TITLE: THE ROLE AND PARTICIPATION OF LINE MANAGERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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ASTRACT

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) aims to raise individual performance to achieve organizational strategies, and the line manager is considered by the scholars to be one of the most important agents in its implementation. This research seeks to understand the role of this agent in strategic HR management models through multiple case studies carried out in three prominent organizations in their sectors of activity in Brazil. The results of the present study show that companies that adopt the SHRM to a greater extent, give the line manager greater responsibility in the implementation of human resources management practices, being the HR specialist a partner and facilitator of this process, findings consistent with what is recommended by normative literature in HR management. In addition, it was identified the importance of the decisions regarding the HR practices being shared between the line manager and the HR professional so that the implementation takes place in an effective way. The transference of the decision making to the manager is most frequently and intensely in recruitment and selection practices and in training and development. It was verified that the companies that present a more structured SHRM, show that they are more concerned with the processes of assigning the role of the line manager, and the contingent factors of the company define the specific characteristics of these roles and responsibilities. Therefore, there is greater agreement on these assignments, both from his own perspective and from the HR specialists. The research has shown that the process of implementing the SHRM by the line manager is a moving target, a permanent process that, in order to maintain itself, must always be the focus of attention of the company's managers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, a substantial body of research has examined the relationship between SHRM and organizational performance (Guest, 2011). The studies on the subject consider that an effective implementation of SHRM implies to hold the entire organization accountable, and not only the HR professional (Azmi & Mushtag, 2015). The existing studies concentrate on the role of the HR professional, not including the manager, a fundamental figure for the SHRM, since it plays an important role in mediating the company's relationship with employees (Valverde, Ryan, & Soler, 2006 , Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, & Looise, 2013). The theories on SHRM argue that only the combination of HR policies and practices established, shared, and implemented by line managers will be able to direct employee behavior toward organizational goals (Bianchi et al., 2017). The main reason for adopting such an approach is the proximity that the line manager has with the reality of the employees.

This study aims to analyze the role and participation of line managers in the implementation of the strategic human resource management in organizations that operate in Brazil. To achieve this general objective, this research will analyze the implementation processes of SHRM in companies that operate in Brazil, identifying the roles and responsibilities assigned to line managers. In addition, you will see how these roles and responsibilities are spread across the relationship between the line manager and the HR specialist, identifying who are the key players in making decisions about a set of HR practices.

These objectives are justified by the scarcity of studies on the subject in Brazil (Bianchi et al., 2017). In the survey conducted by Bianchi et al. (2017), the authors identified that the main object of study is the individual who acts as a leader, but in most cases the role of that leader as a person manager within the organization has not been analyzed. This shows that the study of this issue and the strategic management of people still presents gaps, since they are mostly studied separately (Bianchi et al., 2017). For this reason, this study seeks to present a theoretical and practical contribution to the field of SHRM, deepening the understanding of the role of the line manager in its implementation.

In order to investigate the role of the line manager in the implementation of SHRM, we chose to use a qualitative approach, characterized by a multiple case study of HR strategic management models adopted by three organizations operating in Brazil. To present these results this article was structured in six sections after this introduction. The next topic deals with the theoretical framework that guides the research questions and guides the proposed analyzes. The third part presents the methodology adopted for data processing and production of results. In the sequence the comparative analysis and discussion of the cases are presented. In the fifth part the results will be presented, and, in the last section, the main considerations of the work are highlighted, indicating limitations of the research and ways for new studies on the subject.

2. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

2.1. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

According to Kaufman (2009), studies related to people management emerge at the end of the 19th century, initially focused on industrial relations, through personnel

management, to human resource management in the early 1980s. Two schools had a strong influence in the consolidation of studies in this area. The first, known as the "Michigan Model," more "instrumentalist and utilitarian," saw employees as a resource of the organization that should be managed rationally. The second, the more "humanist and developmentalist" Harvard model, considered that firms could gain competitive advantage throught the relationship with their employees (Kaufman, 2009).

Harvard School was the first advocate of line manager involvement in people management. According to this approach, the HR professional should define policies that guide people management practices, while the line manager must take responsibility for aligning the policies with the organizational strategy. That is when the term strategic human resources management (SHRM) emerges. SHRM is associated with a more strategic role aligned with the company's objectives (Legge, 2006). Armstrong (2006) defines this term as a strategic approach to people management with a focus on achieving organizational goals. It involves the policies and practices (recruitment, selection, training, development and shutdown, for example) that a company uses to organize work related to people management (Boxall, Purcell, & Wright, 2009). Armstrong (2006) assumes that human capital is a source of competitive advantage, because the employees are the ones responsible for implementing the strategic plans. To ensure competitive advantage, organizations must recognize that human resource management is a significant component of the company's strategy (Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, & Rigsbee, 2007; Ulrich et al., 2008).

An obstacle to the concept of SHRM, however, is the difficulty of it becoming a reality within organizations (Armstrong, 2006). For this to happen, organizations must focus on two key stages of the process: strategy formulation and implementation. The first defines HR policies and practices related to their different processes, which will enable the company to achieve its strategic objectives. The second is to start them up. It is worth mentioning that the implementation of a strategy is not only linked to formal written policies, but also to the actions of managers and employees, which will be accepted or confronted throughout the process. This is because strategic intentions are shared among all, but daily actions will define or reformulate these strategies (Armstrong, 2006).

What will make a difference in the organizational results is not the formulation of the policies and practices of SHRM, but its implementation, which is still one of the great problems of this management (Guest, 2011).

The review of the literature on SHRM shows that there are two agents who are the main protagonists in the formulation and implementation of SHRM, the HR professional and the line manager. The literature about SHRM has predominantly addressed the role of the HR professional, neglecting the importance of the line manager in its implementation.

2.2. The role of the line manager in SHRM

Effective implementation of SHRM will only happen if the line manager is involved, since he is a critical agent for the high commitment and motivation of the employees. This professional is also responsible for implementing cultural changes within the organization, associated with the company's strategic decisions. Thus, the involvement of the line manager in the decision-making, processes, practices and definition of the SHRM budget has a direct influence on the effectiveness and status of the SHRM and consequently on the performance of the organization (Azmi & Mushtag, 2015).

Since the line manager is directly involved in SHRM, the speed of decision making on SHRM issues is likely to increase (Renwick, 2003; Larsen & Brewster, 2003). This is because it can relate people to other aspects of day-to-day management, in addition to having a better alignment with other requirements of the operation (Budhwar, 2000a). An example of this is

pay decisions relating to people management, which is an important component of operating costs. The line manager, whose objective is to reduce costs and increase the organization's profit, should be responsible for these decisions (Brewster et al., 2015).

There is a human resource system designed that is designed by the HR department, a real system implemented by line managers and a system that is perceived by employees (Nishii & Wright, 2007). All of them are important to explain the effects of human resource management on performance, and employee performance results are directly influenced by the line manager's performance, since these are critical agents in aligning this process (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007 Hutchinson & Purcell, 2010). This professional should therefore be involved with the main areas of the SHRM (attract, retain, motivate and develop staff) so that he can allocate his time, money and energy in the development of human resources, thus ensuring the execution of the business strategy (Brewster & Larsen, 1992).

In their studies, Sikora and Ferris (2014) also argued that the effective implementation of SHRM by managers can decrease the intention to leave the organization, as well as increase performance, job satisfaction and employee perception of procedural justice. Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), for example, have identified that employees' affective organizational commitment is directly influenced by their satisfaction with the HR practices and their perception of line manager support. This question leads us to the first proposition of this work:

Proposition 1: Companies that are adopting strategic HR management define specific roles and responsibilities for the line manager.

For the line manager to be able to assume his responsibilities at the SHRM, he needs to be clear about his role. The term "role" has emerged in the sociological literature about a set of behaviors appropriate to a social position, or status. This concept refers to expected or appropriate behavior and differs from the way it is put into practice, which is called "role performance" (Turner, 1956). Some authors, such as Goode (1960), address the concept of "role tension" that arises when there is a conflict or role overload. The role stress causes the agent to decide where to allocate his resources, which is related to the value that the agent assigns to each of the roles that he needs to exercise. This leads us to the second proposition of this study:

Proposition 2: In the companies with greater maturity in the SHRM, the line managers present greater clarity regarding the role attributed to them in the SHRM.

2.3. Devolution of SHRM to Line Manager

Recent studies on the distribution of responsibilities in SHRM confirm that they are being transferred from the specialized HR professional to the line manager (Maxwell & Watson, 2006; Perry & Kulik, 2008). Hoogendoorn and Brewster (1992) called this transfer of tasks from the HR professional to the line manager as "devolution". This process is related to the degree to which people management practices become the responsibility of the line manager and not the HR specialist (Armstrong & Cooke, 1992; Larsen & Brewster, 2003; Renwick, 2003). Brewster et al. (2015) analyzed institutional factors and the influences of these factors on the assignment of SHRM responsibilities to the line manager. The authors identified that about half of the organizations surveyed attribute SHRM responsibilities to the line. Larger companies, those who are more unionized and those with a strategic HR

department are the least likely to transfer the responsibilities of SHRM to this professional.

Other theorists have studied factors at the company and national levels to understand their influence on the devolution of decisions on SHRM to the line manager (Gooderham et al., 2015). At the company level, they identified that the greater the power of the HR function, the less likely it is to deliver the HR activities to the line manager. As for factors at the national level, the transfer of decision to line management is more likely in societies with stricter employment laws and less power distance. Brewster (2007) emphasizes the importance of the systemic vision and the local specificity, characteristics that define the attribution of the activities of people management for the line manager. This literature bases the third proposition of this study:

Proposition 3: In companies that adopt to a greater extent SHRM, the main decisions about the HR practices are being devoted from the HR professional to the line manager.

2.4. Partnership between the HR professional and the line manager

The roles and responsibilities of line managers and HR specialists vary by organization. SHRM can be implemented predominantly in isolation by one of these agents, or in a manner shared by both (Brandl et al., 2012). Researches show a strong correlation between the sharing of decisions in this scope between these professionals and the performance of the organization (Dany, Guedri, & Hatt, 2008).

An emerging perspective on this issue is the theory of social capital, which refers to social relations within the organization that can deliver a positive return to business (Adler & Kwon, 2002, quoted by Sanders & Frenkel, 2011). Building a strong partnership between the HR specialist and the line manager allows greater social cohesion between groups, building a shared framework of references, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and thus raising the performance of all. The social bonds between the two agents also increase the positive perception of the employees in relation to the support of the line manager, which improves the satisfaction in the work and thus diminishes the intention of the professionals to leave the organization (Sanders & Frenkel, 2001).

Whittaker and Marchington (2003) emphasize in their research the need to establish integrated actions between the HR specialist and the line manager to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization. Perceiving a collaborative relationship between this manager and the HR professional positively influences the line manager's impression of the company's future performance (Chen, Hsu, & Yip, 2011).

It is worth mentioning, however, that this partnership does not always occur in a positive way and may lead to conflicts between the two agents. One of the issues that can negatively influence this relationship between the HR professional and the line manager is the lack of clarity of the role of each of the agents (Maxwell & Watson, 2006). This literature bases the fourth proposition of this study:

Proposition 4: In companies that adopt in a greater extent SHRM, there is a greater partnership between the HR professional and the line manager in the process of implementing the HR practices.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research adopted the qualitative approach, characterized by a multiple case study of SHRM models adopted by three organizations, seeking to understand the role of the line manager in this organizational process. We chose to use a multiple case study, composed of

two cases with the same characteristics and one case with opposite characteristics (Yin, 2010). As the process studied is related to the SHRM, the cases with similar characteristics should present similar characteristics regarding the role of the line manager in the implementation of the practices of the SHRM, and the case with opposite characteristics must present traces contrary to them.

There was an initial stage in which elements were searched to select the organizations that could offer better conditions to participate in the case studies of this research. The objective was to have as sample two companies that operate in Brazil and intend to implement a SHRM, and a company that is characterized as the case of contrast. One of the ways to identify the SHRM is the significance that the HR function has in relation to the company strategy (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Reichel and Lazarova (2013) suggest that a strategically positioned HR department has more power than an administrative HR function that is just a service provider.

Therefore, the power of the HR area can be an indicator of a strategic HR within the company. For Sheehan et al. (2014) this occurs when the HR executive has a seat on the company board that defines the organization's main strategic guidelines, since this agent will influence strategic decisions related to people management. The HR executive being involved from the outset (as opposed to a later stage) in the strategic discussions of the organization can also define the power of the HR function, since it indicates that this agent is acting as a strategic partner, participating in the construction of the guidelines (Buyens & De Vos, 2001). A third way to identify companies that intend to implement SHRM is to verify that the human resources management model has formally defined strategic guidelines aligned with the organization's strategy (Albuquerque, 2002). Initially, several Brazilian companies were consulted in which three initial questions were asked:

1. Does the main HR officer sit on the board of the company or is part of the group responsible for the main strategic guidelines?
2. Is the main person in charge of human resources involved from the beginning with the development of the business strategy?
3. Does the area or model of human resources management have formally defined strategic guidelines?

Three companies were selected: two that had affirmative answers to the three questions, these being considered as the companies that intend to implement a SHRM, and a company that did not have an affirmative answer in all the questions, which was considered as the opposite case of the present study.

Case 1: analyzed the people management system of the Arcos Dorados company, the world's largest McDonald's franchise, which has operated restaurants in Brazil since 2006.
Case 2: focuses on the company Votorantim Cimentos, brasilian company which has been present in the construction materials segment since 1933.
Case 3: as the case of contrast of the present work. In agreement with the representatives of the company, the confidentiality of the organization will be maintained, hiding its name. It refers to a company founded in 2011, which operates in the fashion e-commerce market in Latin America.

To guarantee the validity and reliability of the results of the case study, multiple sources of evidence have been used, which have generated different access paths to the

studied phenomenon, allowing the triangulation of data and information (Flick, 2004, p.41-42; Yin, 2010, p.142). In this study we used the analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews. It was decided to conduct interviews with the HR manager, HR specialists and line managers at the different hierarchical levels to identify the differences and similarities at each level. This research will use the line manager terminology at the operational, tactical, and strategic level to classify the different hierarchical levels. Table 1 presents the synthesis of the data collection of the 3 cases, composed of the interviews and documents made available by the companies participating in the research.

Table 1: Synthesis of data collection step

Companies	No. Interviews	Total amount of hours	Documents
Case 1	**Total 9**	**7:49:30**	**7**
HRM	1	00:53:42	
HRS	2	01:51:15	
LM Operational	1	00:39:12	
LM Tactical	4	03:39:17	
LM Strategic	1	00:46:04	
Case 2	**Total 13**	**10:43:18**	**5**
HRM	1	01:06:44	
HRS	2	01:54:42	
LM Operational	4	03:08:03	
LM Tactical	3	02:10:12	
LM Strategic	3	02:23:37	
Case 3	**Total 10**	**7:49:16**	**4**
HRM	1	00:46:06	
HRS	2	01:59:37	
LM Operational	1	00:37:57	
LM Tactical	4	02:25:02	
LM Strategic	2	02:00:34	
Total	**32**	**26:22:04**	**16**

Caption: HRM - HR Manager; HRS - HR Specialist; LM - Line Manager.
Source: authored by the author

The technique of content analysis was used for the analysis of the data, suggested by Bardin (2009). This research adopted the thematic categorical analysis that gathers the information grouped by categories. For Bardin (2009), a category system is valid if it can be applied to a set of information, allowing to generate inferences about the studied subject. For this, a network of categories and concepts was formulated, which were transformed into codes, based on the theory raised in the review of the literature and by codes that emerged during the analysis phase of the data.

The expressions in the transcripts of the semistructured interviews and in the collected documents were classified by these units of meaning, using *NVivo software* to encode and categorize the narrative text and to analyze significant patterns. In the environment of this software were inserted the collected documents and the transcripts of the interviews obtained from the audio recordings. This allowed us to obtain ample evidence to respond to the research problem, as well as comparing the documents with the discourse recorded in the interviews, thus guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the study. After the creation of the primary documents, they were divided into families, according to the case, and the respondent of the interview, separated by: HR manager, HR specialist, line manager operational level, line manager tactical level and line manager strategic level. This facilitated extensive reading

and coding and categorization.

First it was done the individual analysis of each of the cases, checking the multiple data source of that organization. Then, the cross-sectional analysis of the results of the cases with a similar profile was carried out, verifying patterns reflected and isolated from the propositions, to understand common aspects and to establish consistent generalizations among the cases, and with the theory. This result was crossed with the results of the contrast case.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CASE DISCUSSION

As a relevant feature of context, it is worth reporting that in the three case studies the entry of a new HR manager is demarcated as a relevant fact. This event is always considered a milestone shift towards the SHRM, which has implications for the roles of all involved, including the line manager. However, each of the three firms studied seems to be at different stages of maturity in the process of implementing SHRM, particularly case 3, which differs from the others as predicted, since it was already chosen as a contrast case.

One of the factors that shows the difference between the stages of maturity in SHRM is related to the history of the organizations. Cases 1 and 2 are companies that have been in the market for the longest time, which have more structured strategic guidelines that help in the definition of HR guidelines and in the construction of policies and practices of people management. Case 3 refers to a newer, fast-growing company and is currently in the process of defining its strategic guidelines, which will guide the policies and practices of SHRM.

Another two points that differentiates the stages of maturity between the cases analyzed is the closer proximity of the HR professional to the line managers at the different hierarchical levels and the fact that the HR specialist has goals related to the outcome of the business. This happens in cases 1 and 2. In case 3, the proximity of the HR professional occurs primarily with line managers at the strategic level, and the HR professional's goals are not directly related to the financial result of the business. Both cases presenting the most internalized SHRM implementation offer a formal line manager training, which does not occur in the case of contrast.

Although cases 1 and 2 are similar in SHRM maturity, they differ from each other. In relation to case 1, its history shows that in the last five years the definition of the service culture and the HR guidelines brought by the new management led the company to draw up HR policies and practices that did not exist previously. Case 2 is about a traditional company of family origin, from the industrial branch, which has more established processes, but also adopted HR guidelines that reinvigorated the company in recent years, with the arrival of a new leader for the area. Because of these differences in the history of both companies, it is possible to identify a higher level of maturity in the process of performance evaluation in case 2 compared to case 1.

About the role assigned to the line manager, in all three cases there are similarities and differences in the perspective of the HR professional and the line manager. In cases 1 and 2, it is possible to identify, from both the HR specialist and the line manager, greater agreement on the role of the line manager in SHRM; whereas, in case 3, deeper differences are presented from the perspective of both agents.

In case 1, both agents identify the development of the employee as being the role of the line manager. The differences relate to the fact that the line manager also emphasizes short-term activities, such as daily follow-up, motivation and guarantee of the implementation of the norms established by HR, while the HR specialist emphasizes the importance of the activities of SHRM in the delivery of results. These characteristics are, in fact, related to the

business model, which prizes, especially in the restaurants, the need for the line manager to execute processes and standards established by the HR specialist.

In case 2, which presents a higher level of maturity in relation to people management, it is possible to identify a greater agreement regarding the role of the line manager in SHRM. Both agents identify the implementation of the SHRM practices, which is in line with what is suggested by the literature, that is, the line manager is primarily responsible for this implementation (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). The development of the employee's career and the importance of knowing and being close to him are also highlighted by the two agents as being one of the roles of the line manager. This is due to the fact that technical knowledge and retention of employees in the company are strategic factors for the organization. From the perspective of the line manager of case 2, the role of the line manager in employee motivation, an element suggested by Azmi and Mushtag (2015) in his studies, is also pointed out. In case 3, the HR specialist considers the role of the line manager to implement people management practices. However, since the company is still in the process of constructing these practices, the line manager does not identify this role so clearly.

The literature review of the present study showed that there are differences regarding the role of the line manager according to the hierarchical level (Jacques, 1988; Billis et al., 1987; Charan et al., 2012). In cases 1 and 2, differences by hierarchical level are discussed by the organization, whereas, in case 3, these differences have not yet been addressed.

About the assignment of roles to the line manager, it is possible to identify more similarities between the line manager and the HR professional in the companies that have demonstrated that they have an implemented SHRM, a factor that suggests a greater effort in the attribution of each of the roles. In case 2, which has more maturity in relation to people management, both agents have identified the implementation of people management practices as being the responsibility of the line manager, which characterizes SHRM (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). Finally, the literature suggests that there are differences in the role of the line manager by hierarchical level. However, this discussion is manifested only in cases that present an implemented SHRM, which present documents describing the competencies and behaviors expected of line managers at each of the hierarchical levels. In case 2 it was not possible to have access to the document, but the use of these documents by the HR specialists was reported. This comparative analysis therefore demonstrates that companies that have a more developed SHRM formally strive to define the role of the line manager in SHRM, a factor that confirms the first proposition of the present study, namely:

Proposition 1: Companies that are adopting SHRM define specific roles and responsibilities for the line manager.

Defining the roles and responsibilities for the line manager at SHRM does not guarantee that this agent is clear about what is expected of him. The lack of clarity about a certain role can lead to a concept called role ambiguity (Kahn, 1964), which will make it difficult to fulfill the demands of this role.

It is possible to verify that in the companies with greater maturity in SHRM there is a more accentuated concern in developing processes to internalize and to qualify the manager in the attributions regarding its role in SHRM. The main cases cited in cases 1 and 2 were: (a) the formal training of the line manager; (b) documentation of the SHRM procedures and the expected behaviors of the line manager; and, finally, (c) the proximity of the HR consultant. This last initiative is in line with the literature, which suggests that low support from the HR professional creates greater role ambiguity for the line manager (Evans, 2017).

In case 3, which does not yet have the SHRM implemented, no procedures have been reported that aim to raise the clarity of the role of the line manager. Regarding the

performance of the HR professionals, in this case of contraposition, it was verified that the reduced number of HR consultants limits the attendance of this professional, being their action directed mainly to the managers at the strategic level.

HR professionals and line managers in cases 1 and 2, who have implemented SHRM more intensively, believe that there is currently greater clarity of the line manager in relation to his / her role. However, the interviewees stressed that this is not the case with all managers, nor fully with each one of them. This is a permanent process of internalization. This fact demonstrates the relevance and the concern of the companies that implemented the SHRM to attend to the second proposition of the present work:

Proposition 2: In the companies that have more maturity in the SHRM, the line managers present greater clarity regarding the role assigned to them in the SHRM.

SHRM can be implemented predominantly in isolation by one of the agents - HR specialist or line manager - or in a shared way, by both (Brandl et al., 2012). The literature suggests that the implementation of SHRM should be carried out predominantly by the line manager, being the HR specialist a partner and facilitator of this process. This movement allows the HR specialist to assume a more strategic role within the organization, helping to define HR policies and practices with a focus on the company's strategic objectives. In this context, the term "devolution", which corresponds to the transfer of people management activities from the HR professional to the line manager (Hoogendoorn & Brewster, 1992), appears in the recent literature. Among the aspects most studied in the SHRM are the activities that involve hiring, training and development, rewards, frame sizing and work relationships (Brewster & Mayhofer, 2012), practices that are analyzed in the present study.

Recruitment and selection practices occur in a similar way, in both cases presenting SHRM and in the opposite case. Although decisions regarding recruitment and selection are made on a shared basis, there is a predominance of the line manager figure. In the opposite case, considering the lower number of HR specialists present in the company, in some situations this process is transferred integrally to the line manager, reducing the involvement and sharing of decisions with the HR specialist.

In the three cases the responsibility for training and development is with the line manager, with the support of the HR professional, but in practice this occurs differently between the cases that present the SHRM and the opposite case. One of the problems identified in this practice concerns the fact that the line manager has more difficulty in carrying out development actions, that is, actions related to the preparation of the employee for future positions, which involve the career management of the employee. According to the literature, employees understand career management as a relational process between them and the line manager. When this process does not happen properly, professionals report more negative perceptions about career growth opportunities and greater intent to leave the organization (Crawshaw & Game, 2015). At this point, it is possible to identify a difference between the cases that present a SHRM and the opposite case. In those there is a greater participation of the HR specialist in the process, giving support and guiding the line manager in the development practices. The HR area offers courses that help the development of employees, an element that does not appear in the case that have not yet implemented the SHRM.

There are also differences in these practices between case 1 and 2. Case 2 is more concerned with employee development. It is strategic for the company to ensure the development and retention of the employee, since the business is based on the need for a

specific technical knowledge. This causes the organization to work with a structured personnel management tool, in which the line manager must build the employee's performance improvement plan and approve it within the system. For case 1, it is more strategic to focus on training practices in the restaurant, since there is a need to guarantee standardization of processes, and many of the employees start the work as their first professional experience.

The literature suggests that there should be greater involvement of line managers in pay and benefit decisions, since the purpose of this agent is to secure the organization's profit - these decisions have a direct impact on organizational results. However, the three cases analyzed show that the HR specialist has a strong involvement in remuneration and benefits decisions, given that this agent is responsible for ensuring fair salary as well as compliance with the company budget.

In case 3, which does not have SHRM implemented, remuneration decisions are made only by the line manager at the strategic level and by the HR specialist. In companies that have a SHRM implemented, there is a greater participation of line managers at the tactical level. In case 1, in the corporate case, the discussion takes place directly between the strategic line manager and the tactical level line manager, and then shared with the HR professional. In the restaurant there is no participation of the line manager in this decision. Case 2, which has as its strategic guideline the meritocracy (related to the value that the employee aggregates for the business), the discussion regarding the remuneration is made in collegiate between the line managers of the same hierarchical level (strategic or tactical) and the professional of HR.

The three cases studied present the same decision-making process in the practices of expansion and reduction of the staff. As for the expansion, although the decision is taken in a shared way between the line manager and the HR specialist, there is in fact a predominance of the line manager's participation at the strategic level, which must carry out the survey and present the justification the need to expand its area. Reduction practices, for the most part, arise from the business need. The HR specialist presents the amount of reduction of the picture, but the decision on how this reduction will take place occurs in a shared way between the line manager at the strategic level and the HR professional. This result demonstrates that the line manager at the strategic level has a greater participation in the decisions of expansion and reduction of the framework, and that this power is not transferred to the tactical and operational level.

In case 1 and 3, the labor relations involving the union are responsibility of the HR specialist, which differs from case 2 which presents a greater involvement of the line manager in the negotiations with the union. In case 2 the HR specialist assumes a supporting role to the line manager, offering him information and assisting in the development of the strategy. This is a practice that has a strong influence of the contingent factors of the companies. Case 2, because it is an industrial branch, has a greater influence and participation of the union in each of the plants located in the different regions of Brazil and abroad. This characteristic made the company identify the need to involve the line manager of each locality in the negotiations with the union. The line manager is the person who is closest to the employee and therefore has a direct impact on the way the relationships between these different agents occur. This reaffirms the importance of the involvement of the line manager in the decisions regarding labor relations. In cases 1 and 3, due to the business model and the smaller presence of the unions in the company, the negotiations take place in a centralized way, being a corporate HR specialist responsible for this process.

Regarding labor lawsuits, the three cases present the same procedure: the formulation of the strategy is done by the legal area together with the HR specialist, who will decide whether the line manager should participate as a witness or witness.

Recent studies on the distribution of responsibilities in SHRM confirm that these are

being transferred from HR specialist to line manager (Maxwell & Watson, 2006; Perry & Kulik, 2008). The devolution of HR practices to the line manager assists the implementation of SHRM, as this is the agent that is closest to the business and therefore plays a key role in the decisions and execution of policies and practices of RH. In addition, the transfer of HR practices to the line manager allows the HR specialist to assume a more strategic role within the organization, which also characterizes the SHRM.

For all the HR practices analyzed, it is possible to identify that responsibilities have been transferred to the line manager, except for the practice of working relationships. What differentiates the cases that take the SHRM from the contrast case are the remuneration practices, since they are not only the participation of the line managers at the strategic level, but also involve the line manager at the tactical level. In addition, despite the devolution of training and development practices to the line manager in the three companies surveyed, in companies where SHRM is more mature, there is greater support from the HR specialist and systematized tools, which facilitates implementation of these practices by the line manager. These results demonstrate that the third proposition of the study is inconclusive, since the three companies studied demonstrate that they are returning the HR practices to the line manager.

Proposition 3: In the companies that adopt to a greater extent SHRM, the main decisions about the HR practices are being returned by the HR professional to the line manager

Although the studies on SHRM suggest that there is a transfer of decisions regarding HR practices to the line manager, Whittaker and Marchington (2003) emphasize the need to establish integrated actions between the HR specialist and the line manager, to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization.

Analyzing the practices separately, it is possible to identify that, in the three companies studied, there is a partnership between the HR specialist and the line manager regarding the implementation of the practice of recruitment and selection. Regarding training and development practices, in companies that present a SHRM there is a greater partnership between the HR specialist and the line manager; the HR specialist provides tools and support for the line manager to perform this practice. Although the three companies reported having a partnership between the HR specialist and the line manager in remuneration decisions, companies with an implemented SHRM involve more managers at the different hierarchical levels, whereas, in the opposite case, only involve line managers at the strategic level. This partnership is important because the HR specialist has the role of ensuring budget compliance and pay equity in the company, while the line manager must ensure meritocracy among its employees.

In the three companies, decisions about expansion and reduction of the staff are taken in a shared way between the strategic manager and the HR specialist. Regarding the practices of labor relations with the union, it has been demonstrated in cases 1 and 3 that these are the responsibility of the HR specialist; in case 2, in recent years, the line manager was involved in the negotiations, which was previously the sole responsibility of the HR specialist.

The result of this analysis demonstrates that, despite the role and the participation of the line manager - with regard to the practices of people management - occur in a different way in each of the practices studied, in the companies presenting the SHRM there is a greater partnership between the HR professional and the line manager, which partially confirms the fourth proposition of this work.

Proposition 4: In companies that adopt to a greater extent SHRM, the HR professional and the line manager act in partnership in the process of implementing the practices of SHRM.

This proposition is not confirmed for the practice of labor relations, so it can not be fully proven.

These results demonstrate that the phase in which the decisions regarding the management of people are taken predominantly in isolation is overtaken in some of the practices. This finding is in line with the literature on SHRM, which highlights the need to establish shared actions between the two agents in order to achieve organizational strategic objectives (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). The differences that have emerged in the practices can lead to new studies on the subject, deepening the analysis of each of the practices, seeking to identify which are the factors that lead to these distinctions in the organizations.

5. RESULTS

The results of the present study show that the companies that adopt the SHRM in Brazil in greater extent attribute to the line manager the greater responsibility in the implementation of the practices of people management, confirming what is found in the literature, which suggests that the responsibility of management of people should be from the line manager (Poole & Jenkins, 1997), the HR specialist being a partner and facilitator of this process. The cases studied seem to confirm the intention of following the Brewster and Larsen (1992) proposition, according to which the involvement of the line manager in the main HR practices, allocating their time, resources and energy in the development of the employees, will guarantee the implementation of SHRM.

Another point identified in the present study is the form and extent to which the line manager should implement the SHRM practices, which varies according to the business model, the strategic positioning and other contingency factors that influence the organization. In other words, it is noted that it is the contingency factors that will impact the definition of the roles and responsibilities of the line manager in the SHRM.

Companies with a more structured SHRM show greater concern with the process of assigning the role of the line manager in SHRM. This involves a structured effort aimed at the formal training of the line manager, the documentation of the procedures of SHRM and the expected behaviors in their work, as well as the creation of mechanisms to approach the line manager with the HR specialist. As a result, there is greater agreement on the role of the line manager in the organizations with the highest maturity of SHRM, both from himself and from the HR specialist.

Another important objective of the present study was to verify how the roles and responsibilities are distributed in the relationship between the line manager and the HR specialist. If SHRM aims to align people management with organizational strategies, the devolution of people management practices to the line manager is what will allow the implementation of the SHRM (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), as this agent is closer to the business, with a fundamental role in the decisions and in the execution of such practices. In addition, transferring HR practices to the line manager allows the HR specialist to assume a more strategic role within the organization, which also characterizes the SHRM (Budhwar, 2000b). This research showed that the devolution of HR practices analyzed has been taking place in the three companies studied, regardless of the maturity of the implementation of SHRM. The exception was the practice of labor relations that, due to contextual factors of the organization, occurs differently in each of the companies.

Normative school authors who propose roles for SHRM actors argue that the line

manager should be the primary decision maker with the support of the HR specialist (Hoogendoorn & Brewster, 1992; Renwick, 2003). From this research, we confirm that this is confirmed in recruitment and selection practices, as well as training and development practices. On the other hand, in remuneration practices and in the expansion and reduction of the staff, the strategic level manager is more involved in decision making, according to parameters established by the HR specialist, since the HR professional is responsible for the budget management of the company. Companies that present greater maturity at SHRM also seek to involve line managers at the tactical level in decisions about compensation practices.

The present study therefore demonstrates that the transfer of decision making to the line manager occurs more frequently and intensely only in the recruitment and selection practices and in the training and development practices, always maintaining the premise of having the professional of HR support. Although the other practices do not present a total devolution of the decision making to the line manager, the companies that adopt the SHRM to a greater extent present more involvement of the line managers in these decisions.

The SHRM literature also highlights the need to establish integrated actions between the HR specialist and the line manager to achieve the organization's strategic objectives (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003). In this paper, we show that, although this process occurs differently in each of the practices studied, in the companies that present a more mature SHRM, there is a greater partnership between the HR professional and the line manager. As a positive result of this process, the literature points to better change management, increased managerial responsibility and employee efficiency, as well as a reduction in HR involvement with routine activities, and can thus become more strategic (Budhwar , 2000b). These findings are in line with the literature on SHRM in Brazil, which shows the transformation that the HR area has been going through, failing to be operational to adopt a more strategic perspective (Tanure et al., 2010).

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was limited to the cases studied and, certainly, presents limitations, some of which stem from the methodological options adopted in this study. The focus on the cases pointed out as companies that present the SHRM provides indications to provide answers to the objectives of the present work, however, does not allow to throw a broad look at all the companies that implemented SHRM in Brazil.

Another limitation of the study is related to the choice of the interviewees, which was done at random by the organization itself. As it is a qualitative methodology, the analysis of the results was carried out based on the interviewees' discourse and, therefore, is limited to the perception of that specific individual. Concerning this same point, there may be differences in the performance of the role of the line manager in the different departments of the organization since the study approached large companies.

During the research, relevant topics emerged for future research on the role of the line manager in the implementation of SHRM in companies operating in Brazil. One of the themes was the difference in the distribution of roles and responsibilities of the line manager in the practices of people management. New studies can deepen the analysis of each of the practices of people management, seeking to identify what are the factors that lead to these distinctions in organizations.

Because these are three case studies, this research could broaden its sample by seeking more evidence from different organizations in order to determine how robust the conclusions of this analysis are. In addition, this study was carried out in large companies, which

represents a rich cut, but studies with medium companies would also be of academic and practical interest.

At present, there is little research that systematically explores, from various stakeholders, the perceptions of the role of the line manager in the implementation of SHRM. The current work focused on the perception of the HR professional and the line manager. Future studies could include the perception and participation of other agents in the process of implementing the SHRM, such as the employees and the CEO of the company.

Some elements that emerged throughout the research, but which could not be explored in more detail, concern differences in the participation of decisions on the HR practices of line managers by hierarchical level. Deepening the knowledge in this respect can help in understanding how the involvement of each of these agents occurs in the implementation of SHRM.

The result obtained through this work suggests that other researches invest in the theme of the role of the different agents in the implementation of SHRM in companies that operate in Brazil, as well as in the performance of these roles. The literature shows that the implementation of SHRM in these companies is an evolving process. Future research in this field will allow a deeper understanding of how this process occurs and can thus contribute to the academic and practical field.

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