The Characteristics of Agile Human Resource Practices: A Systematic Literature Review Approach

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Article info

Abstract

This qualitative research aims to investigate the characteristics of Agile Human Resource Practices (AHRPs) that facilitate adaptability within organizations. Employing a systematic literature review methodology, the study provides insights valuable to organizational management in navigating rapid and ongoing changes. Globally, leading companies-particularly in Western contexts such as Google, Amazon, and Microsoft-have adopted agile HR practices to maintain competitive advantage, while organizations in Eastern regions are beginning to follow suit. In today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment-further intensified by the transformative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic-organizations are compelled to reconfigure roles and responsibilities to foster agile working environments that support long-term competitiveness. Traditional human resource management approaches may no longer suffice in such dynamic contexts. The study identifies six core characteristics of AHRPs: Flexibility, Speed, Flow, Adaptability, Customer Orientation, Team Collaboration, and Technology (3FACTT), which together represent key enablers of agile HR management. This research not only advances the theoretical understanding of AHRPs but also provides a foundation for future studies, especially for HR practitioners seeking to design future-ready organizations.

Introduction

The term "Agile" was introduced by a group of 17 individuals in 2001, aimed at revolutionizing software development. This methodology emphasizes collaboration, transcending tactical differences among various approaches, aligning shared objectives, and achieving significant outcomes (LeMay, 2018). The Agile Alliance, the creators of the Agile Manifesto (2001), articulated Agile as "the ability to create and respond to change in order to succeed in an uncertain and turbulent environment." Furthermore, the Agile Manifesto established four fundamental values: prioritizing individuals and interactions, delivering functional software, fostering customer collaboration, and embracing change.

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Agile is recognized as a distinct project management methodology, contrasting sharply with traditional project management approaches, often referred to as the "Waterfall" technique, which typically emphasizes structured planning, resource allocation, and timeline specification. In contrast, Agile methodology is organized into "sprints" or units, facilitating rapid solution delivery while maintaining close collaboration with customers (McMackin & Heffernan, 2021). Agile teams are specifically designed to tackle complex challenges and operate within an autonomous framework (Malik et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the Agile Manifesto was conceived to equip the workforce to thrive in a volatile environment, promoting a shared vision of team collaboration and customer-centricity. Numerous organizations are increasingly adopting Agile methodologies, leading to the emergence of diverse practices and frameworks that address forthcoming uncertainties (LeMay, 2018). As the Agile approach gains traction globally, it is imperative to examine it through the lens of expert perspectives, which may further enhance its development.

Objectives

1. To examine the characteristics of agile HR practices that facilitate adaptive practices within organizations.

2. To provide valuable insights for future researchers and serve as a guideline for organizations seeking to transform their workforce.

Rationale of the study

Since the early 2000s, the global landscape has been characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA), alongside continuous innovation and a digital revolution. These factors, coupled with increasing global market competition, have significantly altered the world economy (Pasmore & O'Shea, 2010). Many organizational leaders are grappling with the challenge of effectively leading their teams, with a consensus emerging that traditional management styles are inadequate in addressing the complexities of the current environment.

The concept of "agile" has evolved from its origins in the "waterfall model" and hierarchical bureaucratic structures. It has been redefined by eliminating the waterfall approach, thereby enhancing flexibility and speed in delivering customer solutions (Gartner, 2018). Agile methodologies foster a customer-centric and

digitally proficient workforce (Denning, 2018). This approach encompasses practices consisting of cross-functional and self-organizing management processes such as Scrum, Lean, and Kanban, and has been adopted by organizations like Google, Amazon, Virgin, and Spotify to enhance performance (Denning, 2015; Aghina et al., 2018)

As the need for agility has intensified, organizations have begun to embrace agile working methods to boost employee engagement and collaboration. Human Resources (HR) are increasingly tasked with providing the necessary tools to facilitate this transformation (Ulrich & Yeung, 2019). HR must implement agile methodologies to ensure flexibility and responsiveness to evolving demands. Indeed, HR represents the human capital that is vital for fostering agility, productivity, creativity, and innovation within organizations (Javadin, et al., 2018). Khodabandeh et al. (2018) concur with Javadin et al. (2018) that the absence of agile HR practices hinders organizations from achieving key success factors such as productivity, strategic alignment, technological advancement, and overall excellence.

In summary, the future of HR practices is poised for transformation, driven by the value they create (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Particularly in the context of a VUCA world and the ongoing impact of COVID-19, traditional HR practices are increasingly deemed unsuitable for sustaining competitiveness in the market (Dank & Hellstrom, 2020). The adoption of agile HR practices promises to facilitate a more adaptive working environment, enabling organizations to deliver value more swiftly and flexibly (Management & Solutions, 2019). Consequently, this shift is expected to enhance employee motivation and empowerment, leading to improved performance outcomes (Malik et al., 2021).

To investigate and address the objectives of this study, the researcher has formulated the research question: What are the characteristics of agile HR practices as identified through a systematic literature review? Additionally, the researcher employs the PRISMA framework in the research methodology for data synthesis and extraction. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for future researchers and serve as a guideline for organizations seeking to transform their workforce.

Agility and Agile Definitions

In a business context, organizations typically strive for achievement and competitive advantage. However, when the external environment does not align

with business objectives or remains unpredictable, the key question becomes: What capability enables an organization to navigate such uncertainties effectively? Sharifi & Zhang (1999) identified agility as a critical factor in responding to dynamic business environments, emphasizing its capacity to anticipate changes and implement appropriate solutions. Similarly, Dyer & Shafer (2003) defined agility as a combination of proactiveness, adaptability, and innovation.

The transformation toward organizational agility begins with the adoption of agile practices. According to Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014), agility involves shifting an organization into a proactive business driver capable of responding effectively to both internal and external changes. The adoption of agile methodologies fosters creativity and flexibility in an ever-evolving environment, enabling organizations to accelerate time to market, manage shifting priorities, enhance productivity, and improve software quality (Winter, 2015).

In summary, agility is characterized by nimbleness, flexibility, and speed—principles originating from software development and subsequently applied to broader business contexts to enhance product innovation and fulfill customer needs. Developing an agile organization is essential for sustaining competitive advantage in response to market demands. From a tactical perspective, agility involves optimizing response speed, streamlining workflow processes, enhancing team flexibility, and fostering collaboration across the organization. Additionally, agility necessitates continuous adaptation to changing conditions and the strategic use of information technology as a fundamental tool for achieving business objectives.

Traditional HR Practices VS Agile HR Practices

McMackin & Heffernan (2021) built upon the findings of Ulrich & Dulebohn (2015) in defining the four waves of HR transformation. The first wave (1950s–1970s) was characterized by a focus on personnel administration. During the second wave (1970s–1990s), HR shifted toward internal and external alignment with business strategies. The third wave (1990s–2010s), known as resource-based HR, emphasized HR's role as a sustainable source of competitive advantage, with a focus on talent acquisition, motivation, and leadership development.

The fourth and current wave (2010–present) marks the transition toward an agile workforce, wherein organizations increasingly prioritize adaptability and responsiveness. The objective has shifted toward mass customization, enabling HR to align workforce capabilities with strategic business needs. HR functions have evolved to address uncertainty and dynamic business environments, underscoring the need for greater agility (McMackin & Heffernan, 2021).

HR Practices

Historically, from the 1950s to the 1970s, HR functioned primarily as personnel administration. From the 1970s to the 1990s, it evolved into a business partner, playing a more strategic role. By the late 1990s, HR had further expanded to become a strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert, and employee advocate (Ulrich, 1997). Ulrich & Yeung (2019) emphasized that HR must serve as a role model within organizations, acting as a business partner and corporate strategist while maintaining a strong presence to support organizational needs.

Globally, several professional organizations have contributed to the advancement of HR competencies. In the United States, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has been enhancing HR professionals' capabilities since 1948 (SHRM, n.d.-a). In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has been developing HR expertise since 1913 (CIPD, n.d.). More recently, in the Netherlands, the Academy to Innovate Human Resources (AIHR) has been training HR professionals in modern skills since 2016 (AIHR, n.d.-a). These institutions play a crucial role in shaping the evolution of HR practices, reinforcing the necessity for ongoing academic and practical development to maintain HR as a key organizational driver.

Agile HR Practices (AHRPs)

The transition to Agile HR reflects a shift toward greater responsiveness and flexibility, allowing HR to cultivate an adaptive culture aligned with evolving customer and business needs (Kavitha & Suresh, 2021). Dyer & Shafer (2003) highlighted that Agile HR practices empower employees to be proactive, adaptable, and capable of performing multiple roles. Furthermore, Heilmann et al. (2020) asserted that the successful implementation of AHRPs requires a strong organizational culture that embraces change.

Google serves as a prime example of an organization leveraging Agile HR principles to drive innovation. The company fosters a culture that values hard work, creativity, and what it refers to as "Googleness"—a commitment to excellence and continuous

improvement (Burger et al., 2008). Google's idea management system further reinforces this culture, encouraging employees to contribute innovative ideas, which the company then funds for development (Gandee & Haan, n.d.). This approach aligns with the principles of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), wherein employees are empowered to be innovative and autonomous.

The core focus of AHRPs lies in flexibility and continuous adaptation, allowing organizations to adjust projects dynamically. However, AHRPs also necessitate rapid internal interactions and processes, particularly in agile learning and development and agile performance management (Boehm & Turner, 2005). These distinct characteristics are reflected in the comparative analysis of traditional HR practices, HPWS, and Agile HR practices, summarized in Table 1.
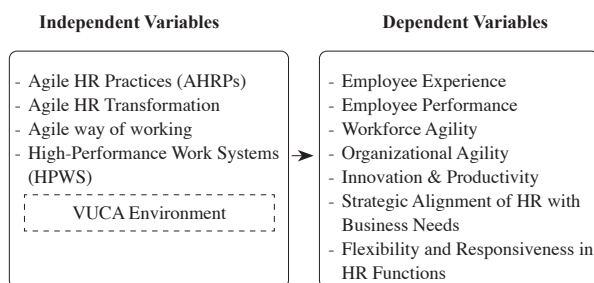
In today's fast-changing business environment, organizations must adapt their HR practices to remain competitive. Agile HR practices—such as learning & development, performance management, job design, rewarding systems, and career growth—serve as independent variables, shaping how businesses respond to the VUCA world. These practices influence key dependent variables, including employee engagement, workforce agility, performance, and organizational agility. By adopting different HR transformation approaches—such as traditional HR, high-performance work systems (HPWS), or agile HR—companies can enhance innovation, productivity, HR's strategic alignment, and policy flexibility, ultimately driving long-term success.

Table 1 Comparison HR Practices, Traditional Practices, HPWS, and Agile way of working

HR Practices	Traditional Practices	High Performance Work Systems (HPWS)	Agile way of working
Learning & Development	Technical skills training; team building activities; team training	Culture of information sharing. Knowledge development – "real time", on-the-job, using innovation to solve problems	Rapid e-learning and informal learning; ongoing coaching; continuous learning and learning culture; training leaders; diversification
Performance Management	Assessment of team/individual performance; motivation: rewards, punishment, recognition	Aligning employee and organizational goals; rewards & performance	Agile continuous feedback; continuous recognition. Encouraging and performance culture Contextualizing
Practices comparison	Benchmarking best practices	Employee engagement	Employee experiences
Job design	Stable job roles	Job design by positions and functions	Evolving job roles and adaptation under crisis situation
Rewarding	Extrinsically reward, retain and control	Performance base pay	Intrinsically inspire, Team bonuses and share values
Career growth	High service year, royalty, and performance	High Potentials and High Performance employees career path	High Potentials and High Performance aligning with positions

Note. Comparison of HR practices in context of three approaches: Traditional (Torrington et al., 1985); (Baird et al., 1988), HPWS (Becker & Huselid, 1998), (Ulrich, 1997); (Appelbaum et al., 2000); (Cappelli & Neumark, 2001); (Jiang et al., 2012); (Kehoe & Wright, 2013); (Patel et al., 2013) and Agile way of working (Bersin, 2012); (Dank & Hellstrom, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

- Agile HR Practices (AHRPs)
- Agile HR Transformation
- Agile way of working
- High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)

  - VUCA Environment

Dependent Variables

- Employee Experience
- Employee Performance
- Workforce Agility
- Organizational Agility
- Innovation & Productivity
- Strategic Alignment of HR with Business Needs
- Flexibility and Responsiveness in HR Functions

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

To pursue the research objectives, the researcher adopted the PRISMA framework in order to extract data and for synthesis. PRISMA is a framework commonly used in evidence-based practice to formulate clinical and research questions (Liberati et al., 2009). PRISMA can be used as a guideline to improve the transparency and completeness of reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. PRISMA has undergone iterative development to address emerging challenges and incorporate methodological advancements in evidence synthesis (Liberati et al., 2009). PRISMA provides a

detailed explanation of each item in the PRISMA checklist, which consists of 27 items and a 4-phase flow diagram (Figure 1) to guide the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses as described in Table 2.

Table 2 Checklist of items to include when reporting a systematic review (with or without meta-analysis) (Adapted from Liberati et al., 2009)

Section/Topic	Number	Checklist Item	Reported on Page Number
TITLE			
Title	1	Provide a clear and concise title that accurately reflects the content of the systematic review or meta-analysis.	
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Write a structured abstract summarizing the background, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions of the study.	
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the systematic review, including its objectives and importance in the context of existing literature.	
Objectives	4	Provide clear question statements addressed with reference to participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design (PICOS)	
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Specify whether a protocol for the review was registered and where it can be accessed.	
Eligibility criteria	6	Clearly define the criteria used to select studies for inclusion in the review.	
Information sources	7	Identify the databases, registries, and other sources searched to identify relevant studies.	
Search	8	Describe the search strategy used to retrieve relevant studies, including any search terms and filters applied.	
Study selection	9	Outline the process for selecting studies, including screening methods and criteria for inclusion/exclusion.	
Data collection process	10	Explain how data were extracted from included studies and any measures taken to ensure accuracy.	
Data items	11	Specify the data elements extracted from each included study, such as study characteristics and outcome measures.	
Risk of bias in individual studies	12	Describe how the risk of bias in individual studies was assessed and any tools used for this purpose.	
Summary measures	13	Explain the methods used to summarize the results of individual studies, such as effect sizes or risk ratios.	
Synthesis of results	14	Detail how the results of individual studies were synthesized, including any statistical methods used.	
Risk of bias across studies	15	Discuss how the risk of bias across studies was assessed and addressed in the synthesis of results.	
Additional analyses	16	Describe any additional analyses conducted, such as subgroup analyses or sensitivity analyses.	
RESULTS			
Study selection	17	Present the flow of studies through the review process, including the number of records identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review.	
Study characteristics	18	Provide detailed characteristics of included studies, such as study design, participant characteristics, and intervention details.	
Risk of bias within studies	19	Present the results of the risk of bias assessment for individual studies.	
Results of individual studies	20	Summarize the results of each included study, including effect estimates and confidence intervals.	
Synthesis of results	21	Present the results of the synthesis of study findings, including any meta-analyses conducted.	
Risk of bias across studies	22	Discuss the overall risk of bias across included studies and its potential impact on the review findings.	
Additional analysis	23	Present the results of any additional analyses conducted, along with their implications.	
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	24	Provide a concise summary of the main findings of the review, including the strength of the evidence.	
Limitations	25	Discuss the limitations of the review, including any potential biases or sources of error.	
Conclusions	26	Summarize the main conclusions of the review, including implications for practice, policy, and future research.	
FUNDING			
Funding	27	Disclose any sources of funding for the review and any potential conflicts of interest.	

PRISMA checklist emphasizes the importance of each item in ensuring the transparency and completeness of systematic review reporting. This includes preparation and review of systematic review manuscripts to improve the quality and reliability of published research as well as the refinement of reporting guidelines to keep pace with advances in research methods and evolving publication standards.

To simplify this study, Liberati et al. (2009) suggested that researchers may apply PICO approach to provide key information about the scope of reviews. PICO provides a structured approach to formulating research questions, ensuring that each component of the question is clearly defined. This clarity helps researchers focus their inquiry and design studies that address specific aspects of the problem or topic of interest. More-over, PICO facilitates literature search strategies by identifying key elements that need to be considered when searching for relevant evidence by breaking down the research question into its components, researchers can develop search strategies that target relevant studies more effectively. PICO stands for;

• Population/Problem: This refers to the group of individuals or the specific problem being studied. It defines the characteristics of the participants or the population under investigation. As for this study, population represents the number of articles identified from the database.

• Intervention: This denotes the treatment, exposure, or intervention being considered as a potential solution to the problem or question identified in the population. Intervention in this study refers to articles screened and selection for those with aligning definition.

• Comparison: This represents the alternative to the intervention being studied. It could be another treatment, or the absence of intervention. This refers to additional articles from references involved in the study.

• Outcome: This indicates the desired result or endpoint of the study. It specifies what researchers aim to achieve or measure in relation to the intervention and comparison. This refers to the final articles selected as main source for synthesis and analysis.

Overall, the use of PICO in research enhances the rigor, clarity, and relevance of research questions, facilitating the generation and synthesis of evidence to inform decision-making and improve outcomes as well as helping researchers in constructing effective search strategies for literature review.

Systematic Literature Review

The systematic review process has been designed, developed, and tested through search terms and identified by viable databases through multiple iterations for scholarly literature and identified empirical studies. The first phrase involves defining the research question or objective that the systematic literature review aims to address then setting research strategies and analysis plan. The second step involves identifying and selecting relevant databases and sources of literature for the systematic literature review. Common databases include PubMed, Web of Science, and Scopus. The third phrase involves screening titles and abstracts of retrieved studies to assess their relevance based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, on the other hand, excluding studies that do not meet the criteria. The fourth step includes extracting relevant data from included studies using standardized data extraction forms. This includes information on study characteristics, participant demographics, interventions, outcomes, and methodological quality.

As for this study, the linking terms were "Agile" and "HR practices" which related to the variables and outcomes. The search process and selection for research criteria composed of search terms through databases with multiple iterations in the Boolean from Scopus Search Guide consisting of "TITLE-ABS-KEY-AUTH ("Agile HR Practices") from international online database which
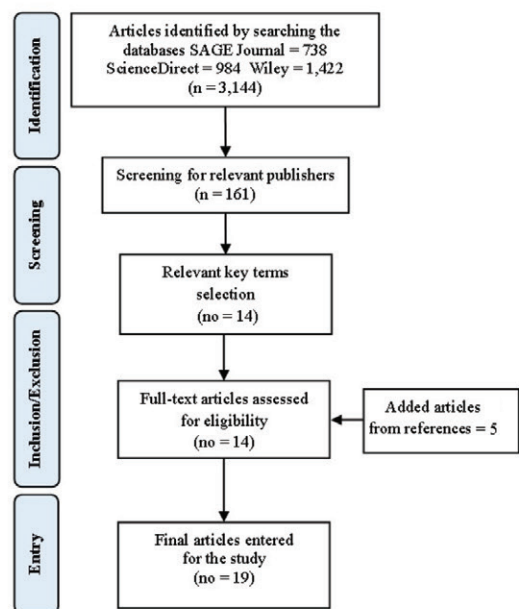

Figure 2 Systematic literature review. Note Adapted from Azizi et al. (2021)

Table 3 Selected articles for the study through systematic literature review

Author(s) name (Year)	Article title	Journal	Publisher	Impact factor	Quartile	Affiliation	Index location
Huselid (1995)	The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance	Academy of Management Journal	Academy of Management	10.91	Q1	United States	Scopus
Park et al. (2004).	HR practices or HR capabilities: Which matters? Insights from the Asia Pacific region	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	Wiley	0.97	Q1	United States	ProQuest Central, Scopus
Festing & Eidems (2011)	A process perspective on transnational HRM systems—A dynamic capability-based analysis	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Personnel Management Abstracts, Scopus
Nijssen & Paauwe (2012)	HRM in turbulent times: how to achieve organizational agility?	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	Taylor & Francis Online	1.544	Q1	United Kingdom	CiteScore (Scopus)
Ananthram & Nankervis (2013)	Strategic agility and the role of HR as a strategic business partner: an Indian perspective	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	Wiley	0.97	Q1	United States	ProQuest Central, Scopus
Bennett & Lemoine (2014)	What a difference a word makes: Understanding threats to performance in a VUCA world	Business Horizons	Elsevier	2.48	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Ulrich & Dulebohn (2015)	Are we there yet? What's next for HR	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Personnel Management Abstracts, Scopus
Srivastava (2016)	Flexible HR to Cater to VUCA Times	Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management	Global Institute of Flexible Systems Management	1.07	Q1	India	Scopus
Holbeche (2019)	Designing sustainably agile and resilient organizations	Systems Research and Behavioral Science	John Wiley and Sons	0.58	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Ahammad et al. (2020)	Strategic agility and human resource management	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Cooke et al. (2020)	Human resource management research and practice in Asia: Past, present and future	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Doz (2020)	Fostering strategic agility: How individual executives and human resource practices contribute	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Harsch (2020)	Dynamic talent management capabilities and organizational agility—A qualitative exploration	Human Resource Management	Wiley	2.34	Q1	United States	Scopus
Heilmann et al. (2020)	Agile HRM Practices of SMEs	Journal of Small Business Management	Taylor and Francis	1.56	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Biron et al. (2021)	Structuring for innovative responses to human resource challenges: a skunk works approach	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Junker et al. (2021)	Agile work practices and employee proactively: A multilevel study	Human Relations	SAGE	3.51	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Malik et al. (2021)	Agile practices and performance: Examining the role of psychological empowerment	International Journal of Project Management	Elsevier	2.33	Q1	United Kingdom	Social Sciences Citation Index, Scopus
McMackin & Heffernan (2021)	Agile for HR: Fine in practice, but will it work in theory?	Human Resource Management Review	Elsevier	3.11	Q1	United Kingdom	Scopus
Subramanian & Suresh (2022)	Assessment Framework for Agile HRM Practices	Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management	Springer Nature	1.07	Q1	India	Scopus

the review of the literatures was studied from 1995 to 2022. Furthermore, the researcher searched directly in *Human Relations, Human Resource Management Review, Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, Systems Research and Behavioral Science, and Human Resource Management* by using Boolean search string as published and indexed in the database (Han & Stieha, 2020).

Azizi et al. (2021) conducted a study regarding innovative HR strategies for COVID-19 management using systematic literature review with "human management and COVID-19" keyword through online database including PubMed, Web of Sciences, and Scopus. The search result provided a total of 1,281 articles related and then they screened and sorted out looking for most relevant articles which yielded a total of 15 articles.

In this study, the selection process was conducted by international database including SAGE Publishing,

Elsevier (ScienceDirect), and Wiley by using the keyword: "Agile HR practices". Figure 1 illustrates the current systematic literature review process.

From the systematic literature review, the researcher was able to acquire 19 articles for this study in order to assemble agile HR characteristics as presented in Table 3

The articles acquired were synopsized to identify agile HR characteristics for having relevant definition. The articles were from well-known publishers with highest quartile concerning human resource management, business, organization, and relevant fields. Moreover, the majority of the articles were from western countries such as the United Kingdoms and the United States of America while only two articles were from eastern country: India. The relevant terms included "speed", "flexibility", "business flow", "adapt", "customer values/needs", "collaboration/teamwork", "technology" as defined in the literature review and illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 Synopsis of the prior literature on Agile HR Characteristics

Author(s) Name and year	Synopsis of Agile and HR Practices	Constituents of Agile HR Characteristics						
		Fast (Speed/Rapid/Quickly)	Flexible	Flow (Fluidity)	Adaptive	Customer Requirement / Customer Oriented (Markets)	Team Autonomy/ Team Collaboration (Cope)	Technology (Digital)
Huselid (1995)	High Performance Work Practices has impact on firm performance			Progressiveness			Work group	Technology advancement
Park et al. (2004)	Core competency develop-ment, agile organizations, and effective management of human resources will serve future business needs	Agility, speed	Flexibility					Electronic commerce
Festing & Eidems (2011)	By implementing the dynamic capabilities theme, unique resources and organizational processes share linkage creating competitive advantages				Adaptation of transnational HRMS		Virtual team/ HRM Coordination	Joint information technology
Nijssen & Paauwe (2012)	Agility framework consists of scalable workforce, fast organizational knowledge, fluidity, and highly adaptive	Fast		Fluidity	Adaptive		Scalable workforce	
Ananthram & Nankervis (2013)	HR that involves in organizational support must be flexible, knowledge management, good collaboration and self-development		Flexible				Collaboration	
Bennett & Lemoine (2014)	Leaders play key role in organizational performance	Agility	Be flexible		Match environment change			Creative tech
Ulrich & Dulebohn (2015)	HR must add values through HR practices for individual, organization, and leadership	Speed of change or agility	Flexibility through centers of expertise			Customer service		Connections through technology

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Table 4 (Continue)

Author(s) Name and year	Synopsis of Agile and HR Practices	Constituents of Agile HR Characteristics						
		Fast (Speed/ Rapid/Quickly)	Flexible	Flow (Fluidity)	Adaptive	Customer Requirement / Customer Oriented (Markets)	Team Autonomy/ Team Collaboration (Cope)	Technology (Digital)
Srivastava (2016)	Flexible HR is important in today's business context necessary to drive agility organization to overcome VUCA situations			Continu-ous perform-ance	Adaptive behaviors	Serve customer demands		
Holbeche (2019)	Formal redesigning is a must for organizational agility as well as the people	Organizational agility	Flexible teams		Adaptable structures	Partnership		Innovation
Ahammad et al. (2020)	The strategic agility of HRM practices has been highlighted to offer organizations flexibility and proactive HR to face uncertainties	Quickly	Flexible	Fluidity		Control market		
Cooke et al. (2020)	Flexibility is needed to build redundancies in the organization and to prepare people for changes		Flexibility for redundancy					Global team through internet
Doz (2020)	The performance outcome has been driven from fostering strategic agility with HR practices for specific individual behaviors	Flexible	Fluidity	Adaptive				
Harsch & Festing (2020)	Firm-internal agility factors and dynamic management capabilities can support organizational agility	Speed, proactivity	Flexibility			Customer orientation	Cooperation	Use of technology
Heilmann et al. (2020)	Agile HRM practices is recommended to have delight customers with rules, clear targets, plans and compensation models	Speed of response	Flexible		Adaptive	Delight customers		
Biron et al. (2021)	Flexibility can support work rapidly with minimal management constraints, to address challenges	Dynamic/rapid change				Serving customer needs		
Junker et al. (2021)	Agile workforce helps increase individuals in proactive behavior as well as in-role performance	Proactive	Flexibility over following plans			Supports customer relations	Collaboration over contracts	
Malik et al. (2021)	The combination team autonomy and practices are useful for projects aiming at incremental innovations		Team flexibility		Adaptive for project requirements		Coordinating characteristic	Innovative behavior
McMackin & Heffernan (2021)	Agile HR as an operational strategy enables the flow of customer values, team empowerment, adaptation, and flexible under digital age		Flexible	Flow	Adaptation	Customer values	Team empowerment	Digital
Subramanian & Suresh (2022)	Agile HRM practices can support business and help gaining competitive advantages	Proactive, Organization's agility				Offering products/services		

To assure that the synopsized literature review had relevant meaning toward agile HR characteristics, the researcher conducted another synthesis to verify whether the practitioners and academics contain similar definition as illustrated in in Table 5

Table 5 Agile HR Practices in the literature review

Agile HR Practices Synthesis	Practitioner Approached					Academic Approached				
	SHRM (n.d.–b)	CIPD (2020)	AIHR (n.d.–b)	Sherehiy et al. (2007)	Azizsafaei (2017)	Deksnys (2018)	Ulrich & Yeung (2019)	Doz (2020)	Cooke et al. (2020)
Flexible Workforce	Workforce Management	_	Flexible Structures	Workforce development and training	Workforce Design	Diversity Development/ Workforce Development	Independent Teams	Flexible Adaptive team	Workforce Diversity
Talent Management	Talent Acquisition	Talent Management	Agile Recruitment	_	Talent Management	_	Agile People Management	Talent Management	Global Talent Management
Employee Experience	Employee Engagement & Retention	Employee Experience	Employee Experience	Job enrichment & Job rotation	_	Job Rotation and Enrichment	Customer-Focused Insights	Multiple Contexts Experience	Employee Well-being
Learning & Development	Learning & Development	Learning & Development/ Upskill/ Reskill	Learning by Gamification	Multiple skills training	Training & Development	Multiple Skills Training	Learning Agility (Grow)	Focus/ Reflective Learning	Employee Training
Performance and Rewarding	Total Rewards	–	Performance Management	_	Performance Management	_	High Performing Teams	_	Employee Evaluation and Appraisal
HR Technology	Technology Management	Digital People Solutions	Innovative technology solutions	Information and knowledge access	Employee Communication with technology	Information and Knowledge	_	Technologies Portfolios	Technology-Seeking

align with the synthesized systematic literature review as depicted in Table 4. To examine the relationship of AHRPs for cross reference, the researcher conducted a co-occurrence networks of the synthesized AHRPs constituents using VOS viewer software (version 1.6.19) for visualizing the co-occurrence relationship networks acquired from PubMeb by inputting a keyword "agile people" as depicted in Figure 3.

most relevant articles to this study. This resulted in a total of 19 articles for synopsis and filling the characteristics of agile HR practice constituents as well as the author name, article title, year of publication, journal name, the impact factor (IF), quartile, affiliation, and journal index location as presented in Table 3. The final retrieved articles were then synopsized and concluded as depicted in Figure 4 in order to expose similar terms with aligning descriptions. This process
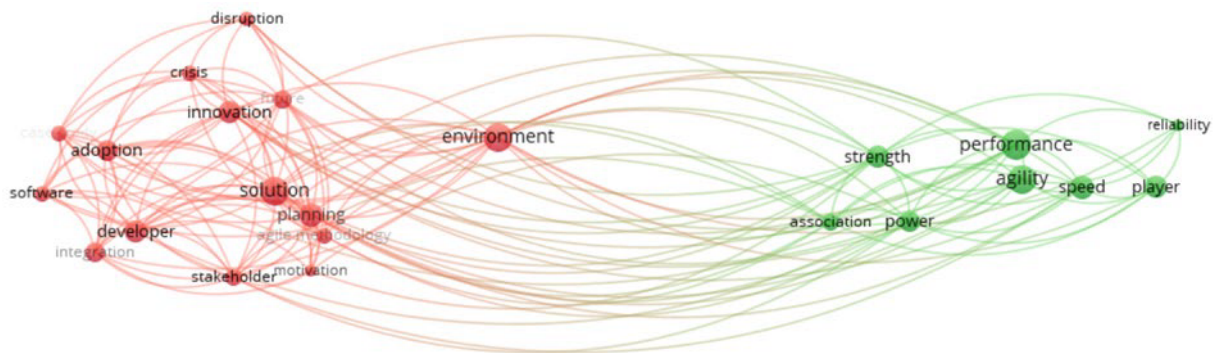
Figure 3 Characteristics of AHRPs Relationship

Result

From the systematic literature review process, the researcher was able to retrieve a total of 3,144 articles from the search term "agile HR practices" which was input into the database and screened and sorted for the

enabled the researcher to discover the characteristics of AHRPs known as "3FACTT" characteristics consisting of;

Flexibility (Flex) – Represents the ability to have flexible workforce structures and enhance employee experience.

Fast (Speed) – Refers to the speed of response or speed to deliver customer solutions.

Flow (Fluidity) – Refers to the flow of work process or continuous work progress.

Adaptation – Refers to the ability to adapt to changes in any environment.

Customer Oriented – Refers to the customization or delivery meeting customer needs/values.

Team Collaboration – Represents the workforce with high teamwork and employee involvement.

Technology – Refers to the use of information and technology as tools to reach goals.

A comprehensive literature review and in-depth analysis of Agile and HR practices reveal key themes associated with Agile HR. Specifically, the synthesis of 19 selected articles highlights the following recurring terms: "Fast" (11 articles), "Flexible" (13 articles), "Flow" (6 articles), "Adaptive" (9 articles), "Customer-Oriented" (10 articles), "Team Collaboration" (8 articles), and "Technology" (10 articles).

Agile HR practices integrate Agile methodology with human resource management, reflecting a mindset originally derived from software development. The primary objective of Agile HR is to accelerate responsiveness to customer needs by forming adaptive teams equipped with technological skills. Agile practices emphasize self-organizing teams, granting them autonomy in decision-making while fostering open communication and value creation. This approach enhances organizational agility, ensuring swift and proactive responses to dynamic business environments.

Compared to traditional HR management, Agile HR practices prioritize flexibility, adaptability, and efficiency. They facilitate shared accomplishments through team collaboration with customers, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in achieving organizational goals. Moreover, Agile HR enables modern knowledge management, allowing organizations to navigate unpredictable challenges sustainably.

In summary, Agile HR practices emerge from Agile methodologies and are applied to human resource management to cultivate an adaptive workforce. The primary objectives of Agile HR include talent acquisition, competency-based compensation, employee value creation, and performance alignment with organizational goals (Kavitha & Suresh, 2021; Subramanian & Suresh, 2022).

Figure 4 Characteristics of AHRPs Emerged from Systematic Literature Review

Discussion

The goal of this research was to study and examine the bibliographic review of the articles related to the characteristics of AHRPs from systematic literature review as depicted in Figure 3. The use of the synthesized characteristics of AHRPs will enable organizations to discover new ways of working and a deeper understanding of agile characteristics. The workforce will experience a faster way of working, increase flexibility, allowing the business to flow without stopping based on uncertainty. Moreover, the workforce will collaborate closely with the use of technology to ensure that customers are well served.

From the perspective of some researchers, the defining characteristics of Agile Human Resource Practices (AHRPs) include supporting agile people management and fostering learning agility for organizational growth (Ulrich & Yeung, 2019). Doz (2020) further highlights that AHRPs enable the formation of flexible, adaptive teams capable of operating in diverse and dynamic contexts. Institutional perspectives emphasize that AHRPs contribute to flexible workforce structures and enhance the overall employee experience (AIHR, n.d.-b). Similarly, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, n.d.-b) asserts that AHRPs facilitate workforce management and promote continuous learning and development.

The findings of this study reinforce that AHRPs enhance organizational flexibility and speed, enabling HR functions to respond effectively to evolving demands. As human capital constitutes an organization's most valuable asset, AHRPs play a crucial role in fostering agility, productivity, creativity, and innovation (Javadin et al., 2018).

In conclusion, future HR practices are expected to undergo significant transformation as organizations recognize the value created through Agile methodologies (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). In particular, within the context of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world—exacerbated by the disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis—traditional HR practices are increasingly inadequate for sustaining competitiveness in dynamic markets (Dank & Hellström, 2020). The findings of this study underscore the critical role of AHRPs in agile organizations, demonstrating their ability to meet business needs while providing essential structural and strategic support as listed below.

- Strategic alignment: AHRP involves aligning HR strategies with overall organizational goals and objectives. This ensures that HR initiatives support the organization's agility and ability to respond to changing market dynamics (Huselid, 1995).

- Flexibility and adaptability: AHRP emphasizes the importance of flexibility and adaptability to meet the dynamic needs of agile organizations. This could involve flexible work arrangements, fluid job roles, and a willingness to adjust HR processes in response to feedback and changing circumstances (Park et al., 2004).

- Continuous improvement: AHRP has the idea of continuous improvement in HR practices within agile organizations involving the regular evaluation and refinement of HR processes to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and employee satisfaction (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012).

- Performance management: AHRP emphasizes the importance of aligning performance management systems with strategic objectives (Huselid, 1995).

- Change management: AHRP supports changes that go beyond planning and initiation; it involves effectively implementing, monitoring, and reinforcing change over time (McMackin & Heffernan, 2021).

By incorporating these components into HR practices, organizations can better support agility, innovation, and resilience in today's rapidly changing business environment. From the research findings, the researcher was able to retrieve relevant terms according to AHRPs especially the term environment which refers to the workplace, work atmosphere that enable the workforce to perform better under various situations.

When linking these concepts with the components of flexibility, speed, fluidity, adaptation, customer orientation, collaboration, and technology (3FACTT), AHRPs can be seen as essential drivers. Flexibility in workforce structures aligns with the adaptable and generative nature of employees. Speed connects to the rapid internal processes that agile systems thrive on, ensuring customer needs are quickly addressed. Fluidity represents continuous progress in work processes, and adaptation highlights the ability to respond to changes in any environment. AHRPs are also inherently customer-oriented, ensuring customized solutions are delivered. Team collaboration is a crucial element, as agile HR emphasizes high levels of teamwork and employee involvement. Lastly, technology serves as a tool to enhance agility, facilitating the flow of work and the ability to meet goals more effectively.

By embracing these elements, AHRPs allow organizations to create a flexible, fast, fluid, and adaptive work environment that is customer-focused, team-oriented, and technology-driven, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

Suggestions

Despite the growing popularity of Agile Human Resource Practices (AHRPs), there remain limited examples of their successful implementation across organizations. Moreover, some organizations may misapply Agile HR principles, leading to ineffective outcomes. This study contributes to the field by defining key characteristics of AHRPs, thereby enhancing understanding and providing a foundation for future action research aimed at generating novel insights.

Future researchers may explore on-field applications of AHRPs in collaboration with well-established organizations, particularly those recognized for excellence in Agile HR through annual awards or related accolades. Such studies could provide empirical evidence on how AHRPs influence organizational operations and workforce dynamics. Additionally, further research could examine the impact of AHRPs on organizational performance, employee experience, and long-term sustainability, addressing critical gaps in existing literature.

Organizations can also leverage the findings of this study to prepare their workforce for future

challenges, particularly in light of rapid changes in the business environment and advancements in technology and data management. McMackin & Heffernan (2023) concluded that Agile HR is in an adoption phase and is likely to gain further momentum depending on the level of market volatility. They also emphasized the need for HR practitioners to transition from traditional HR models to Agile HR, incorporating new concepts, skill development, and cultural transformation to foster organizational agility.

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