Social Work Intervention in Human Resource Management: The Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

People are the main component as well as the target for social work practice. The intention of this profession is to help individuals /groups/communities to find out and solve their difficulties arising out of an imbalance between them and their surroundings and to assist them enhancing and restoring their capacities and potentials. On the other hand, Human Resource Management stands for recognizing and channelizing the uniqueness, talents, potentials, capabilities and strengths of human beings in work place, to develop their productivity as well as to ensure the protection of rights, social security, and justice for them. Human Resource Management is a term that aims to the blooming people as a valuable resource of the organization rather than their control as material assets. By analyzing the frameworks and philosophical bases of both the profession, it can be clearly elucidated that the practice of Human Resource Management, where it aims into resolve the disequilibrium in workplace relationship or employee-employer relationship and when it aims to identify, utilize and channelize all of their potentials and inner resources to develop their productivity the process of Social Work intervention strongly finds its way into the domain of practice of HRM and *vis-à-vis.*

Highlights

◉ Importance of Human Resources in the Industrial Set up.
◉ Importance of interpersonal and social relationship for development of productivity of Human Resources.
◉ Exploring the Historical Background of Social work intervention in HRM.
◉ Exploring the philosophical interconnection Social Work and Human Resource Management.
◉ Exploring the existing scopes and models of practice of Social Work to ensure effective HRM.

Keywords: Social Work, Human Resource Management, Disequilibrium, Occupational Social Work, Industry

People are the main component as well as the target for social work practice. The intention of social work practice is to help individuals /groups/communities to identify and solve their problems arising from disequilibrium between them and their environment, to identify areas of dissatisfaction between human beings and their environment for prevention of the occurrence of disequilibrium. For curing and prevention, the purpose of Social Work is to identify and strengthen the capabilities of human beings individually or collectively. Industries are made up of people and function with the people. This is the most precious and essential resource among all other resources of

an industry such as material, machines, the capital. Effective Human Resources Management is, therefore, the key to success for an Industry. The practice of Human Resource Management aims to resolve the disequilibrium in employee's workplace relationships and in an employee-employer relationship and helping the human resources to identify and utilize their inner and outer strengths and resources for the development of their productivity. The social environment of industry includes interpersonal relationship among employees and relationships between employees and their supervisors and management. Such concepts of both social work and HRM significantly indicate the scopes for social work intervention in HRM. The percentage of human resources working in industries in India has been increasing rapidly over the last few decades. India is a country of socio-cultural diversity. Diversity is also found among the working population engaged in the industry. It is pretty challenging to manage such a large number of the working population with huge socio-cultural diversity for the management of the industrial sectors in India. Human beings are the most valuable resources for an organization, and violent use of this resource may cause serious harm to the productive mechanism of an organization. The employees must be treated in a humanitarian way by giving them sufficient opportunity to explore and utilize their talents and potentials and make their working environment favourable to them in which they can cope up without any fear and frustration. Human relationship is one of the most effective motivational drives for increasing human productivity. Hence the intervention of a humanitarian profession like social work in industries is required because this profession can accept the uniqueness of individuals without being judgemental to them and ensure problem-solving of human beings by using their interpersonal relationship as an important tool of intervention. Social work can help individuals, groups, and communities to enhance and restore their talents and potentials and make their societal condition favorable to them **(NASW).**

Social Work Intervention in Human Resource Management, the historical background: The later phase of the industrial revolution in European countries

within 1918-1944 was the period between the two world wars. The threatening experience of the 1st and 2nd World Wars led to depression and the need for sustainable measures for the safety and security of the workers. The concept of 'Protection' of working people initially came into vision when a large number of Industries were set up, and large number of people were migrated to industrial places to become labours and formed colonies there. During this period, the social environment of the industries started becoming more complex in terms of the needs and problems of the workers. In this period, Trade Unions were organized to prevent workers' exploitations by the management, and thus a movement was initiated 'Industrial Betterment' (Tyson and York, 2000).

This movement forced the employers to arrange for Welfare services for their workers. Health and safety services for workers in the workplace were the integral parts of such welfare activities. For effective management of such welfare activities during the late 1940s full-time Personnel Managers used to be engaged by the employers. They used to be deployed for management of the matters related to pension, remuneration, rehabilitation, and other welfare services for employees. Simultaneously the influence of Government and International Organizations in the matter of workers' welfare prepared ground for amendment of various Acts and Policies for the protection and security of workers. These acts and policies included provisions for equal wages, workplace security, and rehabilitation, an opportunity for employee's training and skill-building, etc. For the implementation of such social security measures and welfare policies, the requirement of trained professionals was felt. This is an era, when the concept of Industrial Social Work was, emerged for implementation of such policies. The trend of the arrangement of only welfare activities and social security measures for employees was continued up to the 1970s.

In 1961, the findings of two special study groups under the United Nations were presented in the European seminar on Personnel Social Work under the European Social Welfare programme. The report defined Social Work in Industries as a systematic way of helping individuals

and groups of workers towards a better adaptation to their working situation. The report proposed to prefer the term 'Personnel Social Work' in place of 'Industrial Social Work'. From the very beginning of the 1980s, significant advancements in the knowledge domain of social sciences such as industrial psychology, industrial sociology etc., brought notable changes in the perception of the employers towards their workers. The employers started thinking that the workers were psycho-social entities rather than only material resources. This was the period when the concept of blooming and utilization of the employees as Human Resources came into existence. This is the period when the welfare measures for the workers were felt insufficient for the betterment of their productivity, potentials, motivation, and environmental belongings. This was the era when the deployment of the Industrial social worker became more significant in terms of management of Human Resources. From that very phase, the domain of activities for Personnel Social Workers in Industries was extended into the four basic areas viz.

❖ To assist the workers in blooming their inner resources and potentials and in calling up their potentials and strengths to make them more efficient in their job responsibilities.

❖ To help employees in their personal and family problems and to liaison between the working environment and the personal setups towards solving personal and family issues and to ensure a productive work life.

❖ To help the workers for coping up with their working conditions and colleagues and to suggest management in developing frameworks for acceptable working conditions

❖ Developing the employees and to oblige the 'work community" as a whole to function in a better way (Cheeran *et al.* 2015).

The extended service domain of social workers in industries created the conceptual framework of 'Occupational Social Work', and this concept became more relevant and accepted in place of 'Industrial Social Work' and 'Personnel Social Work.' Occupational Social Work was broadly defined by NASW as a specialized field of social work practice, which addresses the human and social needs of the work community through a variety of interventions, which aims in to foster optimal adaptation between individuals and their environments. It was also asserted that practicing occupational social work, the social worker might address a wide range of individual and family needs, relationships within organizations and the broader issues of the relationship of the world of work to the community at large. This is how the practice of social work in the field of HRM was started becoming popular and convenient.

Social Work and HRM; the Philosophical interconnection: Relationships are central to social work practice (Wilson *et al.* 2008). The purpose of social work practice is to assist individuals /groups/communities to identify and resolve problems that are aroused out of the disequilibrium between them and their environment. Social workers' objective is to help human beings to have a productive life in their own environmental set ups and links clients with services, resources, and opportunities which they are seeking (UNESCO 2000). Social work, as a profession, deals with many aspects of human conditions in difficult environmental, social, and emotional situations. At micro-level practice, it helps individuals to fit better into their environments, and in macro-level practice, it changes the environment so that it works better for individuals (Segal *et al.* 2010). Social Workers intervene with the people in social problems by helping them to regain their control over their situation (Dominelli, 2009). The aim of Social Work is to enhance the coping mechanism and problem-solving capacity of people and to link them with the systems from where they can be able to obtain resources and services for their effective functioning (Pincus and Minhan 1973 as cited by Preston. 1990). The Social Work profession has its base on the philosophy that aims to attend the issues of mutual dependence between the persons and their environment, their psychological well beings and the functioning of social institutions towards social, financial, health and safety measures of human beings (Tangeberg and Kemp 2002). Social Work has been grown out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for equality, worth, and dignity of human beings (Hefferhan 2006). Social Work

practice has always kept its focus on meeting human needs and developing human potentials (IFSW 1994 as cited by Hefferhan 2006). Social Work concerns itself with human beings where anything hiders their growth, their expanding consciousness, and their increasing co-operation (Raynolds 1935 as cited by Payne 2006). Social Work activities can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity, providing individual and social resources and preventing social dysfunctions (Bohem 1958, as stated by Payne 2006). Social Work is an accountable profession for enabling individuals, families, and groups, etc., to identify their personal, social, and environmental difficulties and also to manage those difficulties through supportive, rehabilitative, protective, and corrective action (CCETSW 1991, cited by Payne 2006). Considering the aforesaid views and explanations, it can be elucidated that Social Work, as a profession, deals with the interpersonal relations of human beings and their relations with their social environment, and the main mission of Social Work Practice is to enhance effective social functioning by facilitating the transactional relationship between the individual(s) and their environment (Bogo and Herington 1986; Gordon 1965; Levey 1973; Timms 1983; Timms and Watson 1978; Woodsworth 1984; Yan 1998 ---as cited by Tsui and Chan 1999). Social Work is always engaged in the helping of individual human beings who face, in their social relationships, all sorts of disturbing inadequacy, frictions, limitations that frustrate the full realization of their own capacities and wants as persons. Therefore the service of Social Work is directed primarily to freeing and helping individuals to find and to fulfil themselves, their own unique selves within the society of which they are a part (Pray 1942 cited by Payne 2006). JRD Tata once stated that good human relations in the workplace not only bring great personal rewards and satisfaction for employees but are essential to the success of any enterprise. Human Resource Management stands for recognizing and channelizing the uniqueness, talents, potentials, capabilities and strengths of human beings in work place, to develop their productivity as well as to ensure the protection of rights, social security, and justice for them. Human Resource Management is a term that stresses the development of people as assets rather than their control as costs (Tyson and York, 2000). Human resource management includes the processes of employment, development, and well-being of the people working in the organization (Armstrong 2009). This process involves all the attempts that affect the nature of the relationship between the organization and its employees (Beer *et al.* 1984 as cited by Armstrong 2009). Human Resource Management is concerned with the development and maintenance of the employee-employee relations and employee-employer relations in the organization (Lal Das 1991). The quality of the interpersonal relationship is one of the significant determinants of employees' productivity and organizational effectiveness (Narang and Singh 2010). The HRM style of any organization is emerged out of the socio-political and cultural framework of the people who are managing and are being managed (Kundu 2000). Employee's engagement with the job is one of the vital components for consideration under HRM because it has a positive relationship with productivity, profitability, safety, employee relation and customer satisfaction (Buckingham and Coffman 1999, Coffman, Gonzalez and Molina 2002, cited by Sharma, Sharma and Gitanjali 2010). Factors like an interpersonal relationship in the workplace, a balance between personal life and professional life, and employee's own value system are very much important factors to ensure positive engagement of employees with their job (Sake 2006, cited by Sharma, Sharma and Gitanjali 2010).

For the selection and deployment of Human Resources under HRM practice, the employer organization should have an obligation to utilize its employees' abilities to the fullest and to give all employees chances to grow and realize their full potentials (Narang and Singh 2010). Human Resource Management emphasizes treating each employee as an individual (Ivancevich and Richard 1995) with uniqueness in terms of physical appearances, experiences, personality, attitudes, aspirations, etc**.** (Diwan 1997). Empowerment of employees through their participation in decision making and self-management of work through appraisal by their groups or peers in working places are the two significant approaches in now a day's HRM practice (Byars and Rue 1997). HRM emphasizes the solution of employment problems for achieving organizational

objectives and facilitate employee development and satisfaction (Ivancevich and Richard 1995). Perception of the worker about the work, the personality of the worker and personal abilities, workgroup in which the worker belongs in the workplace, and motivational aspects of the workers are the major Human factors at work (Dessler 1985, p. 258) which must be considered with maximum importance in Human Resource Management. Human Resource Management includes the process of socializing the people selected for the job, to integrate them with the organization, train them to increase their functional skills and develop them for future roles, place them in the right tasks motivate them for better performance, and inculcate in them a sense of belongingness (Bhattacharya 2002). Intervention with the problems of Human factors of an organization is the concern of HRM practice so that the individuals within the organization can make their maximum contribution to the accomplishment of common goals there and at the same time achieve social satisfaction. HRM is the process of binding people and organizations together towards the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of each of them (Ahmed 2004). Quality of Work-life, productivity, and readiness to change are the three basic outputs of HRM practice (Decenzo and Robbins 1989). Human Resource Management of an organization must have a focus on developing employee competencies and influencing employee behaviour in order to satisfy employees' needs for security and growth as well as accomplishment of the organizational goals (Narang and Singh 2010, p. 25). HR Management can be defined as a planned activity for the overall growth of an individual or a group of individuals within the organization by providing them relevant learning experiences in terms of different tasks, functions, and roles (Venkatesh 2008 p 165).

Since, every organization is made up of people, acquiring their services, developing their skills, motivating them to a high level of performance, and ensuring that they can continue to maintain their commitment to the organization are essential to achieving organizations' objectives (Kundu 2000). Therefore, it can be explained that Human Resource Management may be divided into four basic tasks viz. Acquisition of Human Resources,

development of Human Resources, motivating the Human Resources and maintenance of Human Resources (DeCenzs and Robbins 1989 as cited by Kundu 2000). These thoughts of the social scientists, business personnel, and thinkers would definitely enlighten the interconnection of the philosophical base of social work and HRM.

Social Work Intervention in HRM: The Practice Models: Straussner in 1998 (cited by Cheeran, Joseph and Renjith 2015, p315) introduced a typology of 5 models of social work practice with employees in industries viz.

Employee Service model: It aims at worker's individual level system in which employees and their families operate. Here the social workers need to function as counselors for employees and their families in time of need, referring employees to other helping agencies, make advocacy with management regarding individual employee's problems. The wide range of psycho-social, skill-oriented, and financial needs of workers and their families are tried to be met through this model of practice.

Consumer Service Model: This model has an intention to intervene at a broader level within the industrial setup. This model presumes employees as consumers and assists them in finding out their needs and makes advocacy in favour of the workers to meet the needs. Social workers here need to work with workers as consumers towards analyzing their needs, chalking out strategies to meet their needs, exploring and providing supports to meet such needs, serving as a liaison between individual workers or group and social services agencies, and developing outreach programs to meet employee needs.

Corporate Social responsibility Model: This model emphasizes the linkage of organizational resources with the community within and surrounding. Under this model, the social workers could ensure the development and welfare of the employees within and their families surrounding the industries by using resources from the industry.

Employee/work Organization Service Model: This model of practice is aimed at influencing organizational policy in the areas of health and safety practices,

dispute resolution, capacity building of employees, and commitments.

Work-related Public Policy Model: This model aims to influence public policies in favour of the workers' needs in terms of health, safety, recreation, welfare, and development. Under this model, the social workers need to influence or develop social policies related to the world of work which includes the needs of a particular workers' community within an organization or the working population as a whole.

These models would definitely help to understand the consanguinity of Social Work and HRM. The practice of Human Resource Management, where it aims into resolve the disequilibrium in workplace relationship or employee-employer relationship and when it aims into identity, utilize and channelize all of their potentials and inner resources to develop their products, the process of Social Work intervention strongly finds its way into the domain of practice of HRM and vis-à-vis.

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