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# ***Human Resource Management Journal:* A look to the past, present, and future of the journal and HRM scholarship**

## **Abstract**

This editorial lays out 30 years of history of *Human Resource Management Journal (HRMJ)*, charting the journal's roots, reflecting on HRM scholarship today and guiding authors on potential contributions to the journal in the future. *HRMJ* has achieved high recognition and ranking internationally since its conception originally as a UK-based journal. The journal's broad-based approach to the study of the management of people at work, means it appeals to scholars from a multitude of disciplines, not least of all management, industrial relations, psychology and organisational behaviour. *HRMJ* is also highly rigorous in its review process, ensuring reliable, interesting and impactful articles that further our knowledge of theory and practice.

## **KEYWORDS**

employment relationship, human resource manager, international human resource management, personnel management

## **1 | INTRODUCTION**

In this editorial, we look back at the 30 years of *Human Resource Management Journal (HRMJ)* publishing quality research focused on the management of people at work. In so doing, we chart the development of the journal from its early origins to now being viewed as a leading international journal of choice as evidenced by its top tier position in several national journal rankings (e.g., Chartered Association of Business Schools; Australian Business Deans Council [ABDC]), a consistently upward impact factor (IF, both Web of Science and Scopus) and increasing submissions and downloads from around the world. Moreover, we take the opportunity in this editorial to consider the state of HRM scholarship and set out the direction that *HRMJ* is taking to ensure it continues to be well placed in leading and shaping high quality, impactful research. Reading this editorial will provide scholars with clarity on the range of topics in which *HRMJ* is interested, how we evaluate submitted manuscripts and the current state of the journal. A second editorial to appear later will focus on methodology and, in particular, articulate our commitment to methodological plurality and to promoting research integrity.

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## 2 | HRMJ: A SHORT HISTORY

*HRMJ* was launched in 1990 by Keith Sisson, then Professor of Industrial Relations and Director of the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) at the University of Warwick (Coventry, United Kingdom). The origins of this new journal (diverging from what previously had been a dominant focus on industrial relations [IRs] in academia in the United Kingdom) were to take an intentionally broad approach. Sisson (1990, p. 1) referred to the policies, people and processes involved in the management of people in work organisations and comments that the journal was to give attention:

to a wide range of subjects, including the design of organisations and work, human resource planning, recruitment and selection, appraisal, training and development, management development, motivation and reward, discipline, participation and involvement, health and safety, and management-trade union relations. It will also be stressing the economic, political and social implications of the management of human resources.

The journal was therefore designed to appeal to anyone *interested in the management of people in work organisations regardless of their discipline or their specific function*. From the viewpoint of the 1990s, the HRM world was seen as dominated by prescription but with scant analysis of what happens in practice. As noted by Sisson (1990, p. 1), there was usually very little discussion of:

the appropriateness of the techniques or, indeed, of the problems managers experience in applying them; the reader has to take on trust the prescriptions offered. There is also little attention given to the wider society in which the organisation operates; even the impact of business strategy and structure, for example, tends to be ignored.

Given this backcloth, the aim of *HRMJ* was to provide comprehensive coverage of HRM issues to include multi-disciplinary contributions, as well as those from a range of individual disciplines, to write descriptively and analytically about the management of people and also to appeal to academics and practitioners alike. In relation to the latter, the journal was endorsed by the professional body for personnel managers in the United Kingdom, what was then the *Institute of Personnel Management* (now known as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), and the journal's first Editorial Advisory Board (EAB) included several practitioners, from both the employer and union side.

There was also to be an emphasis placed on comparative studies and on case studies, the latter to help improve our knowledge and understanding of what was happening as opposed to what 'should' be happening. There was much emphasis on sketching out the changing context for HRM, including legislation, the influence of the European Union, new business models in a new era of competition and sectoral changes. At the same time, it was acknowledged that theory and practice are entwined, and ideas can become self-fulfilling, foreshadowing the famous piece on management theory and practice in *Academy of Management Learning & Education* by Ghoshal (2005). While context was stressed as important, there was also the possibility and role of strategic choice (Kochan, Katz, & McKersie, 1986).

It is worth noting some differences in the approach taken by *HRMJ* as it evolved in contrast to other HRM journals – some articulated in the aims as mentioned above, others more emergent in the pattern of articles published. There is evidence of rather different traditions of writing within the HRM field and this is reflected in the various HRM journals. The first tradition focuses more on performance and an organisation-level model of an HRM system inspired by the stream of research on high-performance work systems, largely emerging from U.S. scholars and which examines the links between HRM strategy and employee outcome measures such as commitment. The model combines theories and concepts from strategic management and organisational behaviour with a focus on resources and processes internal to the organisation and tend to lean towards a unitarist – shareholder

perspective. In contrast, the second approach takes a more critical stance drawing from IR and sociology, with a pluralist stakeholder approach, sometimes still examining the same HRM strategy – employee outcome relationship but entailing more emphasis on influences from outside the organisation (see Kaufman, Wilkinson, Barry, & Gomez, 2019; Wilkinson, Bacon, Snell, & Lepak, 2019).

The historical origins of *HRMJ* reflect more of the latter. While there was much interest in the ideas of HRM imported from the United States, there was also some pushback with concerns that some of these ideas, such as high commitment management, could threaten trade unions (Ackers & Wilkinson, 2003). It is worthwhile noting that leading UK researchers in HRM at the time, David Guest and John Storey, reflected a pluralist tradition of writing, the former having been based in the London School of Economics Industrial Relations Department and the latter having written on labour process theory and being based at the IRRU at Warwick Business School while writing his major tracts on HRM (Storey, 1989, 1992). In line with our narrative that *HRMJ* has had editors from that critical tradition, with many schooled in IR, Keith Sisson was followed by John Storey, John Purcell and Mick Marchington (all pluralist stalwarts). More recently, Tony Dundon and Adrian Wilkinson continued this tradition, along with the arrival of David Collings, who was the first editor from outside of the United Kingdom and from a broader HRM academic background. It is also worth noting that the other two UK-centred HRM journals at this time were the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, edited by an industrial sociologist, Michael Poole, and *Personnel Review*, edited by Karen Legge, who wrote some of the most trenchant criticisms of the HRM agenda (e.g. Legge, 1995).

In contrast, in the United States, the influence of adjacent disciplines, such as (neo-classical) economics, strategy and industrial/organisational (I/O) psychology has arguably placed a greater emphasis on business performance, individual behaviour and measurement. As Stern and Barley (1996, p. 154) comment, being located in business schools has 'tugged organisational research toward issues of efficiency and effectiveness and away from large, systemic issues'. In the United States, *Human Resource Management* and *Human Resource Management Review* editors have tended to come from more of an organisational behaviour (OB) or strategy background, with IR less prominent.

With the progressive decline of institutional IR in the United Kingdom (Purcell, 1993), there were predictions of a new agenda of managerial decision making. In fact, as Marginson (2015) argued, a quarter of workers were still covered by collective bargaining agreements, showing a high degree of institutional resilience. Equally, others have shown a move towards individual rights becoming enshrined in employment law (Ewing, 2003). Contemporary HRM emerged to develop our understanding of modern working life. The focus was not only on the efficiency and competitiveness that aligns with unitarist approaches but also included the perspective that employers and employees have many divergent interests (Ackers & Wilkinson, 2003). Too strong a focus on unitarism, which overlooks the collective aspects of employment and underplays the contested terrain in which management choices are made (Bacon, 2003, p. 84), was to be avoided.

The *HRMJ* tradition has been and continues to be especially interested in a more blended version of HRM. The journal's distinctiveness, for example, is shown in several recent articles demonstrating the continued relevance of institutional IR (e.g. Doellgast & Marsden, 2019; Goyer, Clark, & Bhankaraully, 2016; O'Reilly, Grotti, & Russell, 2019). *HRMJ*'s initial focus on the *management of people in work organisations* remains at the bedrock of what we are about, although we also acknowledge that contemporary work often is unpaid or voluntary (Schlosser & Zinni, 2011) and the new 'normal' of precarious work presents challenges for the standard employment relationship (Rubery, Grimshaw, Keizer, & Johnson, 2018). As a journal, we are open, therefore, to high-quality HRM research from all traditions and approaches that provide new insights on the *management of people at work*. Such work may take place in specific organisations or workplaces, or as represented in recent *HRMJ* provocation and review papers, the emerging boundaries of the gig economy (e.g. Duggan, Sherman, Carbery, & McDonnell, 2019; Kost, Fieseler, & Wong, 2019; Swart & Kinnie, 2019).

*HRMJ* remains committed to having HRM scholarship located within the employment relationship where due recognition is given to the often competing and contradictory needs of employees and management.

### 3 | HRMJ: PRESENT PERSPECTIVES ON HRM SCHOLARSHIP

There is some confusion in the field regarding what HRM scholarship entails given the multidisciplinary of HRM research. Consequently, we believe it useful to depict what *HRMJ* views as coming under the HRM banner and thus, the types of papers we are interested in receiving. HRM as a field of research includes elements of content (*what*), process (*how*) and context (*why*) (De Wit & Meyer, 2010). The core content of HRM is generally well-understood and includes *what* practices organisations adopt to regulate employees, such as recruitment, selection, training, reward and performance management, either studied as individual practices or as bundles of practices in HRM systems. The process of HRM then explores *how* these HRM practices/systems influence employee attitudes and behaviours, as well as team, business unit and firm performance outcomes (Sanders, Shipton, & Gomes, 2014). Finally, research on the context of HRM focuses on explaining *why* particular HRM practices/systems have come about or *why* they may have different outcomes in different organisational settings (Cooke, 2018; Farndale & Paauwe, 2018). All three streams together form the HRM field of study.

To arrive at these different streams, HRM scholarship can be either theory driven or phenomenon driven (Weber & Kabst, 2004). Phenomenon-driven HRM explores emerging phenomena from practice that are not yet established in academic research (Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries, & Gallo, 2015). An example of this is the explosion of papers on talent management that emerged over the last decade or so (cf. Glaister, Karacay, Demirbag, & Tatoglu, 2018). As interest in an emergent phenomenon in the practitioner literature increases, a scholarly body of research starts to form with its own terminology and a shared language and community (Von Krogh, Lamastra, & Haefliger, 2012). In turn, as this research grows, the phenomenon can be explored through extant theoretical lenses, or, in more exceptional cases, through the development of new theory. Of course, it is important in this process that the phenomenon is truly an emergent field of study rather than a passing fad (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Guest, 2013). *HRMJ* welcomes emergent phenomenon research, alongside more established fields of HRM study.

More typically, HRM scholarship draws from theory-driven approaches to explain observations related to employment practices or offer alternative theoretical perspectives. HRM scholars regularly draw from multiple disciplinary fields, all of which (and more) have and continue to be welcomed by *HRMJ*. We summarise just a few of these here:

- *Critical theory and HRM* adopt a critical management perspective, often but not exclusively aligned with the IR field, investigating how HRM is conducted given the inherent power imbalance between employees and employers. An example of theory often applied in this field is the political economy approach (Thompson, 2011).
- *Economic theory and HRM* focus on calculating cost-based return on investment on HRM practice implementation in organisations (e.g. based in personnel economics: Grund et al., 2017). This stream also explores patterns of wages and employment in the external labour market (e.g. based in labour economics: Meer & West, 2016), as well as individual decisions regarding what investments to make in the development of their skills, knowledge and experience and the implications at the macro level (e.g., based in human capital theory: Wright & McMahan, 2011). Applying general economic theory to the discipline can also provide alternative insights into the decisions that firms are making regarding the management of their human resources (Kaufman, 2015).
- *Industrial sociology, IR theory and HRM*. This stream of research explores how management practice reflects broader societal trends, often related to inequalities. Frames of references are used to explore tensions within the employment relationship and the notion of structured antagonism is central to this stream (Edwards, 1986). Another common theory applied here is labour process theory (Godard, 2010).
- *Psychological theory and HRM* focuses on exploring how HRM practices/systems impact on employee attitudes and behaviours, highlighting individual differences. Many examples can be found in the 2016 special issue of *HRMJ* (volume 26, issue 2) on 'Understanding Mediating Variables and their Outcomes', which includes theories such as the job demands and resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989), self-determination theory (Gagné & Deci, 2005), job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), attribution

theory (Heider, 1958) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), to name but a few. This approach also includes research from an industrial psychology tradition which seeks to cross the divide between individual and organisational outcomes of HRM practices; for example, such work can be found in relation to staffing (Ployhart, 2012), training and development (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012) and performance appraisal and management (DeNisi & Smith, 2014). Much of the work on mutual gains within HRM (e.g. Ogonnaya & Messersmith, 2019) also draws from psychological theory.

- *Strategic management theory and HRM* are at the organisational level of analysis and explores the alignment between HRM practices/systems and organisational strategy, with the common goal of improving performance and demonstrating the added value of HRM to organisations (Boxall, 2018; Guest, 2017; Paauwe, 2009). Typical theories explored here include the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991), contingency theory (Galbraith, 1973), resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and strategic contingencies theory (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971), among many others.
- *International business and HRM* draws across disciplines to demonstrate the effect of national contexts on how HRM plays out. Cross-cultural management frameworks (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) are used to explain how values and belief systems affect the way in which employees experience HRM practices (e.g., Park & Nawakitphaitoon, 2018; Peretz, Fried, & Levi, 2018). Institutional frameworks (e.g. neo-institutional theory – DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; varieties of capitalism – Amable, 2003; Hall & Soskice, 2001) are also applied to explain how, for example, the legal or other infrastructures at national level affect employment practices adopted by organisations (e.g. Goyer et al., 2016; Reichel, Scheibmayr, & Brandl, 2019).

The above approaches to studying HRM are not the only perspectives *HRMJ* wishes to promote. Rather, we highlight these to demonstrate *HRMJ*'s multifaceted approach to theorisation. We also point to the potential utility of other theories including, for example, historical and employment law perspectives. In brief, *HRMJ* seeks to be a multidisciplinary HRM journal and as such should not be dominated by any single set of theorizing. This links back to the heart of the development of *HRMJ* in its desire to be open and relevant to all interested in issues surrounding the management of people at work.

Nevertheless, there is a current tendency towards a dominant psychology lens, partly because it enriches understanding of individual employees and partly because it allows for statistically rigorous research that meets the increasingly stringent standards of peer-reviewed publication (Godard, 2014; Harley, 2015). This has led in recent times to strong debate in *HRMJ* around the psychologisation of HRM as a field of research. Stemming from the invited provocation by Godard (2014), we have published several articles, replies and counter-replies providing support and critiques (see e.g. in this issue: Troth and Guest (2019) arguing the case for the emphasis on psychology research in HRM, as well as Budd's and Kaufman's commentary and Godard's response on this case).

At *HRMJ* we seek rigour across epistemological and methodological approaches. For example, in a provocation paper published in *HRMJ*, Harley (2015, p.402) explains this very well:

one can be just as rigorous in abstract philosophising as in statistical analysis [...] any method can be applied rigorously – ethnography, interviewing, discourse analysis and other qualitative approaches have very clear sets of rules about rigour.

In other words, *HRMJ* is open to different approaches, including those that focus on the 'human' in HRM as well as research that offers critical insights (Godard, 2014; Wright & McMahan, 2011).

In recent times, several provocative articles published in *HRMJ* have also called for a rethink on academic research and professional practice with Dundon and Rafferty (2018, p.377) arguing HRM 'is at risk of impoverishment'. They argue that this results from an overly marketised and individualistic ideology taking hold to the neglect of 'wider organisational, employee, and societal concerns'. Similarly, HRM research that draws from psychological and economic theory is argued to have become highly formulaic and decontextualised (Cooke, 2018). Adding context

back into HRM scholarship helps us uncover new phenomena that can move the field forward and implies stepping beyond complex statistical analyses to in-depth qualitative studies of HRM in practice.

Several of *HRMJ*'s special issues have drawn on diverse research traditions to consider HRM in context; for example, in hospitals (2010, volume 20, issue 4), for emerging market economies (2011, volume 21, issue 4), and employer organisations (2019, volume 29, issue 1). Two forthcoming special issues seek to give greater credence to the importance of context. The first, guest edited by Vincent, Bamber, Delbridge, Doellgast, Grady and Grugulis, is focused on situating HRM practices in their political and economic context (likely to be published later in 2020). The second special issue of relevance is that guest edited by Farndale, Bonache, McDonnell and Kwon, which will explore positioning context both '*front and centre in international HRM research*' (likely to be published later in 2021), providing an opportunity for cross-fertilisation between the HRM and international business literatures.

## 4 | SUBMITTING TO *HRMJ*: ADVICE TO AUTHORS

The previous sections have focused on depicting the areas of interest to *HRMJ* and our readership. A natural follow-on from this is to provide guidance on how manuscripts are evaluated at *HRMJ*. Here, we focus on the importance of ensuring submissions fit with the journal's current aims and scope and provide details on the reviewing process. Full details on author guidelines for submission can be found on the *HRMJ* website: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17488583>.

### 4.1 | Ensuring fit with *HRMJ*

When a paper is submitted, it is checked to ensure that it meets the submission requirements (e.g., fully blind, word count, referencing style, all required elements included) by the editorial office before being considered by the Editors-in-Chief. Once on the Editors' desk, a high percentage of papers are rejected at this juncture for which there tend to be several common reasons. The first is that the paper is not appropriate for the journal. This ranges from those that are very clearly not relevant (e.g. more focused on law or engineering) to those that are less obvious. This typically arises from papers that are clearly situated in the fields of OB or applied psychology, but which fail to discuss explicitly how such theories impact the management of people at work. While *HRMJ* welcomes OB papers, they need to be situated in and to talk to the HRM field. Where there is a clear failure to engage with debates in the HRM literature, then these papers are typically rejected.

Second, papers at *HRMJ* are expected to make a theoretical contribution. This means papers need to change the agenda for future research by extending or redirecting extant theory, perspectives or phenomena. What new perspective does the reader gain that they did not have prior to reading the paper? Regularly we receive submissions whereby the argued contribution is context. While we are very interested in papers that explore the impact of context in changing how we think about extant theory, a replication of studies in a context that has not been previously explored does not necessarily make a sufficient contribution in its own right. Another related issue is that papers often fail to make the mark because there is too much ambiguity around what the paper is about or what HRM problem it sets out to address in a way that extant literature has not yet considered.

The third overarching reason behind desk rejection is weak content. This often finds itself rooted in a lack of theory and limited engagement with relevant literature along with an inappropriate research design or sample, confusion and contradictions over concepts or a lack of detail about the method to determine its rigour for the conclusions being reached. Relatedly, papers are regularly rejected for being overly descriptive. By this, we point to very limited analysis (this may also mean a lack of rigour), along with synthesis and engagement with theory and practice.

With regard to the use of appropriate data, we encourage authors to avoid the inherent biases of cross-sectional or single-source data; however, where such an approach can be justified through an appropriate research model or the potential for a novel theoretical contribution, such empirical studies will be considered provided sufficient steps

have been taken to limit potential bias (see e.g. Spector, 2019). As such, unlike some other journals, we do not adopt a strict policy excluding cross-sectional or single-source data as we recognise that this may unintentionally serve to narrow lines of inquiry and prevent important research on complex topics, hard to reach samples and so forth. As noted, a future editorial will present the journal's stance on research design, our emphasis on methodological plurality, and new initiatives we are undertaking to eliminate questionable research practices and promote reproducibility in HRM research. In particular, we aim to provide the option to submit pre-registered deductive research hypotheses and designs for review before data are collected (Nosek, Ebersole, DeHaven, & Mellor, 2018).

A further aspect of content we wish to promote is theory-based, practitioner-focused and/or policy-relevant research. It is not our aim to converse only with other scholars within HRM or employment studies; our research needs to be accessed by our wider practitioner and policymaker community. In this regard, the practical implications of our research endeavours need to be as much to the forefront of our stated contributions as our theoretical ones. Authors are encouraged to include substantive sections on practice or policy implications. In an effort to improve the accessibility of the journal to the non-expert or lay reader, we also have introduced 'practitioner notes' for all submissions. This new section to papers should outline, in bullet point form, what is currently known about the subject matter, what the paper adds to this and the implications for practitioners and/or policymakers.

Finally, an issue that has become more prevalent and may be a more worrying trend for academia, is the number of papers that we need to desk reject due to similarity with other papers. *HRMJ* uses plagiarism checking software on all submissions and we are seeing increasing numbers of cases needing consideration for such reasons. The issues that arise range from inappropriate academic referencing whereby significant sections of an article are taken from another source without due acknowledgement, to self-plagiarism issues whereby there are significant similarities with previously published works. Transparency during the submission process, including author declaration of prior publication of the same data even in public conference proceedings, is therefore essential.

## 4.2 | The review process

The continued success of *HRMJ* relies on a committed community of international scholars from diverse disciplines who contribute to our reviewing process. Many of these are past authors of papers published in *HRMJ*, but we also welcome those who may be less familiar with *HRMJ* or from tangential disciplines with relevance for HRM scholarship, and early career researchers building expertise in specialist areas. We are well aware of the time commitments involved in providing reviews and very grateful to those who demonstrate their collegiality and willingness to share their experience with other authors and further our field of scholarship. Securing detailed, constructive, and timely reviews is an ever-increasing challenge for editorial teams. While peer review has received much critical comment, it remains at the bedrock of our scholarship and we encourage all who read, and publish in, *HRMJ* to engage with this fundamental process as reviewers. *HRMJ* is registered with Publons, which is a system that formally provides recognition of reviews. *HRMJ* also seeks to thank all reviewers on an annual basis with a reviewing certificate, and the list of reviewers is published in the final issue of the journal each year.

Once a submission has passed the desk review stage with the Editors-in-Chief, the journal applies a stringent double-blind review process (i.e. authors are anonymous to reviewers and vice versa). *HRMJ* requests reviews from a minimum of three referees, all of whom are content experts in the relevant topic and/or methodological area. The acting editor for each submission is either an Editor-in-Chief or an Associate Editor. The acting editor guides the author through the process of responding to feedback (e.g., clarifying contradictions in referees' comments) and forms their final decision about manuscripts based on an integration of reviewer feedback with the journal's standards and norms. Referees are asked to comment particularly on whether the paper advances understanding theoretically, is of interest to *HRMJ* readers, and whether data and analysis are sufficiently rigorous and presented to a good standard. It is typical for manuscripts published in *HRMJ* to have passed through at least two rounds of reviews, and manuscripts are very rarely (if ever) accepted based on the first submission alone.

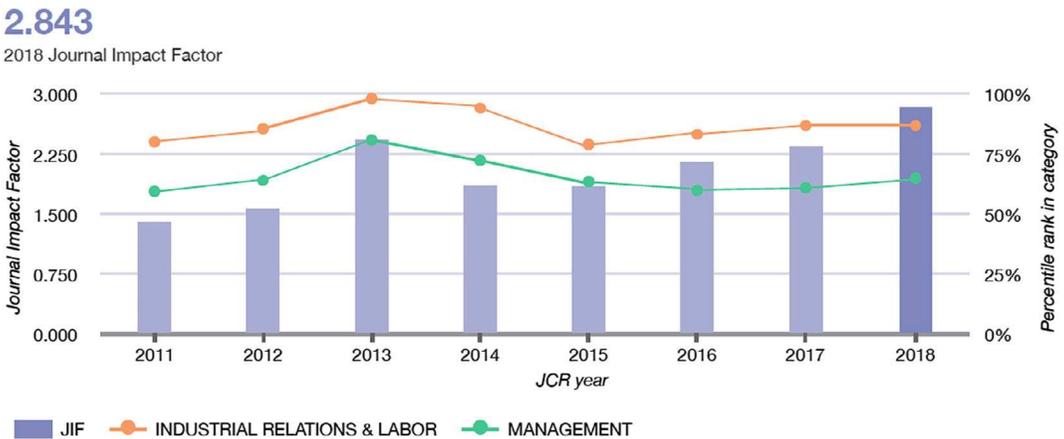
## 5 | THE CURRENT STANDING OF HRMJ

Given the UK origins of the journal's rise and development, *HRMJ* has traditionally been viewed as most interested in papers focused in that national context. The past decade has seen this change significantly through strategic decisions on the Editors' part to internationalise all workings of the journal. For clarity, *HRMJ* is especially interested in articles that will appeal to an international readership and we welcome papers from diverse contexts. Positively, there has been much wider diversity in terms of the breakdown of submissions originating from locations outside Anglo-Saxon countries, while paper circulation and downloads have become much more international over the past decade. *HRMJ* is now accessed by almost 5,000 institutions and libraries worldwide with downloads in excess of 130,000 per annum.

The *editorial team* has evolved substantially in terms of size, internationalisation, disciplinary breadth and gender diversity. While five of the previous six editors were UK based, the most recent model of joint Editors-in-Chief has taken in the United States, Ireland, Australia and the United Kingdom. The Associate Editorial team encompasses scholars based in the United States, Canada, Spain, Australia, Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands. The editorial team also represents a wide range of perspectives that inform HRM scholarship and reflects strong gender diversity, with female scholars currently making up around half of all positions.

*HRMJ*'s IF has been steadily increasing, representing a long-run focus by all Editors, past and present, to build the journal sustainably. This trend is reflected in both the quality and impact of the articles. The 5-year IF for 2018 is 3.227 which has steadily risen year-on-year with the 2014 IF standing at 2.738. The most recent annual IF was 2.843 in 2018 up from 2.343 the year prior, which shows a strong increase from the 1.860 in 2014 and which compares favourably with the other leading HRM and IR journals. Figure 1 illustrates the journal's IF along with percentile rank for the management and IRs and labour categories.

In terms of rankings, *HRMJ* is ranked as a four in the UK's *Association of Business Schools* listing and as an A in the ABDC list, signifying it as a journal with stringent peer review processes and publishing internationally excellent research. It is also in the 'Q1' quartile of the Scimago Journal & Country Rank. The average acceptance rate over the past decade has been around 9%, which is all the more noteworthy given the stable but significant increase in submissions. To illustrate this increase in submissions, there were 199 new submissions in 2009, which increased to 487 in 2018.



**FIGURE 1** 2018 Journal Impact Factor and percentile rank in category for Human Resource Management Journal  
Source: Web of Science, Journal Citation Reports

## 6 | CONCLUDING REMARKS: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In closing, *HRMJ* continues to strive to be at the forefront of developing our understanding and knowledge of all matters related to HRM that are of interest to academics and practitioners alike. In looking back at HRM scholarship and three decades of this journal since its launch, the aim of *HRMJ* is best described as focused on employment studies in their broadest sense. This includes embracing a multi-disciplinary perspective on HRM, exploring issues through psychological, economic, strategic management, industrial sociology, critical theory and international business lenses, among others, but with a clear link to the HRM field of research and practice. We are confident that the range of topics, theoretical and methodological approaches adopted and diversity of contexts explored lend themselves to concluding that *HRMJ* is a journal that provides comprehensive coverage of key HRM issues of relevance to individual employees, organisations and society.

*HRMJ* seeks to be at the forefront of debates related to the management of people at work. As such we seek and welcome submissions that are focused on phenomena that have the capacity to significantly disrupt the world of work and the management and well-being of people. While in no way wanting to be prescriptive on what this might involve, there are some important topics that are worthy of scholarly attention and in which *HRMJ* is interested. For example, the rise of artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies along with a much larger focus on big data and people analytics (e.g. Angrave, Charlwood, Kirkpatrick, Lawrence, & Stuart, 2016) raise important questions on all facets of work, employment relations and HRM. Such burgeoning domains are ripe for greater scholarly inquiry, and *HRMJ* is very interested in such research. Similarly, what do new ways of working (e.g. the gig economy) mean for the management of people at work and where does HRM as a profession fit within this?

As editors, we are keen to ensure *HRMJ* is a standout journal that is central to leading the charge on high-quality, relevant, impactful scholarship. Our provocation paper series is noteworthy in this regard in that it enables a more reflective piece that can help open up key debates and avenues that may have become side lined. This, in turn, can enable new discussions and debates to take place. Moreover, we are keenly aware of several significant developments within scholarly publishing which will shape our field in the coming years; for example, the importance of promoting ethical research practice and encouraging data transparency. *HRMJ* aims to be one of the first journals within HRM and employment studies to encourage Registered Reports as a submission option, and in so doing, address the overemphasis across the field on reporting only positive results. These initiatives, and our position with respect to encouraging methodological plurality, will be developed further in a future *HRMJ* editorial.

Finally, we extend continued thanks and appreciation to our editorial office support, editors-in-chief past and present, associate editors, EAB members, reviewers and all scholars who submit their research for publication. We look forward to seeing *HRMJ* continue publishing the best scholarly research of theoretical and practical relevance to all with an interest in the management of people at work.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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