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ASSESSING HUMAN TALENT MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE: THE CASE OF MEDICAL CUBACENTER S.A.

EVALUACIÓN DE LA GESTIÓN DEL TALENTO HUMANO EN EL SECTOR SANITARIO: EL CASO DE MEDICAL CUBACENTER S.A.

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Resumen

La gestión del talento humano (GTH) en las organizaciones de salud se enfrenta cada vez más a desafíos debido a la complejidad estructural, la transformación digital y las crecientes demandas de calidad del servicio y eficiencia operativa. A pesar de su importancia estratégica, la GTH se evalúa frecuentemente mediante modelos agregados y homogéneos que no logran capturar la variabilidad interna de los sistemas organizacionales. Este estudio de caso único aborda esta limitación al proponer y aplicar un marco analítico basado en componentes para evaluar la GTH en una institución privada de salud. Se implementó un diseño descriptivo-analítico utilizando instrumentos diferenciados aplicados al personal interno y a los clientes externos para evaluar subsistemas clave, incluyendo reclutamiento, capacitación, evaluación del desempeño y alineación organizacional. El estudio se llevó a cabo en Medical Cubacenter S.A. en Ecuador. Los resultados revelan inconsistencias significativas entre las políticas organizacionales formales y las prácticas reales, particularmente en la evaluación del desempeño y la gestión basada en competencias, lo que pone de manifiesto la fragmentación estructural dentro del sistema de GTH. Estos hallazgos demuestran que la GTH opera como una configuración heterogénea en lugar de un sistema coherente y unificado. El estudio contribuye a la literatura al cuestionar el supuesto de homogeneidad sistémica y al proporcionar una alternativa metodológica que permite una evaluación más precisa y sensible al contexto de los sistemas de GTH. Desde una perspectiva práctica, el enfoque propuesto respalda la toma de decisiones basada en evidencia al identificar áreas específicas para la mejora organizacional dirigida.

Palabras claves: Gestión de recursos humanos; organizaciones sanitarias; sistemas de gestión de recursos humanos; desempeño organizacional; enfoque basado en componentes.

Abstract

Human talent management (HTM) in healthcare organizations is increasingly challenged by structural complexity, digital transformation, and growing demands for service quality and operational efficiency. Despite its strategic importance, HTM is frequently assessed through aggregated and homogeneous models that fail to capture the internal variability of organizational systems. This single case study addresses this limitation by proposing and applying a component-based analytical framework to evaluate HTM in a private healthcare institution. A descriptive-analytical design was implemented using differentiated instruments applied to internal staff and external clients to assess key subsystems, including recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and organizational alignment. The study was conducted at Medical Cubacenter S.A. in Ecuador. The results reveal significant inconsistencies between formal organizational policies and actual practices, particularly in performance evaluation and competency-based management, highlighting structural fragmentation within the HTM system. These findings demonstrate that HTM operates as a heterogeneous configuration rather than a coherent and unified system. The study contributes to the literature by challenging the assumption of systemic homogeneity and by providing a methodological alternative that enables more precise and context-sensitive evaluation

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of HTM systems. From a practical perspective, the proposed approach supports evidence-based decision-making by identifying specific areas for targeted organizational improvement.

Keywords: Human resource management; healthcare organizations; HRM systems; organizational performance; component-based approach.

1. Introduction

Human talent management (HTM) has evolved into a critical strategic function for organizational performance in contexts characterized by globalization, technological transformation, and increasing labor market complexity. Contemporary organizations are no longer able to rely on administrative personnel management models; instead, they are required to adopt integrated and strategically aligned systems that position human capital as a central driver of competitiveness and sustainability (Wright & McMahan, 1992; Jiang et al., 2012). In this perspective, HTM is not merely a set of isolated practices but a system composed of interrelated dimensions—such as recruitment, development, performance management, and organizational culture—that jointly influence organizational outcomes.

This strategic relevance becomes particularly evident in the healthcare

sector, where the effectiveness of human talent management directly impacts service quality, patient safety, and institutional resilience. Healthcare organizations operate in high-pressure environments in which the performance of human resources determines not only operational efficiency but also the quality of care and user satisfaction. Consequently, deficiencies in HR practices can generate systemic inefficiencies, reduce employee engagement, and ultimately compromise organizational performance. In such contexts, the need for robust, adaptive, and analytically sound HTM systems becomes especially critical.

Despite this recognized importance, a fundamental limitation persists in the literature. A substantial body of research continues to evaluate HTM systems using homogeneous instruments and aggregated indicators that treat the system as a unified and internally consistent construct. This approach, while



methodologically convenient, is theoretically reductionist and empirically insufficient, as it obscures the internal variability of organizational processes and limits the identification of specific deficiencies across key components (Lepak et al., 2006; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Furthermore, even recent developments in HR analytics—intended to enhance decision-making—have not fully overcome this limitation. Although analytics has been presented as a transformative tool, organizations still rely predominantly on descriptive metrics that fail to capture the multidimensional nature of HTM systems (Marler & Boudreau, 2017; Boudreau & Cascio, 2017).

This contradiction reveals a critical gap in the field: while HTM is conceptually recognized as a complex and multidimensional system, it continues to be analyzed through simplified and aggregated frameworks. Such misalignment between theory and methodology restricts the ability to generate precise diagnoses and limits the design of targeted and effective improvement strategies. Moreover, emerging evidence suggests that

HTM systems are inherently heterogeneous, with uneven levels of development across their components depending on organizational and contextual conditions (Minbaeva, 2021; Tyskbo & Firtin, 2025). Therefore, assuming measurement homogeneity not only reduces analytical accuracy but also leads to incomplete or misleading interpretations.

In response to this limitation, the present study adopts a component-based analytical perspective that explicitly recognizes the structural heterogeneity of HTM systems. Rather than treating the system as a unified construct, this approach evaluates its key dimensions independently through differentiated analytical instruments, allowing for a more precise and context-sensitive diagnosis. This perspective is particularly relevant for complex organizational environments, where subsystems operate under distinct dynamics and require tailored evaluation strategies.

The study is conducted at Medical Cubacenter S.A., a private healthcare institution in Ecuador, serving as a case study to examine the applicability of this analytical

approach in a real organizational context. By disaggregating HTM into its core components, the research identifies structural inconsistencies, gaps between formal policies and actual practices, and specific areas for strategic improvement.

The objective of this study is to assess the human talent management system from a multidimensional and component-based perspective, overcoming the limitations of homogeneous evaluation models. In doing so, the study makes three key contributions: (i) a theoretical contribution, by critically challenging the assumption of systemic homogeneity in HTM research; (ii) a methodological contribution, by proposing and applying a differentiated evaluation framework aligned with the multidimensional nature of HTM; and (iii) a practical contribution, by providing actionable insights to support evidence-based decision-making in healthcare organizations.

State of the art

Research on human talent management (HTM) has progressively consolidated its position as a central element in

explaining organizational performance. Classical perspectives within strategic human resource management argue that the alignment between HR practices and organizational strategy constitutes a key driver of competitive advantage (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Subsequent empirical evidence has reinforced this position by demonstrating that HR systems influence organizational outcomes through complex mediating mechanisms related to employee capabilities, motivation, and opportunities to contribute (Jiang et al., 2012).

However, despite this apparent theoretical consolidation, a critical inconsistency persists between conceptual development and methodological application. A significant portion of the literature continues to operationalize HTM systems as coherent and internally consistent structures, assuming that their components function in a uniform and integrated manner. This assumption is not only theoretically reductionist but also empirically problematic, as it overlooks the structural heterogeneity that characterizes real organizational



systems (Lepak et al., 2006; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). From a critical standpoint, this reveals a persistent gap between how HTM is conceptualized and how it is actually measured.

Recent contributions have attempted to modernize the field by incorporating digital transformation, global talent dynamics, and data-driven decision-making into HRM frameworks. For instance, Minbaeva (2021) argues that digitalization is fundamentally reshaping HR processes, requiring organizations to adopt more adaptive and analytical approaches. Similarly, Cooke et al. (2023) emphasize that the emergence of artificial intelligence challenges traditional HRM models by introducing new forms of decision-making and organizational complexity. In parallel, Collings et al. (2019) highlight the importance of global talent management strategies in shaping organizational performance within multinational contexts.

Nevertheless, these advances do not fully resolve the underlying methodological problem. Although contemporary frameworks recognize complexity at a conceptual level, they

frequently reproduce simplifications at the analytical level by maintaining aggregated measurement models. This contradiction suggests that the field is evolving conceptually but remains constrained methodologically. In fact, the increasing emphasis on HR analytics has not translated into more sophisticated evaluation practices. Marler and Boudreau (2017) identify the potential of analytics to transform HR into a strategic function, yet they also acknowledge that organizations largely rely on descriptive metrics. This limitation is further reinforced by Boudreau and Cascio (2017), who demonstrate that the integration of data into decision-making processes remains superficial in most organizations.

From the perspective adopted in this study, this situation reflects a structural weakness in the field: the persistence of homogeneous evaluation models that fail to capture the multidimensional nature of HTM systems. By aggregating data into unified indicators, these approaches obscure internal disparities across key components such as recruitment, training, performance management, and organizational

culture. As a result, they produce generalized diagnoses that are insufficient for identifying specific operational deficiencies or designing targeted interventions.

Moreover, emerging empirical evidence suggests that HTM systems are inherently heterogeneous and context-dependent. Studies conducted in diverse organizational settings indicate that HR practices vary significantly according to institutional, cultural, and organizational factors, leading to uneven levels of development across system components (Tyskbo & Firtin, 2025; Lazarova et al., 2023). This evidence directly challenges the assumption of systemic coherence that underpins most traditional evaluation models.

Based on this critical assessment, it is argued that the predominant approaches in HTM research are methodologically limited because they impose artificial uniformity on inherently diverse systems. Therefore, advancing the field requires moving beyond aggregated measurement frameworks toward analytical models capable of capturing internal differentiation. In

this context, the present study adopts a component-based perspective that explicitly recognizes the heterogeneity of HTM systems and evaluates their dimensions independently. This approach not only addresses a persistent gap in the literature but also provides a more accurate and operationally relevant framework for analyzing human talent management in complex organizational environments.

2. Methodology

Research Design and Epistemological Positioning

This study adopts a descriptive–analytical design within a case study framework, grounded in a pragmatic epistemological perspective. The research assumes that human talent management (HTM) systems are complex, context-dependent, and structurally heterogeneous, which limits the applicability of uniform measurement approaches. Therefore, the study rejects the assumption of methodological homogeneity and instead embraces a component-based analytical paradigm that allows for the



differentiated evaluation of organizational subsystems.

Case Study Context

The research was conducted at Medical Cubacenter S.A., a private healthcare institution in Ecuador. The selection of this organization was based on its operational complexity, diversity of professional roles, and relevance as a representative case of medium-scale healthcare service providers in Latin American contexts.

The case study approach enables an in-depth exploration of HTM processes in a real organizational setting, facilitating the identification of structural inconsistencies that may not be observable through large-scale standardized studies.

Population and Sampling Strategy

The study considered two analytical units:

Internal actors: medical staff, nursing personnel, administrative employees, and support staff involved in service delivery.

External actors: patients receiving healthcare services.

The internal population consisted of 139 employees. The sample size was determined using the finite population formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, ensuring statistical representativeness.

A non-probabilistic purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants with direct involvement in key HTM processes. For external users, a convenience sampling approach was applied due to accessibility constraints, ensuring the inclusion of patients with recent service experience.

Operationalization of Variables

The HTM system was decomposed into the following analytical components:

Recruitment and selection

Training and development

Performance evaluation

Organizational climate

Each component was operationalized through specific indicators derived from the literature on strategic human resource

management and organizational performance. This decomposition allowed for the independent evaluation of subsystems, avoiding the aggregation bias commonly found in HTM studies.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using multiple structured instruments, designed according to the characteristics of each analytical component and respondent group.

- Internal staff instruments included Likert-scale items measuring perceptions of HR processes.
- External user instruments focused on service quality and perceived staff performance.

The use of differentiated instruments responds to the need to capture context-specific dimensions, acknowledging that each HTM component operates under distinct organizational logics.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through alignment with established theoretical constructs in HTM literature. Additionally, instruments

were reviewed by subject-matter experts to guarantee conceptual consistency.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with acceptable thresholds above 0.70 for internal consistency. Given the differentiated nature of the instruments, reliability was evaluated separately for each component.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two stages:

Descriptive analysis to identify central tendencies and dispersion within each component.

Comparative analysis across components, enabling the identification of structural inconsistencies and asymmetries within the HTM system.

This approach allows for a more precise diagnosis compared to aggregated models, as it preserves the internal variability of the system.

Bias Control and Methodological Limitations

To mitigate potential biases:



- instruments were applied independently across groups
- anonymity was guaranteed to reduce response bias
- data triangulation was applied between internal and external sources

The study acknowledges the use of non-homogeneous instruments as a methodological decision rather than a limitation. This approach is consistent with the research objective of capturing the multidimensional structure of HTM systems.

Methodological Contribution

The primary contribution of this study lies in challenging the assumption of measurement homogeneity in HTM research. By adopting a component-based approach, the study provides a replicable framework for analyzing complex organizational systems, particularly in sectors where human resource processes are structurally differentiated, such as healthcare.

3. Results and discussion

Reliability of Measurement Instruments

The reliability analysis confirmed acceptable levels of internal consistency across all components of the human talent management (HTM) system. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.81 for recruitment and selection, 0.76 for training and development, 0.71 for performance evaluation, and 0.86 for organizational climate. All values exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the measurement instruments used for each component are internally consistent and suitable for analytical purposes. The variation in reliability levels across components further supports the multidimensional structure of the HTM system and justifies the use of differentiated instruments.

Descriptive Analysis by Component

The descriptive analysis reveals significant variability across the components of the HTM system, confirming the absence of structural homogeneity.

Recruitment and Selection showed moderate performance ($M = 3.12$; $SD = 0.64$), indicating the presence of basic procedural structures but limited strategic alignment with competency-based management.

Training and Development presented intermediate values ($M = 2.98$; $SD = 0.71$), reflecting irregular implementation and lack of systematic planning in capacity-building processes.

Performance Evaluation recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.41$; $SD = 0.69$), evidencing weaknesses in formal evaluation mechanisms, absence of standardized criteria, and limited feedback systems.

Organizational Climate exhibited the highest level of internal consistency and relatively higher perception scores ($M = 3.34$; $SD = 0.58$), although with notable variation across staff groups.

Cross-Component Comparative Analysis

The comparison across components reveals structural asymmetry within the HTM system. While recruitment and organizational climate demonstrate moderate levels of

development, performance evaluation remains significantly underdeveloped. Training processes, although present, lack coherence and strategic integration.

These differences indicate that the HTM system does not operate as a unified structure but rather as a set of partially developed and weakly integrated subsystems. The gap between components, particularly between organizational climate and performance evaluation, suggests misalignment between employee perception and formal management practices.

External User Perspective (Patients)

The analysis of external user responses indicates generally acceptable levels of perceived service quality. However, variability in responses suggests inconsistencies in staff performance and service delivery.

These findings reinforce the internal analysis, indicating that structural weaknesses in HTM components, particularly in performance evaluation and training, may have a direct impact on service outcomes.



Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that:

The HTM system exhibits a fragmented structure rather than an integrated model

Key components show uneven levels of development

There is a lack of alignment between HR processes and organizational objectives

Internal inconsistencies are reflected in external service perceptions

These findings validate the component-based analytical approach adopted in this study, as they reveal structural patterns that would not be identifiable through aggregated or homogeneous evaluation models.

Discussion

The findings of this study challenge one of the most persistent assumptions in the human talent management (HTM) literature: that organizational systems can be evaluated as coherent, internally aligned, and functionally integrated structures. Contrary to this dominant view, the results demonstrate that

HTM systems may operate as fragmented configurations, in which key components evolve unevenly and lack effective coordination. This evidence not only questions the validity of aggregated evaluation models but also reveals a deeper structural limitation in the way HTM has been conceptualized and measured.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study critically re-examines the foundational premise of strategic human resource management, which emphasizes alignment between HR practices and organizational strategy as a driver of competitive advantage (Wright & McMahan, 1992). While this assumption has been widely supported, more recent reflections on the evolution of the field suggest that strategic HRM has often progressed without resolving fundamental conceptual inconsistencies (Wright & Ulrich, 2017). In this sense, the present findings support the argument that alignment should not be assumed as an inherent system property but rather verified empirically, particularly in complex organizational environments such as healthcare.

This position is consistent with prior research that conceptualizes HR systems as configurations of interdependent but not necessarily balanced components (Lepak et al., 2006). However, this study advances this perspective by demonstrating that heterogeneity is not only theoretical but empirically observable within a single organization. The disparities identified across recruitment, training, and performance evaluation reinforce the argument that aggregated measurement approaches obscure critical internal dynamics (Paauwe & Boselie, 2005), thereby limiting the explanatory capacity of HTM models.

The study also contributes to the debate on HR analytics by offering a critical reinterpretation of its current limitations. While HR analytics has been promoted as a transformative tool (Marler & Boudreau, 2017), existing research has already warned that HR functions risk failing to leverage data effectively due to conceptual and capability gaps (Angrave et al., 2016). The present findings confirm this concern, showing that the core limitation lies not in data availability but in the

persistence of simplified analytical frameworks. Furthermore, methodological biases inherent in organizational research—such as common method bias—may reinforce these limitations if not properly addressed (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

In parallel, the increasing digitalization of HRM has been presented as a pathway to more adaptive and efficient systems (Strohmeier, 2020; Bondarouk et al., 2017). However, this study argues that digital transformation alone does not resolve structural inconsistencies. While recent research highlights the opportunities of artificial intelligence and global HRM transformations (Budhwar et al., 2022; Caligiuri & Caprar, 2022), the findings suggest that technological advancements may amplify existing fragmentation if underlying analytical assumptions remain unchanged. In other words, digitalization enhances tools, but not necessarily understanding.

This argument is further supported by broader perspectives on digital transformation, which emphasize that technological change requires corresponding shifts in



organizational logic and analytical frameworks (Vial, 2019). Similarly, emerging applications of AI in HR processes—such as recruitment—have demonstrated both opportunities and risks, particularly in terms of consistency and decision quality (Van Esch et al., 2019). Therefore, the study takes a clear position: without a reconceptualization of HTM systems as heterogeneous and multidimensional structures, technological solutions may reinforce rather than resolve systemic weaknesses.

From a global perspective, talent management research has emphasized the importance of multilevel and context-dependent dynamics in shaping organizational outcomes (Collings et al., 2019; Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). However, this study extends this argument by demonstrating that heterogeneity is not only present across organizations or institutional environments but also within individual organizations. This finding is consistent with recent evidence showing that diversity and structural differences influence organizational processes and outcomes (Mohan et

al., 2024), reinforcing the need for more granular analytical approaches.

From a methodological standpoint, this study explicitly challenges the dominance of homogeneous measurement instruments in HTM research. By adopting a component-based analytical framework, it provides a more accurate representation of organizational dynamics and enables the identification of targeted areas for intervention. This approach responds directly to longstanding calls in the literature to improve methodological rigor and analytical precision in HRM research.

From a practical perspective, the implications are equally significant. The findings indicate that organizations—particularly in the healthcare sector—must move beyond generalized HR assessments and adopt differentiated evaluation strategies. The identification of performance evaluation as the weakest component suggests that organizational effectiveness can be significantly improved through targeted, component-specific interventions rather than broad

system-wide reforms. This perspective aligns with the broader view that HRM effectiveness depends on contextual adaptation and strategic coherence across subsystems (Guest, 2017).

In conclusion, this study advances the HTM literature by asserting that organizational coherence is not an inherent property but an empirical condition that must be demonstrated. By providing evidence of structural fragmentation, it calls for a shift in both theoretical and methodological approaches, emphasizing the need for more nuanced, granular, and context-sensitive models of human talent management. Rather than reinforcing existing paradigms, the study contributes to redefining how HTM systems should be analyzed in complex organizational environments.

Despite its contributions, this study presents certain limitations. First, the research is based on a single case study, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other organizational contexts. Second, the use of a descriptive–analytical approach restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between HTM

components and organizational outcomes. Third, the application of non-probabilistic sampling for external users may introduce selection bias. Future research should incorporate comparative designs across multiple institutions and apply advanced statistical or mixed-method approaches to validate the robustness of the proposed framework.

Future research should extend this component-based framework by incorporating longitudinal data to examine the evolution of HTM systems over time. Additionally, comparative studies across different healthcare institutions or sectors would allow for testing the external validity of the model. The integration of advanced analytical techniques, such as structural equation modeling or machine learning approaches, may further enhance the explanatory power of HTM evaluation.

4. Conclusions

This study set out to evaluate the human talent management (HTM) system within a healthcare organization through a component-based analytical approach. The



findings demonstrate that HTM systems cannot be adequately understood as homogeneous or fully integrated structures, as commonly assumed in the literature.

First, the analysis confirms that the HTM system operates as a structurally fragmented configuration, where key components such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and organizational climate exhibit uneven levels of development. This finding directly addresses the primary objective of the study by evidencing that internal coherence within HTM systems should not be assumed but empirically assessed.

Second, the results reveal that the use of differentiated measurement instruments provides a more accurate representation of organizational dynamics. By avoiding aggregation bias, the study demonstrates that component-level analysis allows for the identification of specific operational weaknesses, particularly in performance evaluation processes. This validates the methodological approach adopted in the research.

Third, the study establishes that internal inconsistencies within HTM systems have practical implications for service delivery. The alignment between internal deficiencies and variability in external user perceptions suggests that weaknesses in human resource processes may directly influence organizational outcomes in the healthcare sector.

Finally, the research contributes to the field by proposing a methodological shift from homogeneous to component-based evaluation models. This approach offers a more nuanced and context-sensitive framework for analyzing complex organizational systems, particularly in environments where human capital plays a critical role.

In conclusion, the study argues that the effectiveness of HTM systems depends not on their formal structure but on the degree of functional coherence between their components. Therefore, future research and organizational practices should prioritize differentiated analytical approaches that reflect the multidimensional nature of human talent management.

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