TALENT MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF MINDFUL ORGANIZING AND ORGANIZATIONAL MINDFULNESS

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to show the unexplored relationship between mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness and talent management with regard to its outcomes.

Methodology: The paper presents an integrative review of the literature available in relation to talent management and organizational mindfulness and provides the development of a theoretical framework based on integration and synthesis of this literature.

Findings: The literature review revealed that organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing belong to the factors which may enhance individual level outcomes of talent management, such us: organizational commitment, motivation to work, extra-role behaviour and this, in turn, results in better organization's performance.

Practical implications: In order to enhance the individual level outcomes of talent management, the mindfulness needs to operate across all organizational levels. It should be create by top administrators and translate across organizations' levels by middle managers for the front-line employees.

Research limitations: This study is based on theoretical analysis and its assumptions should be tested empirically.

Originality/value of the paper: Although the authors indicate many factors that may shape talent management process and its outcomes, the potential influence of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness on talent management outcomes has not been analysed so far, meanwhile these phenomena's have a lot in common with managing talented employees. Therefore, it is expected that mindful organizing (directly) and organizational mindfulness (indirectly) may enhance individual level outcomes of talent management.

Keywords: talent management, mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness

Paper type: Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Talent management (TM) is perceived by business theoreticians and practitioners as one of the priorities in the present-day human resource management (Ashton and Morton, 2005; White, 2009; Dries, 2013). Moreover, opinions of managers

and HR specialists reflected in the research findings suggest, that TM contribution will be even more significant in the future (Chitsaz-Isfahani and Boustani, 2014). A growing interest in talent management is a result of competitive battle between organizations for limited resources of talented employees (Michaels et al., 2001) and sustaining of negative demographic trends. Among such trends one may list ageing population, being the result of a negative birth rate, and increased international mobility of workers, encouraged by progressive integration of national economies, which leads to deeper shortage of talents in local labour markets (Athey, 2004; Stahl et al., 2007; Beechler and Woodward, 2009; Johannsdottir et al., 2014).

The scientific literature has shown, that talent management is not isolated from internal and external conditions which determine its results. Although the authors (i.a. Ingram, 2011; Chodorek, 2016) indicate many factors that may shape the TM process and its outcomes, the potential influence of mindful organizing (MO) and organizational mindfulness (OM) on TM outcomes has not been analyzed so far, meanwhile these phenomena's have a lot in common with managing talented employees.

Both talent management and mindful organizing/organizational mindfulness are focus on extraordinary positive outcomes or positively deviant performance, i.e. the results dramatically exceed expected norms. The TM concept assumes that it is possible through acquiring, developing, motivating and retaining of talented employees in the organization (Heinen and O'Neill, 2004). According to mindful organizing assumptions, extraordinary individual and organizational outcomes result from positive emotions felt by employees, that contribute to improve human well-being, which makes easier overcoming the adversities (Stankiewicz, 2010). Furthermore, talent management and mindful organizing assumedly lead to similar employee level outcomes, such us: organizational commitment, motivation to work, and organizational citizenship behaviours (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012; Vogus and Iacobucci, 2016). The purpose of this paper is to show the unexplored relationship between mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness and talent management with regard to its outcomes.

The structure of paper is as follows. The second section presents basic issues involved with talent management, i.e. state of art, definitions and streams. In section three, organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing have been described, especially the roots of these concepts, differences in meaning and relations between them. The last part includes the discussion about possible impact of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness on talent management outcomes. At the end of paper, in "Conclusions" section, Author indicates most important conclusions and practical implications drawn from the study, and points out its limitations and future research directions.

2. Talent management: state of the art, definitions and streams

The talent management (TM) idea became very popular in the late 90's, when the McKinsey consulting company released the findings which indicated that the most successful organizations had leaders awfully focused on talents (Burkus and Osula, 2011). These organizations would identify and hire top performers in hope that this is the key to gain the competitive advantage. Simultaneously, McKinsey experts have defined a new business reality – intensive competitive battle between organizations for talented employees, which they called "The War for Talent" (Michaels et al., 2001).

After that, the talent management issue has received a remarkable degree both practitioner and academic interest. This relatively recent emphasis on talent represents a paradigm shift from traditional human resource management (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Miller et al., 1998), and strategic human resource management (Schuler, 1989; Wright and McMahon, 1992; Huselid et al., 1997) towards the management specifically suited to present-day highly dynamic and competitive environment (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). While the business context have shifted significantly since the end of the last century, the idea of talent management remains important. Collings and Mellahi (2009) suggest, that the challenge of maximizing the competitive advantage of an organization's human capital is probably even more significant in the recessionary climate of the second part of recent decade.

Paradoxically, despite the great interest of talent management concept, it has not reach sufficient maturity and requires significant theoretical advancement (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). According to Lewis and Heckman (2006) there is a "disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of talent management". The other authors (Ashton and Morton, 2005; ASTD, 2009) point out, that the term „talent management" has not been defined clearly and widely accepted yet. The lack of agreement in terms of what talent management actually mean has become for many authors stimulus to develop a synthetic definition of this term. For instance, Cannon and McGee (2011) define talent management as a "process by which an organization identifies, manages and develops its people now and for the future". Silzer and Dowell (2010) described TM as an "an integrated set of processes, programs and cultural norms in an organization designed and implemented to attract, develop, deploy, and retain talent to achieve strategic objectives and meet future business needs". According to Armstrong (2007) talent management "is the use of an integrated set of activities to ensure that the organization attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs now and in the future". Similarly, Listwan (2005) understands this term as "a set of activities refers to remarkably gifted persons, undertaken in order to develop them and gain the organization's goals". Heinen and O'Neill (2004) claim, that "talent management encompasses a set

of interrelated workforce-management activities concerned with identifying, attracting, integrating, developing, motivating, and retaining people". Talent management can be also define as "a conscious, deliberate approach undertaken to attract, develop and retain people with the aptitude and abilities to meet current and future organizational needs" (Mehta, 2011).

The author's efforts led to multiplication of various interpretations, which allowed to achieved the consensus only in limited scope. The main reason of ambiguous understanding the term "talent management" can be complexity of this issue and diversity of assumptions refers to talent made by researchers (Lewis and Heckman, 2006; Mehta, 2011; Beheshtifar and Kamani-Fard, 2013). Analyzing presented definitions we might say, that the authors describe talent management as a process, approach or set of processes or activities. Talent management refers to talents in organizations – remarkably gifted employees possess outstanding skills. According to authors talent management include various HR processes, such us: broadly defined acquisition (searching and attracting), deployment, developing, motivating and retaining of talented employees. The authors underline that mentioned processes should be integrate each other. Moreover, presented definitions indicate the expected effects of talent management, such us: gain the organization's goals or meet current and future organizational needs.

Lewis and Heckman (2006), based on their literature review, state that definitions of talent management fall into one of three broad streams, i.e.: TM as HRM practices, TM focused on the concept of talent pool and TM concentrated on talent.

The first stream views TM as a combination of typical human resource management functions, practices and activities, such as recruitment, selection, development, motivating, etc. According to authors representing this stream, talent management requires following the patterns of HR departments' routines, but faster (via Internet, outsourcing) or across the whole enterprise rather than within a department or function. Authors also suggest that the term "human resource management" will be replaced by the term "talent management" in the future.

The second category of definitions is focused primarily on creation of large talent pools, in order to ensure the qualitative and quantitative flow of talented employees through the organization. This approach has been built on succession planning or human resource planning assumptions (Jackson and Schuler, 1990; Rothwell, 1994), but can also include typical HR practices and processes (e.g. recruitment, selection). The core of discussed approach is a projection of an employee's needs and managing the progression of employees through positions, often by the use of enterprise-wide software systems. This perspective is focused on internal rather than external resources of the organization.

The third category of definitions is focused on talent generically. There are two general views on talent emerging from this perspective. The first one

regards talent as "an unqualified good and a resource to be managed primarily according to performance levels" (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). It means that highly competent performers should be sought, hired and differentially rewarded regardless of their specific role or organization's specific needs. The proponents of this stream postulate to classify all employees by a performance level (e.g. "A" – best, "B" – good, "C" – bottom performers) and either encourage rigorously terminating bottom performers (Axelrod et al., 2002) or "topgrading" the organization by hiring exclusively the best performers (Smart, 1999). The second view regards talent as an undifferentiated good and emerges from the humanistic and demographic perspectives. In this approach talent is critical because, on the one hand, the role of a strong HR function is to manage everyone to a high performance (Buckingham and Vosburgh, 2001) and on the other hand, demographic and business trends make talent more valuable (Gandossy and Kao, 2004; Tucker et al., 2005).

In addition to streams above, Collings and Mellahi (2009) propose their own fourth stream, which emphasizes the identification of pivotal positions rather than talented employees per se. The starting point in this approach is systematic identification of positions, which can differentially contribute to emerging the organization's competitive advantage. Afterwards, using available on internal and external labour market resources organizations should create a talent pool of high potential and high performing individuals to fill these positions, and develop a differentiated human resource architecture in order to facilitate filling these roles with appropriate talents and ensure their continued organizational commitment.

The latter approach has been adopt in further considerations conducted within this paper because seems to be the latest, most advanced and predominantly quoted stream of thought about talent management.

3. Organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing: roots, definitions and relations

The foundations of organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing can be found in individual mindfulness phenomenon (Ray et al., 2011), recently perceived as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). In other words, individual mindfulness is understand as "a state of psychological freedom that occurs when attention remains quiet and limber, without attachment to any particular point of view" (Martin, 1997). In theory and research on individual mindfulness are distinguished two approaches – the Western and Eastern perspective. The Western perspective mainly derives from E.J. Langer's work (e.g. Langer, 1989) and it could be seen as a type of an information-processing approach (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2006). In this framework mindfulness is expressed through active differentiation and refinement of existing categories and distinctions, creation of new discontinuous

categories out of streams of events, and more nuanced appreciation of context and alternative ways to deal with it (Langer, 1989). In contrast, the Eastern perspective on individual mindfulness has originated from the Buddhist thought (Hede, 2010). Within this approach mindfulness is views as a mental state characterized by wholesomeness and ability to insight into the nature of reality (Cullen, 2011), and can be prescribe as an attention to and awareness of present events, as well as experience occurring internally and externally (Brown and Ryan, 2003) or moment-to-moment, non-reactive and non-judgmental awareness (Weick and Putnam, 2006).

It is evidenced that individual mindfulness, regardless whether we perceive it from the Western or Easter perspective, leads to reducing of negative functioning and increasing positive outcomes in several important domains of human life, such us: physical health, mental health, behavioural regulation or interpersonal relationships (Brown et al., 2007; Langer, 2009; Hede, 2010). Among the positive outcomes associated with mindfulness authors mention: enhanced emotion regulation, self-control, improved concentration, mental clarity, enhanced flexibility, increased emotional intelligence, ability to act with awareness in social situation, ability to relate to others with kindness, acceptance, compassion and capability of responding constructively to relationship stress (Barnes et al., 2007; Dekeyser et al., 2008, Davis and Hayes, 2011).

Over the years the concept of mindfulness has moved into psychological, psychotherapeutic and organizational fields. Organizational theorists in their study often have relied on findings made by psychologists, clinicians and cognitive scientist (Purser and Milillo, 2015). Finally, mindfulness construct has been transferred to the collective level by Weick and associates (1999), founding their conception on Langer's work and Western Perspective. In their review of many case studies of so-called high reliability organizations (HROs), like nuclear power plants or airlines, Weick and colleagues (Weick et al., 1999; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007) argue that these organizations derive the ability to avoid mistakes and successfully manage from organizational mindfulness.

According to Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) organizational mindfulness "refers to the extent to which an organization captures discriminatory detail about emerging threats and creates a capability to swiftly act in response to these details". Ray and associates (2011) explain the differences between individual and organizational mindfulness. They emphasize, that OM is not an intra-psychic process like individual mindfulness, and it is not an aggregation of individual mindfulness. It may be perceive as relatively stable and enduring attribute of an organization, that results from organizational structures and practices implemented by top administrators (Ray et al., 2011). Mentioned authors underline three important characteristics of organizational mindfulness: (1) it arise from top-down processes; (2) it is relatively enduring property of an organization (like culture)

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and (3) it creates the context for thinking and action on the operational (front line) level. In doing so, it signalizes what the organization expects, rewards and supports. Signalizing occurs through prioritization of mindfulness by top administrators via their pattern of practice and establishment of organizational structures. Organizational mindfulness is evident when organizational leaders look for multiple and deeper explanations for emerging problems, pay attention to evolving operational date and create the culture that encourage rich thinking and capacity to action (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012). The essence of organizational mindfulness is accurately reflected by recent definition proposed by Piórkowska (2016): "organizational mindfulness is an organizational supra-individual stable and enduring attribute that inheres in structures and practice as well as results from top-down processes creating the context for lower levels".

In contrast, the mindful organizing is "a social process that relies on extensive and continuous real-time communication and interactions that occur in briefings, meetings, updates and in teams' on-going work" (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012). It is not a intrapsychic process of individuals like individual mindfulness or enduring organizational characteristic like organizational mindfulness, but rather some kind of dynamic, that becomes collective through continuing actions and interactions among individuals (Piórkowska, 2016). As such, mindful organizing can be seen as a function of organizational members' behaviour, especially employees on the front line" (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012). It becomes collective, because the members of organization face the same situational cues and often consult one another in the interpretation of those cues, which results in interpretations and actions that converge (Vogus, 2012). Researchers of mindfulness (i.a. Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007) indicate three important features of mindful organizing: (1) it result from bottom-up processes; (2) it enacts context for front line level; (3) it is relatively more fragile than organizational mindfulness and must be continuously reconstituted, because organizing routines evolve in slightly different way each time, therefore mindful organizing exist as long as it is collectively enacted.

It should be mentioned that there are some interrelationships between organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing. On the one hand, top administrators signalize the importance of mindful thinking and action to employees through organizational mindfulness, what motivates them to think and act more mindfully. On the other hand, mindful organizing can increase organizational mindfulness by reinforcing and refining processes, structures and routines implemented by top administrators (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012). Thus, organizational mindfulness enables mindful organizing and is reinforced by it (Piórkowska, 2016). What is worth adding, Roe and Schulman (2008) emphasize a crucial role of "reliability professionals" such as middle managers in MO – OM relations. Authors (e.g. Rerup 2009; Ocasio, 2011) perceive middle managers as

a "bridge" between organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing, because they can translate real-time data from bottom levels for top administrators and create the structures that may become a guide for front line action.

4. Relationships between mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness and talent management with regard to its outcomes

In order to reveal and explain how mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness can affect the TM outcomes I integrate previous insights into an expanded model of talent management in the context of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness, which is illustrated in Figure 1.
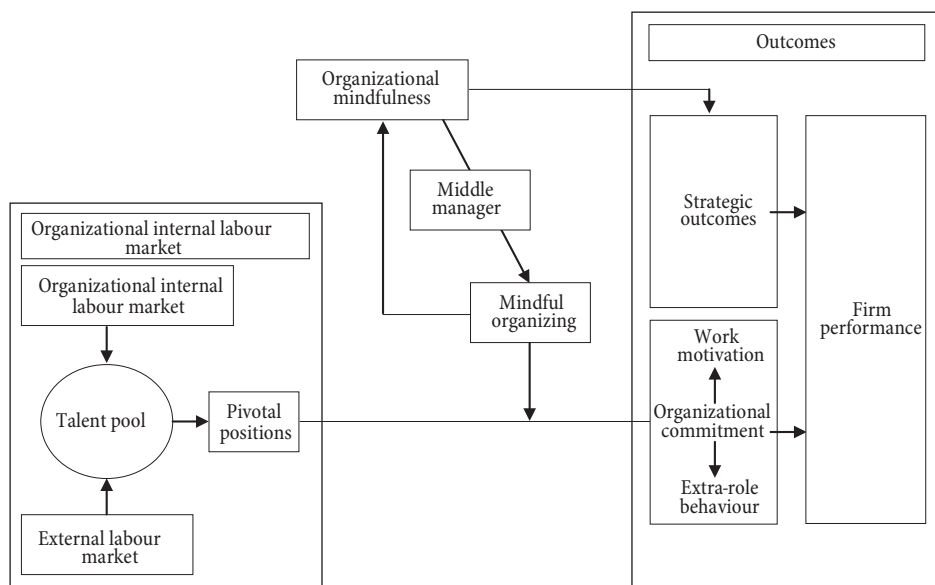

Figure 1. Talent management in the context of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness

Source: Own work based on Collings and Mellahi (2009) and Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012).

I developed presented concept with Collings and Mellahi's (2009) framework of talent management as a foundation. It has been noticed in the second section of this paper that Collings and Mellahi's approach is focused on identification of so-called pivotal positions rather than talented employees per se. The first step in the TM process, according to authors, is systematic identification of these positions, which can contribute to emerging and sustaining of competitive advantage. Next, organizational leaders should create a talent pool of high potential and high performing employees, who are able to fill pivotal positions. The talent pool can be create through engaging resources available on both internal and external labour market. Simultaneously, it is necessary to develop a differentiated human resource architecture (includes e.g. recruitment, training, motivating etc.)

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in order to facilitate filling pivotal roles. Afterwards, pivotal positions are filled by talents from the talent pool. This way of managing talented people should contribute to individual level outcomes like: motivation to work, organizational commitment and extra-role behaviours (for more details see Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Keeping in mind the insights from behavioural perspective, Collings and Mellahi argue that talent management is implemented to elicit desired behaviours among talented employees. Following Campbell et al. (1993) they perceive performance as a set of behaviours that are relevant to the organization's goals. Therefore, they were looking for the antecedents of individual performance in HRM literature (see Vroom, 1964; Blumberg and Prongle, 1982; Campbell et al., 1993; Neil and Griffin, 1999). The first of TM outcomes in the Collings and Mellahi's approach – motivation is taken from the AMO framework, which suggests that employee performance is a function of the employee's ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity (O) to perform (see Boselie et al., 2005; Boxall and Purcel, 2008) [1]. The second outcome – organizational commitment emerge from the assumption that generally in the organization's best interest is to retain talented employees as opposed to loosing them due to turnover. In this regard organizational commitment has historically focused to a far greater degree on employee retention and turnover (Meyer et al., 2004). The last outcome – extra-role behaviour functions as a consequence of organizational commitment (MacKenzie et al., 1998). Therefore, Collings and Mellahi argue that talent management would lead to high organizational commitment, which subsequently leads to extra-role performance. Extra-role behaviours are reflected in helping co-workers, participating in organizational decision making, tolerating of mediocre working conditions or increase care about success and well-being of the organization (Organ, 1988). According to Collings and Mellahi (2009) these behaviours are particularly important, because pivotal positions "require greater proactive initiatives and flexibility to cope with the fast changing environment". Mentioned authors underline that motivation to work, organizational commitment and extra-role performance should lead to improve the firm's performance.

Referring to section three, presented model assumes that organizational mindfulness creates the context for mindful thinking and action through top-down processes initiated by top administrators, which inhere in relatively stable and enduring structures, practices and routines. In turn, middle managers translate organizational mindfulness to operational levels. In this way, organizational mindfulness can shapes employees' behaviours in the form of more mindful organizing. Meanwhile, mindful organizing on the operational level creates a "feedback loop" (through middle managers) to organizational mindfulness through reinforcing and refining the processes, structures and routines implemented by top administrators. So, higher level of mindful organizing can increase organizational mindfulness. In order to provide strategic and operational

reliability mindfulness needs to operate across all organizational levels. Organizational mindfulness contributes to strategic outcomes, while mindful organizing improve operational results. Thus, both organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing are necessary. Therefore, it is not enough to focus on top administrators, middle managers or bottom-line employees in isolation. Organizational mindfulness should be create by leaders and translate across organizations' levels by middle managers for the front-line employees.

The literature review shows that mindful organizing can lead to the same individual level outcomes as talent management, such us: affective and normative commitment to an organization, organizational citizenship behaviour and motivation to work. According to Vogus (2012) and Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) engaging in mindful organizing and its intense focus on delivering highly reliable performance corresponds with the deeply held organizational values that inspired individuals to join to the organization. Therefore, mindful organizing would increase affective commitment to the organization. Moreover, the above-mentioned authors state that as mindful organizing is consistent with organization's ideals and values, it is possible that it could generate normative commitment in the form of a moral duty and lead employees to fulfil their obligations to their organization, e.g. by collaborating with others, using all of their skills or using up-to-date knowledge. The commitment to an organization, however, is likely to result in higher reliability only to the extent it elicits behaviours consistent with fulfil the obligations (Vogus and Iacobucci, 2016). Meanwhile, high-quality work claims organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), i.e.: behaviours that are helpful but not requires by an employer (Organ et al., 2006), such us: willingness to interpersonal helping (e.g. knowledge sharing, assisting with task), undertaking tasks that contributes to smoothly functioning of the organization or preventing the occurrence of work-related problems (Benner et al., 1996). There are some premises suggesting that organizational commitment enhanced by mindful organizing leads to organizational citizenship behaviours. As Vougus and Iacobucci (2016) explain it, there is likely strong relationship between organizational commitment and OCB, because work practices that boost employees' affective commitment enhance feelings of emotional attachment to the organization and affective bonds with organizations' members and induce discretionary behaviours throughout whole organization. Research on commitment have shown that employees with higher organizational commitment are highly motivated and achieve better performance (Altindis, 2011). So, it can be stated that organizational commitment has a positive impact on work motivation and job performance, because it is one of energizing forces for motivated behaviour (Meyer et al., 2004), that can lead to perseverance in action, even in the face of opposing forces (Scholl, 1991). However, Meyer and Allen's study (1997) emphasize that employees who expressed strong affective commitment would

be more motivated than employees with continuance or normative commitment. This is because affective commitment reflects employee's emotional attachment to the organization, which results in agreement between individual organizational values (Dordevic, 2004). In other words, it is expected that work motivation and organizational citizenship behaviour are a consequences of organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1979; Eby et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2005; De Silva and Yamao, 2006; McCabe and Garavan, 2008).

5. Conclusions

Talent management is considered as a process, approach or set of processes/ activities refers to talents in organization, which include integrated HR processes, such us: acquisition deployment, developing, motivating and retaining of talented employees. The latter approach emphasize the identification of pivotal positions rather than talented employees per se., create a talent pool of high potential and high performing individuals to fill these positions, and develop a differentiated human resource architecture in order to facilitate filling these roles with appropriate talents. This way of managing talented people should contribute to individual level outcomes: motivation to work, organizational commitment and extra-role behaviours. Talent management is not isolated from internal and external conditions that determine its results. Amongst many factors that may shape TM outcomes it is important to consider mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness because talent management and mindful organizing assumedly lead to similar employee level outcomes. Therefore, it is expected that mindful organizing (directly) and organizational mindfulness (indirectly) may enhance individual level outcomes of talent management and this, in turn, results in better firm's performance. Although organizational mindfulness generally contributes to strategic level outcomes, it also enables mindful organizing. Therefore, I assume that organizational mindfulness may indirectly improve operational results. The main originality of the paper is that the authors of existing publications propose many factors that may shape TM process and its outcomes, but the potential influence of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness on talent management outcomes has not been analysed so far. Meanwhile, mindfulness may become a crucial determinant of TM outcomes.

Aforementioned theoretical conclusions generate some practical implications for organizations. In order to enhance the individual level outcomes of talent management, the mindfulness needs to operate across all organizational levels. It should be create by top administrators and translate across organizations' levels by middle managers for the front-line employees. With this, talent management enhanced by mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness may leads to increased commitment to an organization, higher motivation to work and organizational citizenship behaviour amongst talented employees.

The current study is based on theoretical analysis and its assumptions should be tested empirically. It is especially important to examine whether mindful organizing actually moderate the relation between talent management – individual level outcomes, and in consequence, whether MO may enhance TM results. It is also important to investigate which outcomes of TM process are notably susceptible to mindful organizing.

Proposed theoretical framework could be verified by quantitative study using the tools originate from existing literature, such us: (1) the scale for measuring strategic talent management developed by Ingram (2016); (2) the scale for measuring mindful organizing offered by Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012); (3) the scale for measuring organizational commitment created by Allen and Meyer (1990); (4) the scale for measuring motivation to work offered by Tremblay et al. (2009); (5) the scale for measuring organizational citizenship behaviour taken from the work of Organ et al. (2006) and others. The author hopes that the paper will inspire other researchers to undertake further study on the topic discussed here.

Notes

[1] The abilities and opportunity have not been included in Collings and Mellahi's framework, because individuals selected to talent pool as a high potential or high performing employee are likely to have a relatively high level of ability, and moreover, the fact that pivotal position have been predetermined means that talents should have the opportunity to contribute to organizational performance through their deployment in pivotal roles (Colling and Mellahi, 2009).

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