management system of your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

8. Do you think that the talent management system of your company will help boost the morale of employees in a turbulent period?

9. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on your company's recruitment and selection requirements? If yes, in what ways and why? If no, why?

10. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on the recruitment and selection requirements of your company? If yes, in what and why? If no, why?

11. Has recruitment and selection requirements in your company changed during the Brexit process? If yes, what has changed and why? If no, why?

12. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on your company's motivation and reward system? If yes, in what ways and why? If no, why?

13. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on the motivation and reward system of your company? If yes, in what and why? If no, why?

14. Has the motivation and reward system in your company changed during the Brexit process? If yes, what has changed and why? If no, why?

15. How does your company motivate and reward staff during a turbulent situation like Brexit?

16. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on your company's training and development methods? If yes, in what ways and why? If no, why?

17. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on the training and development methods of your company? If yes, in what and why? If no, why?

18. Has the training and development methods in your company changed during the Brexit process? If yes, what has changed and why? If no, why?

19. Do you think that the Brexit process has any impact on the performance appraisal system of your company? If yes, in what ways and why? If no, why?

20. Do you think that the outcome of Brexit will have any impact on the performance appraisal system of your company? If yes, in what and why? If no, why?

21. Has the performance appraisal system in your company changed during the Brexit process? If yes, what has changed and why? If no, why?

22. Do you think you or your colleagues have learned something during this Brexit period? If yes, what, and why? If no, why? Do you think the outcome of Brexit will have an impact on it?

23. How do you see your company HR now (*i.e.*, during the Brexit period)? How do you see the future of HR in your company (*i.e.*, after the Brexit outcome)? Why?

APPENDIX B

Second Phase Data Collection: Interview Guides / Questions for the Study

SECTION 'A'

TALENT MANAGEMENT

1. What does talent mean in your company? - How is the best worker/talent defined in your company?

2. What are the HR and Talent Management practices present in your company?

3. What is the top priority of your company — how could talent help support this goal?

4. Why do you think having talent is important to your company?

5. Are you involved in managing talent in the company? How? Who else is involved in this role? What do they do?

6. What methods have your company been using to identify and attract talent? What are the most effective methods? And why?

7. What methods have your company been using to develop talent? What are the most effective methods? And why?

8. What methods have your company been using to retain talent? What are the most effective talent retention methods? And why?

9. How does your company measure or evaluate talent management outcomes? If your company would like to evaluate its talent management result, what criteria would it like to use or have been using?

10. What factors have the most impact on your company talent management effectiveness?

11. What challenges are your company facing in managing talent? How does it deal with the issues of managing talents in turbulent times like Covid-19 and Brexit?

SECTION ‘B’

MANAGING TALENTS IN TURBULENT SITUATIONS – (*e.g.*, BREXIT)

12. How do you feel about Brexit (*i.e.*, UK leaving EU) now? What is your thought on it?

13. Do you think that Brexit (*i.e.*, UK leaving EU) now has impacted your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

14. Do you think that Brexit (*i.e.*, UK leaving EU) now has impacted talented employees in your company? If yes, what, and why? If no, why?

15. What are the most affected HR practices because of Brexit and Why?

16. How do you see your company HR now (*i.e.*, since UK left the EU)? Why?

SECTION ‘C’

MANAGING TALENTS IN TURBULENT SITUATIONS – (*e.g.*, COVID-19)

17. How do you feel about Covid-19? What is your thought on it?

18. Do you think Covid-19 has impacted on your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

19. Do you think Covid-19 has impacted the workforce size of your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

20. Do you think Covid-19 has changed the ways of working in your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

21. Do you think Covid-19 is has impacted employee wellbeing in your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

22. Do you think Covid-19 has impacted staffing (working hours/conditions of employment) in your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

23. Do you think Covid-19 has impacted the talent management process of your company? If yes, what way and why? If no, why?

24. What are the most affected HR practices in your company, and why?

25. Do you think Covid-19 has impacted on employee turnover of your company? If yes, in what ways and why? If no, why?

26. How do you see your company HR now (*i.e.,* Covid-19 period)? How do you see the future of HR in your company (*i.e.,* post-Covid-19)? Why?

APPENDIX C

First Phase Data Collection Study Letter – Letter of Consent

Ms. Bertha Dzifa Kumodji

Birmingham City University

Birmingham City University Business School,

Curzon Building,

4 Cardigan Street,

Birmingham

B4 7BD

Friday February 15, 2019

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir / Madam,

LETTER OF CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Ms Bertha Dzifa Kumodji, a PhD student at Birmingham City University Business School, Birmingham City University (United Kingdom). I am conducting my doctoral study on the topic: ***"Exploring Talent Management practices in SMEs in the UK in a turbulent Context: Lessons from Brexit & Covid-19 Times"***

The main aim and objective of carrying out this study is: to explore and investigate how a turbulent process like Brexit impacts on managing talents within SMEs in the UK. In particular, the study will shed light on the following:

i. The applicability of the notion of talent management in the SME context.
ii. The current state of talent management in the UK SMEs.

iii. The impact of a turbulent situation like Brexit on talent management and retainment in UK SMEs.

Overall, the study will seek to contribute to expand the understanding of HR and TM practices in SMEs during a turbulent period.

This study will use a multi-case study approach that will include four small and medium enterprises in the UK, specifically the Midlands area. This study will gather the views of owners/CEOs, general managers and directors, middle and line managers and employees from each case-study through conducting face to face interviews and online survey.

The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.

- Participation is completely voluntary.
- Participants or Respondents are free to withdraw their consent at any time.
- Information and data obtained will be analysed by the researcher solely for the purpose of this study and will not adversely affect any participants.
- The researcher will tape record each interview, with the interviewee's permission.
- During the study process, sensitive or confidential information will not be collected.
- Material collected or obtained will be kept in the strictest confidence and in a secure place.
- The researcher will make detailed notes during each interview and use the tape recordings to check the accuracy of the transcribed interview notes.
- The typed record of each interview will be sent to the interviewee to verify that it is an accurate record of the interview.
- After data analysis, all the tapes, drafts, etc. will be destroyed to prevent any misuse.
- The final written thesis or study will ensure anonymity by not using any actual names or identifying characteristics of any participants or respondents.

In addition to the interviews, I would like as a researcher to request your company to provide me with a circulation list or help in circulating and communicating the online survey questionnaires to employees. Again, I would be much grateful to gain access to documentation relating to the criteria of defining, identifying, managing, developing, and retaining employees in the company.

Therefore, with this letter I formally ask for your participation as a company in this study. Please indicate this in the section at the end of this letter. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this study, please do not hesitate to contact any of the undersigned:

1. ***Dr. Alexandros Psychogios***

Professor in International HRM

Management, Human Resources & Enterprise

Birmingham City University Business School

City Centre Campus

Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Str.

Birmingham B4 7BD

Email: alexandros.psychogios@bcu.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 7902881999

2. ***Dr. Stefania Paladini***

Reader in Economics & Global Security

Birmingham City University Business School

City Centre Campus,

Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Str.

Birmingham B4 7BD

Email: stefania.paladini@bcu.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 0121 331 7721

Thank you in advance for taking part in this study.

Ms Bertha Dzifa Kumodji

PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student

Email: *bertha.kumodji@mail.bcu.ac.uk*

Tel: *+44 (0) 7585266453*

Please indicate approval for your participation in the study by circling as applicable:

The company wish / do not wish to participate in the study titled: ***"Exploring Talent Management practices in SMEs in the UK in a turbulent Context: Lessons from Brexit & Covid-19 Times"***

Signature: ……………………………………………………….

Date: …………………………………………………………

APPENDIX D

Second Phase Data Collection Study Letter – Follow-up Email Consent

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT SECOND PHASE OF RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

Trust you are well and keeping safe.

As per the requirements of my research methodology, I would like to request for a second phase of data collection with your company.

With the ongoing pandemic, I would like to seek permission to contact your employees previously interviewed to further request for a follow up (*i.e.*, second phase) interview:

This interview will be conducted remotely (*i.e.*, Telephone, Skype, Zoom, Ms Teams etc.) based on the participants' preference and convenience.

As usual, the interview will take approximately 45mins to 1 hour.

- Participation is completely voluntary.
- Participants are free to withdraw their consent at any time.
- Information and data obtained will be analysed by the researcher solely for the purpose of this study and will not adversely affect any participants.
- The researcher will audio record each interview, with the interviewee's permission.
- During the study process, sensitive or confidential information will not be collected.
- Material collected or obtained will be kept in the strictest confidence and in a secure place.
- The final written thesis or study will ensure anonymity by not using any actual names or identifying characteristics of any participants or respondents.

In case that you have any question please do not hesitate to contact me either via my email address: ***bertha.kumodji@mail.bcu.ac.uk*** or my phone number: ***07850766349***.

Thank you in once again for your approval and help on my research.

Best Regards.

Ms. Bertha Dzifa Kumodji

Doctoral Researcher

Centre for Brexit Studies

Faculty of Business, Law & Social Sciences

Birmingham City University

The Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Street

Birmingham, B4 7BD, UK

APPENDIX E

Interviewee Consent Form

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

Interview Consent Form

Study Title: "Exploring Talent Management practices in SMEs in the UK in a turbulent Context: Lessons from Brexit & Covid-19 Times"

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have been given the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that any information collected during the study will be audio-recorded and direct quotes used, these will be anonymous and remain confidential	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my decision whether to participate in this study will have no negative impacts on me either personally or professionally.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I wish to be contacted the second time for a follow-up interview	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree to take part in the above study.	Yes ☐	No ☐

Declaration by participant:

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name:

Signature:	Date:

Declaration by researcher:

I have given a verbal explanation of the study project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

Signature:	Date:

<u>APPENDIX F</u>

<u>Participant / Interviewee Information Sheet</u>

BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

<u>Participant Information Sheet - Taking part in an Interview</u>

<u>Study Title</u>: "Exploring Talent Management practices in SMEs in the UK in a turbulent Context: Lessons from Brexit & Covid-19 Times"

1. Introduction

You are invited to take part in an interview for a PhD study titled: 'exploring the impact of Brexit process on talent management practices of SMEs in the UK: A Stakeholder's View'.

This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the study project. Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the study is being carried out and what exactly it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information sheet carefully and to ask any questions that you may have. Talk to others about the study if you wish and do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide you want to take part in the study project, you will be asked to sign the consent form. By signing it, you are telling us that you:

- understand what you have read
- consent to take part in the study project
- you would like to share your experiences with the researcher

2. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of Brexit process on talent management practices of SMEs in the UK. Overall, the study will seek to stimulate and address the gap of research in the neglected area of talent management in SMEs.

3. Who is organising and funding this study?

This study is being funded and conducted as part of a Higher Degree by Research (*i.e.*, PhD research project) at the Birmingham City University Business School (Centre for

Brexit Studies), United Kingdom. The researcher in the study will not be paid for including you in this study or receive any personal financial benefit from your involvement in this study project.

4. **Do I have to take part?**

Participation is not a requirement; it is up to you to decide whether you would like to participate or not. If you agree to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time, even without providing a reason. No questions will be asked if you stop.

5. **What will happen to me if I decide to take part?**

You will be contacted to arrange an interview at a safe time and place that suits you. Any questions you may have about the interview or study will be answered.

6. **What would the interview be like?**

You will be asked if you are willing to have the interview video or audio tape recorded. You will be given the ‘consent form’. You only sign this form if you agree to take part in the interview. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep. The interview will be a little like a conversation. You will be asked to talk about your experiences or opinions in relation to managing talent in turbulent situations like Brexit. Your views and experience are just what the study is interested in exploring.

7. **How long would the interview take?**

The time it takes for an interview varies, depending on how much you have to say, but the interview will last at least an hour. If you would prefer, we can interview you on two different occasions. Remember, if you want to stop the interview at any time, you can do so without giving any reason at all.

8. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Participating in this study is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort.

9. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no benefits for those people participating in the study, it is hoped that this work will seek to contribute to the understanding of HR and TM practices in SMEs during a turbulent period.

10. How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. If you decide to leave after an interview has taken place, all video recordings, transcripts and typing of your interview would be destroyed. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them and you can withdraw from it at any time for any reason. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from the study, we will not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for us to do so.

11. Will my taking part be anonymised?

Yes. All the information that will be collected about you during the study will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your institution or organization will also not be identified or identifiable. Your data will be anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Any data collected about you in the online survey will be stored in a form protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies.

12. What will happen to the data?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Ethical and legal practice will be followed and all information about you will be handled in confidence. The electronic and recorded data will be stored on university computers, which are password protected. Only the researcher and supervisory team involved in this study and regulatory authorities will have access to the data, files, and any audio tapes. All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Your information will be securely stored by the research team according to university policy in a way that means you cannot be identified from the information you give us.

13. What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings or results of the study may be published in a scientific journal or presented at a conference. However, your identity will remain anonymous in all publications and presentations of the findings. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Your institution or organisation will not be identified in any report or publication. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the study, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher. At any point throughout the study or after completion the researcher can provide feedback on any questions you may have regarding them. You will be offered the opportunity to be informed of the results of any of the measurements taken throughout the study.

14. Who has reviewed this study?

All research undergone at Birmingham City University Business School, United Kingdom is looked at and approved or endorsed by Birmingham City University's Research Ethics Committee to protect your interests, safety, rights, wellbeing, and dignity. The University Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

15. Contacts for further information

If you require further information about the study, you can contact a member of the university research or supervisory team. They are:

Name	Position	Email Address
Ms. Bertha Dzifa Kumodji	PhD Student (Researcher)	***bertha.kumodji@mail.bcu.ac.uk***
Dr. Alexandros Psychogios	Professor in International HRM Management, Human Resources & Enterprises	***alexandros.psychogios@bcu.ac.uk***
Dr. Stefania Paladini	Reader in Economics & Global Security	***stefania.paladini@bcu.ac.uk***
University Research Office	Faculty of Business, Law & Social Sciences (BLSS Ethics)	***BLSSEthics@bcu.ac.uk***

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

APPENDIX G

Study Ethical Approval

Faculty of Business, Law & Social Sciences Research Office

Curzon Building, 4 Cardigan Street

Birmingham

B4 7BD

BLSSethics@bcu.ac.uk;

11/Mar/2019

Ms BERTHA DZIFA KUMODJI bertha.kumodji@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Dear BERTHA DZIFA,

Re: KUMODJI /1975 /R (A) /2019 /Feb /BLSS FAEC **-** EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF BREXIT PROCESS ON TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF SMEs: A STAKEHOLDER'S VIEW

Thank you for your application and documentation regarding the above activity. I am pleased to take Chair’s Action and approve this activity.

Provided that you are granted Permission of Access by relevant parties (meeting requirements as laid out by them), you may begin your activity.

I can also confirm that any person participating in the project is covered under the University’s insurance arrangements.

Please note that ethics approval only covers your activity as it has been detailed in your ethics application. If you wish to make any changes to the activity, then you must submit an Amendment application for approval of the proposed changes.

Examples of changes include (but are not limited to) adding a new study site, a new method of participant recruitment, adding a new method of data collection and/or change of Project Lead.

Please also note that the Business, Law and Social Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee should be notified of any serious adverse effects arising because of this activity.

If for any reason the Committee feels that the activity is no longer ethically sound, it reserves the right to withdraw its approval. In the unlikely event of issues arising which would lead to this, you will be consulted.

Keep a copy of this letter along with the corresponding application for your records as evidence of approval.

If you have any queries, please contact BLSSethics@bcu.ac.uk;

I wish you every success with your activity.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Emma Bridger

On behalf of the Business, Law and Social Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee