CONNECTING PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS: RESEARCH PATHWAYS AND PERSPECTIVES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's organizational environment witnesses profound and significant changes, which have been driving studies on people management. Among the main contextual changes, it is worth mentioning the introduction of new technologies, new forms of work (such as telework), the nature of employment contracts, and the composition of the workforce (Fraccaroli et al., 2023). Additionally, unpredictable challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the importance of strategic agility and flexibility in facing crises that produce economic, financial, and social changes (He et al., 2023).

To address such dynamics, organizations find themselves needing to strengthen their organizational capabilities (Arbab & Mahdi Abaker, 2018), with the field of people management being crucial for improving organizational performance, regardless of how it is measured (Yamin, 2019). In this sense, people management, through its various practices (Abdul Rahim Zumrah et al., 2022), has occupied a prominent position in organizational studies.

Furthermore, the adoption of human resource management practices in the public sector differs from that adopted in the private sector, as pointed out by Jakobsen et al. (2023). This occurs for several reasons, including differences in legitimacy requirements and organizational values, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of how public managers effectively conduct these practices in their context (Jakobsen et al., 2023).

Thus, as a starting point for this literature review, recent reviews on human resource management practices were sought in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The study by Boon et al. (2019) analyzed the evolution of human resource management systems and their connection with research instruments used to evaluate the construct up to 2017. Castro et al. (2020) analyzed Brazilian production on strategic human resource management practices from 1997-2017 in both the public and private sectors. Demo et al. (2020) mapped international article production on the topic from 2005-2019, without sectoral distinction.

Another identified review study, without a temporal cut and covering both public and private sectors, was by Melo et al. (2023), focusing on human resource management practices in the context of telework. The study by Jakobsen et al. (2023), in turn, focused on recruitment and selection practices, while the work by Oliveira et al. (2023) evaluated Brazilian production on human resource management practices in both sectors up to May 2022.

Finally, the systematic literature review by Boselie et al. (2021) was identified, mapping international scientific production on human resource management exclusively in the public sector from 2000 to 2016. As pointed out by the authors, although there is an increase in the number of publications dedicated to the theme in the public sector, it is essential to learn from the lessons derived from previous research and continue identifying new research perspectives, considering contextualized approaches when applying human resource management practices in the public sector (Boselie et al., 2021).

Therefore, this systematic literature review aims to advance the mapping of this research field, using Boselie et al. (2021) work as a starting point, seeking to expand and improve previous findings, exploring additional aspects, and incorporating new perspectives. In this sense, the central question of this research is: "What are the pathways and research perspectives in human resource management practices in the public sector?" From this question, it was possible to identify the itineraries of international production and identify gaps, challenges, and new opportunities that underpinned the proposal of an agenda for future studies.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Human resource management practices

There is a substantial body of literature on human resource management, understood here as managerial decisions aimed at policies and practices that collectively influence the dynamics of labor relations and aim to achieve specific objectives (Boselie et al., 2021). As pointed out by Legge (2006), the field of human resource management encompasses a range of debates, stemming from various normative and descriptive models. These models address both hard concepts, focused on the effective and efficient utilization of human capital, and soft concepts, which view people as valuable and strategic resources, prioritizing human development.

Demo et al. (2024) define human resource management practices (HRMP) as articulated proposals by the organization, inspired by its strategies, that translate human resource management policies into actions and organizational routines regarding the handling of human relations, aiming to achieve desired outcomes. The constant rethinking of strategies, policies, and organizational practices integrated with their objectives and goals to optimize organizational performance and maximize human potential lays the foundation for strategic human resource management (SHRM) (Castro et al., 2020).

Several studies suggest a strong association of HRMP with variables such as productivity, commitment, turnover intentions, organizational citizenship behaviors (Cesário & Magalhães, 2017), resilience (Costa et al., 2019), workplace well-being (Demo et al., 2022), leadership, organizational virtues (Coura et al., 2022), and quality of life in telework (Melo & Demo, 2023). Although the scope of human resource management practices continues to expand, studies indicate that their main functions include recruitment and selection practices, training and development, performance evaluation, compensation and rewards, participation and teamwork, relationship and working conditions (Demo et al., 2024; Van der Wal, 2017).

Although the literature presents some indices for evaluating certain human resource management practices (Pfeffer, 2005), there remained a gap related to the development of integrated and more comprehensive models for measuring HRMP (Boon et al., 2019), specifically in the public sector (Boselie et al., 2021; Knies et al., 2020). The models proposed and validated cross-culturally by Demo et al. (2012; 2014) aimed to fill this gap and have been used in various studies (Dello Russo et al., 2023; Resende & Neiva, 2021). Furthermore, with the aim of advancing in obtaining validity evidence of a specific measure to evaluate HRMP in the public sector, Demo et al. (2024) developed a measure customized for this context.

Additionally, with the increasing performance orientation of public organizations and considering their particularities and complexities, human resource management has gained notable prominence and popularity in the public sector, requiring an increasingly focused approach (Boselie et al., 2021), which justifies studies with a specific focus on HR practices in the government environment.

2.2 Human resource management practices in the public sector

Public servants are the face of the state, ensuring the provision of services and contributing to the legitimacy of public organizations by ideally representing society (Venard et al., 2023). However, the government environment faces a complex human capital crisis, such as the need to replace retiring employees, deal with an increasing workload, and confront a decrease in the labor supply in the markets (Jakobsen et al., 2023). Research on the relationship between human resource management and the satisfaction, commitment, engagement, and motivation of public servants is gaining increasing attention in the field of public management,

especially considering evidence linking the effectiveness of human resource management to improvements in organizational outcomes (Mariani et al., 2019).

The lack of development of employees' potential limits organizations from achieving their maximum effectiveness, as human resource management practices (HRMP) can enhance workers' skills, knowledge, and capabilities (Al Marhoobi & Atan, 2018). It is known that the strategic role of HRMP is not limited to the private sector (Demo et al., 2020). Although scholars have extensively investigated the relationships between performance and strategic human resource management in business contexts, it is argued that these results are not easily applicable to public environments, highlighting the need for further research in diverse contexts (Van der Wal, 2017).

The public sector has specificities that should lead it to adopt strategic human resource management in a differentiated manner (Jakobsen et al., 2023). Public organizations are less exposed to market competition, face more legal constraints, and are subject to political influences. Additionally, they have more ambiguous, complex, and multidimensional goals compared to the private sector, remembering that some human resource management practices in the public service, such as selection and remuneration, are governed by law (Lim et al., 2017).

In the field of public management and administration, human resource management is related to the commitment, engagement, and motivation of public servants (Mariani et al., 2021). Studies have already highlighted its importance in the development of workers, emphasizing the need for governments to ensure occupational safety and healthier work environments so that professionals can fulfill their mission more effectively (Cesário & Magalhães, 2017). It is essential for employees to perceive HRMP as beneficial, which can result in higher job satisfaction and, consequently, improved performance (Venard et al., 2023).

Given the increasing reforms in public administration, there is a debate about the effectiveness of human resource management practices in this sector, as well as the conditions that can affect them (Mariani et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a need for a greater understanding of the interactions between the fields of human resource management and public administration, avoiding the transfer of best practices from the private sector to the public sector without considering the significant contextual differences between them (Boselie et al., 2021).

3. METHODS

To conduct the present research, a combined strategy of systematic literature review (SLR) was adopted to cover qualitative analyses, along with bibliometric analyses, which allow for a quantitative evaluation of the identified articles (Rojon et al., 2021). Thus, the aim is to build a broader perspective with scientific evidence of the chosen field of study.

The literature review on human resource management practices in the public sector was conducted using the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis), which consists of three stages: identification, screening, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). The research question "What are the pathways and research perspectives in human resource management practices in the public sector?" was formulated.

Next, searches were conducted in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. We opted for the Web of Science and Scopus databases due to the number of indexed journals and the temporal coverage of the journals (Chadegani et al., 2013). The search was conducted in March 2024, using the descriptors in the title, abstract, and keywords fields, for the period from 2017 to 2023, as the literature review by Boselie et al. (2021) focusing on the public sector was identified, covering the period from 2000 to 2016. The defined descriptors were (("human resource management practices" OR "HRM practices" OR "human resource management systems" OR "HRM systems" OR "strategic human resource management practices") AND ("Public sector" OR "government" OR "public service" OR "public organizations" OR "civil

servants" OR "public employees")). The initial search resulted in 315 documents (Scopus 206 + WoS 109).

The initial identification stage also included the application of filters: language (English), document type "article," and categories business, management, psychology applied, public administration for the Web of Science database and business, management and accounting, psychology for the Scopus database, as these categories traditionally research the topic (Melo et al., 2023). After applying these filters, the resulting balance was 167 articles. Duplicate documents (n=41) were excluded, and relevance criteria were adopted, using the CiteScore indicators from Scopus and the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) from Web of Science, to assess the quality of the journals in which the articles were published (Aguinis et al., 2023). No articles were excluded, as all were from journals with a JIF or Citescore rating. Thus, the identification stage resulted in 126 articles, which moved on to the next screening stage.

The screening stage involved reading the title, abstract, and keywords of the 126 articles to assess the relevance of the documents, resulting in the exclusion of 72 records that were not aligned with the research objective, that is, those that did not refer to human resource management practices in the public sector. Furthermore, during the screening stage, the full text of the 54 articles was read, and documents were removed if they did not focus on the public sector as the research locus (n=3), if they did not use human resource management practices as a variable in the model (n=21), and if the articles did not have open and free access (n=3). Therefore, the final corpus of this SLR consists of 27 scientific articles. Figure 1 outlines the stages of the adopted PRISMA method.

Figure 1

PRISMA Protocol Diagram
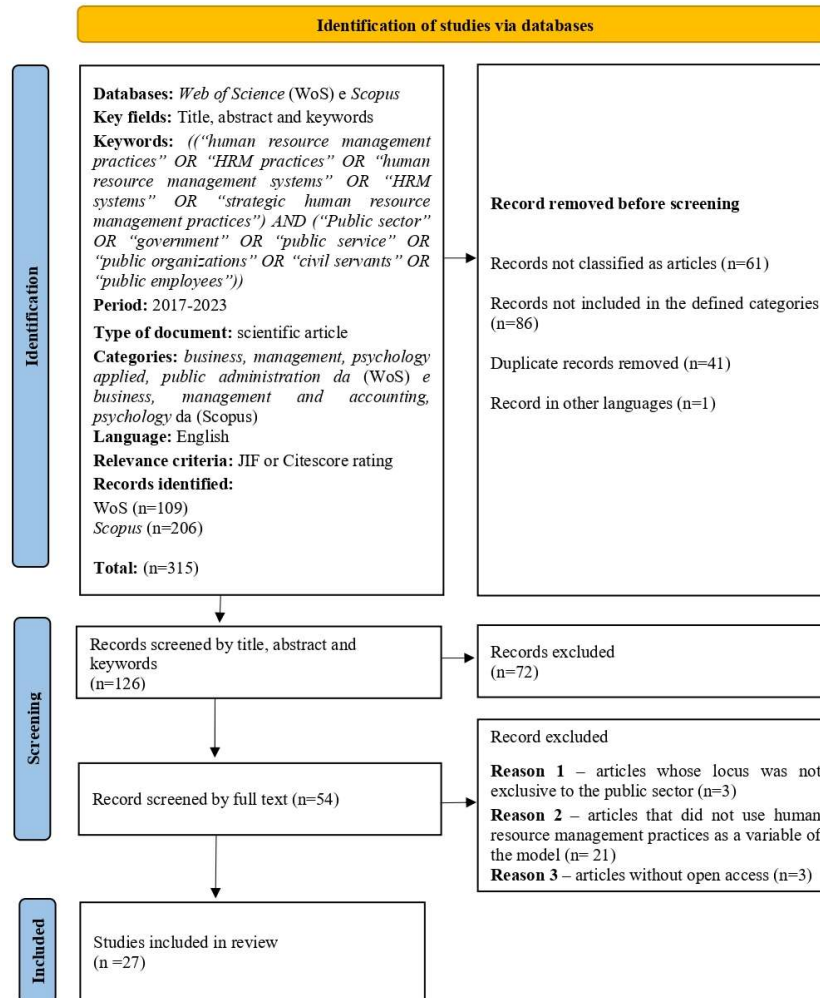
Source: Figure by authors

Finally, to gain a more detailed understanding of the behavior of the field of study on human resource management practices in the public sector, bibliometric analyses of the articles comprising the analysis corpus were conducted. RStudio software (bibliometrix package) and VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) were chosen for their open access and assistance in more objective and structured analyses, through visualizing data and characterizing publications (Kirby, 2023).

4. RESULTS: MAPPING OF SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

The analysis of the final sample of articles (n=27) in this systematic literature review reveals that the majority of studies adopted a quantitative approach (78%), followed by qualitative research (22%). No articles of multimethod or theoretical nature were found. Regarding data collection techniques, quantitative studies mostly opted for the use of questionnaires (95%), while qualitative research utilized semi-structured interviews (67%). Regarding data analysis techniques, structural equation modeling predominated (52%) among quantitative studies and thematic and content analysis (50%) in qualitative studies.

Regarding the journals, the most frequent publishers on the topic were the Review of Public Personnel Administration (n=3), with a CiteScore of 8.9 (2022), which focuses on the

various approaches used in studies and practices of human resource management in the public sector, and the International Journal of Public Administration (n=2), with a CiteScore of 4.4 (2022), which publishes studies exploring the latest advances in the field of public administration, public policies, and management.

Additionally, data on annual scientific production showed a relative regularity in the number of publications, averaging 4 between 2017 and 2023. However, as shown in Figure 2, 2018 had the lowest number of publications (n=2), while 2023 saw the highest increase (n=6), possibly due to the need to analyze human resource management practices in different work arrangements as a result of the 2019 pandemic crisis.

Figure 2
Annual scientific production
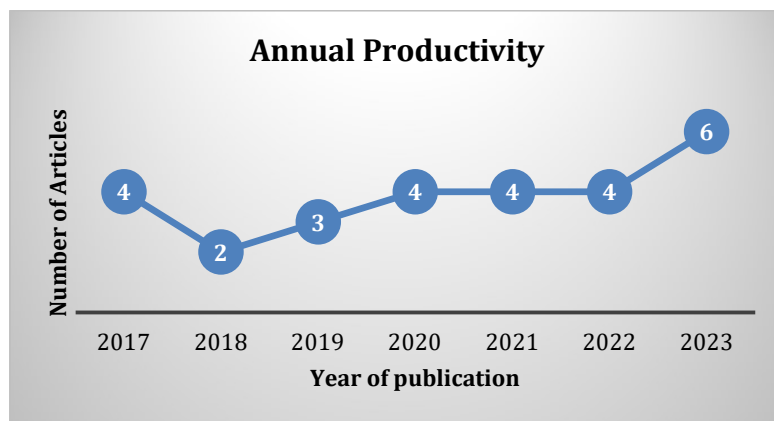
Source: Figure by authors.

Furthermore, it is possible to infer, through the analysis of the number of citations of the articles comprising the sample of this review, which studies have exerted greater influence in the research field on human resource management practices in the public sector. Table 1 lists the three most cited articles, ranked by the number of citations, along with their authors, year of publication, journals, CiteScore, Journal Impact Factor (JIF), and number of citations in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases.

Table 1
Ranking of most cited articles

Title / Authors / Year	Journal	*CiteScore* (2022)	JIF (2022)	Number of citations Scopus + WoS
1) *Conceptualization of wasta and its main consequences on human resource management* (Alsarhan & Valax, 2021)	*International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*	4.6	3.0	23
2) *The Effects of Politicization on Performance: The Mediating Role of HRM Practices* (Fuenzalida & Riccucci, 2019)	*Review of Public Personnel Administration*	8.9	3.9	23

| 3) Shedding New Light on Strategic Human Resource Management: The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices and Human Resources on the Perception of Federal Agency Mission Accomplishment (Lim et al, 2017) | Public Personnel Management | 3.0 | 4.7 | 17 |

Source: Table by Authors using Scopus and Web of Science databases

The article by Alsarhan and Valax (2021), of qualitative nature, seeks to elucidate the main implications of the use of wasta, understood as the power of influence and a form of expression of social capital in the Arab world, among human resource management practices in the workplace and the overall performance of public institutions in Jordan. Interviews were conducted with professionals in the public sector, and the results indicated that wasta influences employee motivation, morale, job satisfaction, frustration, workplace diversity, turnover, and mental exhaustion. Additionally, it impacts the image and reputation of individuals and organizations.

The second most cited article, by Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019), questions the effects of politicization, understood as the replacement of technical and neutral criteria by political and personal biases, on the organizational performance of public institutions in Chile. The authors propose that this influence can be explained by the deterioration of human resource management practices, such as recruitment, selection, performance evaluation, and training. The results confirm the existence of negative impacts of politicization on the performance of public agencies.

The article by Lim et al. (2017) evaluates the resource-based view in the study of strategic human resource management in public institutions. The authors identified that all types of human resource management practices, whether results-oriented or performance-based, such as rewards, training, evaluation, and recruitment, positively affect the perception of fulfilling the public mission. It is worth noting that this is one of the few articles that seeks to discuss the adoption of human resource management practices in light of the specificities and constraints present in the public sector.

Moving on to the analysis of authors, in terms of academic production on human resource management practices in the public sector, Hassan Al-Dhaafri and Mohammed Alosani, both affiliated with the Dubai Police Service/United Arab Emirates, with 2 publications each, are highlighted as the most relevant in the studied period. Regarding the geographical distribution of publications, concerning the country of correspondence of the authors of the articles, Malaysia (n=7), South Korea (n=5), and Ghana (n=4) stand out as the most relevant, along with Australia, France, India, Norway, and South Africa, with 3 publications each. It is worth noting that there was participation from authors from all continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and America), but Chile was the only representative from Latin America, indicating an advancement compared to the systematic review by Boselie et al. (2021), which did not include studies from this region of the globe in the analyzed period.

Finally, aiming to advance in understanding the knowledge structure, connections, and structural relationships of theoretical-methodological connectivity of the studies comprising the corpus of analysis, we opted to conduct a keyword co-occurrence analysis of the articles using the VOSviewer software (van Eck, 2010). Four clusters (red, green, blue, and yellow) were generated, formed by circles (nodes) representing concepts, with larger circles reflecting the number of times the word appears within a specific domain. The lines between nodes represent relationships between concepts and indicate the conceptual structure present in the literature, as in the case of human resource management practices in the public context (Qin et al, 2022). Figure 3 presents the graphical visualization of the clusters.

Figure 3
Keywords co-ocurrance
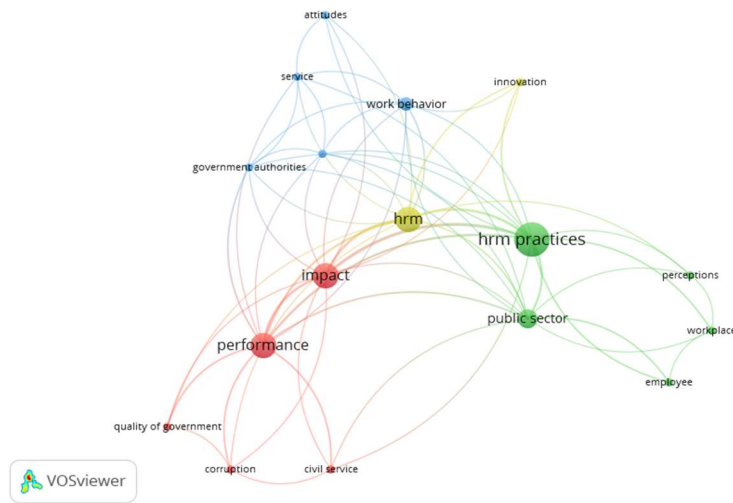
Source: Figure by Authors using Vosviewer.

A general analysis of the keyword co-occurrence map indicates that human resource management (HRM), impact, and performance, represented by the larger nodes in Figure 3, are the most relevant concepts in the field of study on human resource management practices in the public sector. This result aligns with the literature, as the adoption of effective human resource management practices enables the creation of work environments that favor improved individual performance and, consequently, greater impact in deliverables (Boon et al., 2019).

The concepts present in the blue cluster (work behavior, government authorities, job satisfaction, services, and attitudes) reflect the discussion regarding the behaviors and attitudes of public servants and leaders in promoting job satisfaction and service delivery. In this context, evidence can be seen of the impact that human resource management practices have on promoting positive behaviors and attitudes (Cesário and Magalhães, 2017; Venard et al, 2023; Zumrah et al, 2022).

The red cluster, composed of the words impact, performance, public service, corruption, and government quality, invites reflection on the presence of unprofessional practices, based on personal interests, often found in the government environment. These practices tend to undermine the quality of the government's image and have negative repercussions on institutional performance and service delivery to society. According to Cooper (2022), public bureaucracy, based on Weberian principles of merit and permanent careers, especially in the presence of established mechanisms for reporting wrongdoing in the workplace, has a positive impact on recruitment practices and promotion opportunities. Van der Wal (2017) and Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019) support this idea by indicating how job satisfaction and performance can be enhanced through anti-corruption initiatives and the promotion of ethical principles, coupled with human resource management policies.

The green cluster (human resource management practices, public sector, employees, workplace, and perceptions) demonstrates the importance of investigating employees' perceptions of human resource management practices (HRMP) in the workplace. Alhajaj and Ahmad (2023) evaluated employees' subjective experiences regarding satisfaction, empowerment, participation, and communication, aiming to understand their intention to leave the job. Cesário and Magalhães (2017) also found positive relationships between perception of HRMP and intention to leave the job and organizational citizenship behavior. Gur and Tzafrir (2022) assessed how employees' perception of HRMP interacts with the trust variable among

different groups within a public health institution and recommended designing customized HRMP for each group of workers.

Finally, the yellow cluster (human resource management and innovation) associates terms related to creating favorable environments for the adoption of innovative practices in the public sector. A culture of innovation in the organizational environment positively affects human resource management practices, and conversely, the implementation of effective and appropriate HRMP facilitates and stimulates a more innovative profile among employees (Alosani & Al-Dhaafri, 2023; Azmi & Hashim, 2022). According to Vivona and Lewis (2023), recognition and inclusion practices have highly positive effects on the entrepreneurial behavior of public servants, contributing to governments becoming more capable of addressing complex societal problems and delivering quality public services more aligned with citizens' needs (Alosani et al, 2021).

5. DISCUSSION, PERSPECTIVES AND AGENDA

Although academic production on human resource management practices in organizations is extensive, there is still room for a deeper understanding of the characteristics involved in these practices in the public sector. As commonly seen in research on organizational variables in the public sector, most authors tend to overlook the debate on the specificities inherent in this sector, such as bureaucracy, public mission, efficiency in spending, legal regulations, and meeting citizens' needs.

Furthermore, considering that studying a research field involves understanding the concept of the research variable, the authors of some selected articles have endeavored to present a definition of human resource management practices, based on references in the literature, as well as their purpose in organizations. According to Zumrah et al. (2022), human resource management practices (HRMP) refer to activities in an organization such as compensation, training and development, career development, and work-life balance. Azmi and Hashim (2022) argue that the knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and attitudes desired of workers, known as competencies, are shaped through HRMP. In turn, Biscak and Bencina (2019) state that HRMP aim to ensure that workers deliver high-quality services, provide user satisfaction through efficient resource use, and improve workers' qualifications. Malik and Lenka (2020) and Cesário and Magalhães (2017) assert that HRMP contribute to achieving organizational objectives.

The main understanding derived from the concepts used is that human resource management practices (HRMP), beyond their operational nature such as recruitment and selection, aim to implement mechanisms that foster individual performance and achieve organizational goals. It is noticeable that aspects related to well-being, quality of life, self-realization, and purpose, for example, are not typically emphasized in the conceptualization, often taking a backseat when it comes to understanding the main objectives of HRMP, thus constituting a relevant call for further research. In this regard, the practices proposed by Demo et al. (2024), in their customized measurement model for the public service, seek to address this call by incorporating relationship practices and working conditions primarily aimed at the well-being and quality of life of public servants. Additionally, it is worth highlighting the conceptualization provided by Biscak and Bencina (2019), who focused on aspects related to efficiency in resource use and the delivery of high-quality services, which should guide the public mission in the conceptualization of the construct.

In terms of research design strategy, in 92% of the articles (n=25), the variable "human resource management practices" was included as a predictor in the analyses. Only the study by Alosani and Al-Dhaafri (2023) positioned HRMP as the criterion variable, and the article by Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019) conducted the analysis considering it as a mediating variable

in the model, which may represent a trend in studies where HRMP more commonly impact other organizational variables rather than the reverse. Boon et al. (2019) had already warned about the need to develop more complex structural models of relationships between variables, including HRMP as mediators, and the literature lists studies focusing on this perspective (Demo et al., 2022; Coura et al., 2022; Melo & Demo, 2023).

Among the set of HRMP commonly used by authors, training and performance evaluation stand out, corroborating with the dominant productivity-oriented understanding in the most used concepts, and also with the results of the systematic review by Boselie et al. (2021), which identified a high interest among authors in studying the relationship between HRM and performance. The authors attribute this interest to the trend in the public sector, especially in the last two decades, towards results-oriented management.

Still on the subject of models, Table 3 presents the variables chosen by the authors for the analysis of relationships with the construct "human resource management practices (HRMP)". We opted to group the variables into thematic categories entitled trust, culture, organizational performance, innovation, and individual-centered variables, for a better understanding of the trends in studies on the construct.

Table 3

Main Variables Adopted in the Analysis Models of the Relationships with HRMP

Category	Variables	Articles
Trust	Corruption; Knowledge sharing; Organizational ethical climate; Politicization; Trust in manager; Wasta (influence power); Whistleblowing.	Alosani e Al-Dhaafri (2023); Alsarhan e Valax (2021); Cooper (2022); Gur e Tzafrir (2022); Venard et al (2023); Yamin (2020)
Culture	National culture; Organizational culture.	Lockhart et al (2020)
Organizational performance	Adaptive performance; HR Outcomes; Organizational excellence; Organizational performance; Perceived mission accomplishment; Performance;Supply chain management.	Al Damoe et al (2017); Al Marhoobi e Atan (2018); Arbab et al (2018); Biscak e Bencina (2019); Fuenzalida e Riccucci (2019); Lenda (2017); Lin et al (2023); Tabiu et al (2020); Venard et al (2023); Yamin (2020)
Innovation	Attitude toward public sector entrepreneurship; Innovation culture; Service innovation.	Alosani et al (2021); Alosani e Al-Dhaafri (2023); Azmi e Hashim (2022); Vivona e Lewis (2020)
Individual-centered variables	Employee performance; Employee perception; Job satisfaction; Motivation; Organisational citizenship behaviour; Person-organisation fit; Person-job fit; Self-efficacy; Talent turnover intention; Work engagement.	Abane et al (2023); Alhajaj e Ahmad (2023); Cesário e Magalhães (2017); Fuenzalida e Riccucci (2019); Lenda (2017); Lin et al (2023); Lockhart et al (2020); Sixpence et al (2021); Venard et al (2023); Vivona e Lewis (2020); Zumrah et al (2022)

Source: Table by authors

A predominance of interest in variables focusing on the individual level (attitudes and behaviors) is observed. Boselie et al. (2021) also obtained similar results and attributed them to the quantitative and psychologization characteristics, term used by the authors, present in

studies in this area. Although some variables in the trust category are more commonly debated in the public context, it is evident that all identified categories refer to practices equally applicable to private organizations. In this sense, two distinct lines of thought can be established: i) there is no difference in the design of human resource management practices between the public and private sectors; ii) the authors chose not to delve into the discussion about the specificities of human resource management practices in the public sector.

However, it is worth noting the choice of some studies to include variables such as ethics, corruption, whistleblowing, and politicization in their analyses, as these are important factors when it comes to the government sphere. Along the same lines, the two most cited articles (Alsarhan & Valax, 2021; Fuenzalida & Riccucci, 2019) discuss the negative impact that behavior based on personal influence and the breach of impartiality standards have on performance and human resource management in the public sector.

Furthering the debate on human resource management practices in the public sector, several articles have brought valuable reflections to the research field. Lim et al. (2017) argue that public organizations face more complex and multifaceted problems than the private sector and operate under legal constraints and political influence. Mariani et al. (2021) advance the discussion by bringing to light the implications of the managerial reforms that occurred with the New Public Management (NPM) movement experienced since the late 1970s, initially in Anglo-Saxon countries. The authors discuss the effectiveness of pay for performance practices in government, considering budgetary limitations, intrinsic characteristics of employee motivation, and the difficulty in perceiving the relationship between performance and compensation. Finally, Van der Wal (2017) argues that the definition of performance in the public sector should encompass factors such as sustainable economic growth, development, well-being, progress, innovation, and absence of corruption.

Based on the insights brought by the articles and the discussions presented above, it is possible to outline a research agenda for future studies. We have chosen to organize the proposed agenda into three main groups: methodology, public sector/culture, and leadership, as the research suggestions from the analyzed articles focused on these themes. In terms of methodology, it was observed that there were no studies of a multimethod and theoretical nature in the analyzed period. Advancing studies, especially of a theoretical nature, can help deepen the understanding of the variable, including identifying which set of variables would be most suitable for the public sector. Furthermore, multimethod studies, with a hermeneutic bias, will enable a better understanding of the phenomenon under analysis, beyond the measurement that quantitative techniques bring. Also, concerning advances in methodology, it is suggested to conduct more research that predicts the variable of human resource management practices (HRMP) as a mediator of the adopted model, which is also already an agenda in the field (Boon et al., 2019). This is because most studies chose to test models in which HRMP predicted another organizational variable.

Future studies aiming to better understand the characteristics of the public sector and cultural aspects, both within the organization and within the country/locality, are also relevant. The public sector, in particular, is influenced by variables such as political support, budgetary constraints, legal rigidity, complexity of public policies, public values, and public opinion, which ultimately impact the reach and effectiveness of human resource management practices. This scenario reinforces the need to establish human resource management practices exclusive to the public sector, as suggested by Boselie et al. (2021).

Furthermore, in many countries, this sector plays a significant role in economic participation and employment, further highlighting the need to understand how human resource management practices can assist in achieving organizational objectives, delivering quality services, and, equally importantly, in motivating and ensuring the well-being of employees. Thus, future studies should consider aspects related to the political maturity and level of

professionalization of the organizations studied, as well as aspects of national culture, which can reflect levels of corruption, clientelism, and political influence in the workplace.

Finally, studies that include the variable of leadership in the analysis models are suggested, given that leaders can connect teams and daily practices to organizational strategy. None of the analyzed articles considered the influence of this variable on the effectiveness of human resource management practices. Therefore, it is worth exploring how leadership styles impact the quality of relationships developed in the organizational environment and innovation in the public sector, as well as how human resource management practices influence these relationships. Additionally, deeper exploration of leadership, at various levels within the organization, especially regarding its role in shaping human resource management practices, is recommended.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the search for articles that composed this literature review was limited to the Scopus and Web of Science databases and journals with impact factor (CiteScore or Journal Impact Factor), although this was a strategy to provide higher quality to the review. The research included in the analysis was also limited to publications classified as articles and written in English. Therefore, there is a possibility that relevant works in progress may have been overlooked, such as those presented at conferences, as well as those in other languages or published in other databases.

6. CONCLUSIONS

It is understood that the main objective of this research has been achieved, as scientific articles published in high-impact journals, from 2017 to 2023, investigating human resource management practices in the public sector, have been mapped. Additionally, it was possible to unveil the state of the art of the variable, as well as establish a research agenda for future studies.

A field of research, to advance, requires academia to dedicate itself to understanding how the studied phenomenon is characterized. Thus, regarding the theoretical advances obtained with this study, the diagnosis of the incipiency stands out, both in the theoretical and conceptual debate on human resource management practices in the public context, and in scientific production on the subject. Therefore, there is still a need for further deepening of the construct and understanding how to address human resource management practices based on the idiosyncrasies present in public organizations.

In terms of the practical advances of this study, it can be affirmed that the findings described here suggest that public organizations, through their leadership, understand the importance of designing and implementing human resource management practices that do not only address aspects related to productivity and performance. It is necessary to include in the internal debate the subjective needs of employees, such as well-being, quality of life, and fulfillment. Thus, it not only favors the creation of healthier work environments with more engaged employees but also leads to better delivery of public services to citizens.

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