

Rebooting strategic human resource management to drive talent management in state-owned enterprises



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Background: This study examined how strategic reconfiguration of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices influences the effectiveness of talent management (TM) within South Africa's state-owned enterprises (SOEs), with particular attention to how SHRM can drive organisational performance through enhanced talent acquisition, development, and retention.

Aim: This research explored a 'rebooted' SHRM framework to address talent acquisition, development, and retention, and to mitigate unique SOE challenges, including governance deficits and operational inefficiencies.

Setting: The study took place at selected SOEs in Limpopo province.

Method: The study was quantitative; the survey questionnaire was distributed across four strata among 252 employees. SPSS (ver. 4.2) was used to analyse data, and factor analysis, correlation, and multiple regression analysis were employed to test the research objectives.

Results: The findings reveal noticeable critical SHRM and TM sub-factors, including greening the workplace, corporate social responsibility, future of work, work satisfaction, work motivation, and workforce development. Notably, work motivation showed strong explanatory power, accounting for 61% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.615$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.605$). The findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between SHRM and TM, and a significant influence of SHRM sub-factors on TM. This reveals work motivation through the social exchange theory perspective, indicating the reciprocal nature of SHRM, fostering employee contributions, and sustaining competitive advantage.

Conclusion: The study highlights insights for SOE leaders and policymakers seeking to optimise human capital and improve organisational performance in a dynamic environment.

Contribution: The study contributes to the academic literature by identifying context-specific SHRM dimensions and providing empirical evidence of SHRM's influence on TM outcomes in SOEs.

Keywords: competitive advantage; human resource management; state-owned enterprises; strategic human resource management; talent management; sustainability.

Introduction

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) and talent management are widely acknowledged as critical drivers of organisational success in today's dynamic business landscape (Farisani 2022:9; Zanafabazar, Natsagdorj & Jigjiddorj 2023:148). Effective integration of these approaches enables organisations to attract and retain top employees, while aligning human resource (HR) strategies with overarching organisational goals (Asrizal & Sopiah 2025:21). Furthermore, progressive HR practices are essential for maintaining competitiveness in the global race for skilled employees and achieving a sustainable competitive edge (Goyal et al. 2018:30). Within this context, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) represent a fascinating case due to their unique mandates and operating environment (Adebayo & Ackers 2022:183). While SHRM and talent management have been extensively studied in the private sector, their application and adaptation within SOEs, particularly in the South African context, requires further scholarly attention (Sungwa 2025:5). This study addresses the gap by examining how SHRM practices can be strategically reconfigured to enhance talent management effectiveness in SOEs.

Traditional human resource management (HRM) has often been criticised for its focus on administrative functions, routine tasks, and compliance, with limited contribution to organisational strategic objectives (Mello 2019). This approach contrasts with SHRM, which emphasises the alignment of HR practices with organisational strategy to achieve a competitive advantage (Ruzungunde, Sanhokwe & Chinyamurindi 2024:3). As Armstrong (2024) argues, a dynamic perspective of HRM is needed, prioritising the strategic management of personnel over transactional workforce administration. Moreover, SHRM's capacity to align HR programmes and policies with employee development and a positive work environment further underscores its strategic importance (Jian & Regua 2024:94). Furthermore, communication is critical in contemporary organisations, as it facilitates informed strategic HR decision-making for the development of a sustainable competitive advantage (Buyens et al. 1999:35).

State-owned enterprises characterised by state ownership and a mandate to provide essential goods and services operate under distinct governance structures and public expectations (Sidki, Boerger & Boll 2024:449). In the South African context, SOEs face specific challenges, including governance deficits, financial instability, and political interference, which can hinder their ability to attract, develop, and retain talent (Thabane 2024:2). These challenges highlight the critical need for a re-evaluation of SHRM practices to effectively drive talent management and improve organisational performance in this sector (Era 2024:81). Knies et al. (2024:2440) emphasise the potential of talent management within SHRM to position employees as valuable assets and contribute to SOE goal attainment.

This study explores the strategic reconfiguration ('rebooting') of SHRM practices to address the unique talent management challenges encountered by SOEs, specifically within the South African context (Sungwa 2025:4).

It argues for a stronger alignment of HR functions with organisational priorities to optimise employee recruitment, enhance organisational performance, and foster a sustainable competitive advantage (Bezuidenhout 2022; Ruzungunde et al. 2024:4). This 'reboot' is presented as a necessary adaptation to meet evolving demands related to customer needs, product innovation, technological advancements, and employee retention (Era 2024:18). Focusing on SOEs, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on HRM by examining the contextual factors that shape effective people management strategies in organisations with public mandates.

The research aims to investigate how rebooting SHRM can enable SOEs to acquire a competitive advantage through enhanced talent management. The specific objectives are:

- To identify the critical factors of SHRM and talent management that are particularly salient within SOEs

and may extend beyond those typically identified in the general literature.

- To determine the relationship between the SHRM and talent management practices outcomes in SOEs.
- To analyse the influence of specific SHRM sub-factors and talent management sub-factors within the SOE context.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: The literature review section provides the theoretical foundation for the study (Lim, Kumar & Ali 2022:487). The research methodology is outlined, followed by the presentation and discussion of the results. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations offer insights into addressing SHRM challenges and enhancing SOE competitiveness.

Literature review

Definition and conceptualisation

The concept of 'rebooting' has emerged as a strategic discourse aimed at reimagining institutional models to enhance organisational performance, particularly in times of crisis or structural stagnation. According to Thabane (2024:3), rebooting entails a deliberate effort to revitalise organisational capabilities and reposition entities for optimal functioning. In the context of SOEs, where bureaucratic inertia, politicisation, and inefficiencies often impair performance rebooting, it offers a transformational lens for institutional renewal and strategic alignment. It can also function as a reputation management strategy, particularly during operational or legitimacy crises, allowing organisations to rebuild public trust and reinforce their strategic purpose.

Despite its growing relevance, rebooting remains an under-theorised construct in the HRM literature, particularly in the public sector. Therefore, a precautionary strategy is recommended for SOEs in the context of governance (Thabane 2024:82). Nevertheless, its application to SHRM suggests promising possibilities for embedding innovation, agility, and organisational resilience within HR practices. Rebooting can thus be positioned not simply as organisational repair, but as a proactive means of integrating strategic HR renewal into broader institutional transformation. Wassell and Bouchard (2020:13) contend that, despite the complexity of organisational challenges, SHRM should prioritise critical talent management elements that enhance and sustain organisational competitiveness.

The SHRM has evolved from an administrative support function into a central component of organisational strategy. Maria (2024:90) argues that SHRM is now positioned as a lever for sustained competitive advantage rather than a set of routine HR activities. This transformation is especially relevant in SOEs, where agility, talent management, and performance are often constrained by centralised control structures and legacy systems. Strategic human resource management, when effectively aligned with organisational strategy, can enable SOEs to respond more dynamically to internal inefficiencies and external pressures.

The transition from traditional HR practices to rebooted SHRM systems would yield enhanced strategic focus, operational efficiency, procedural accuracy, and data-driven insights (Sheeba & Manjuladevi 2024:41). This transformation supports organisations that lacked these elements entirely in the past and explains how rebooted HR practices can strengthen existing strategic directions, which are already embedded within the organisation (Nyathi & Kekwaletswe 2024:199).

Shrestha and Prajapati (2024:56) emphasise the importance of aligning HRM with broader business strategies, arguing that integration fosters adaptability and long-term organisational performance. Furthermore, Boselie and Van der Heijden (2024) introduce the concept of strategic 'fit', ensuring coherence between organisational goals and HR practices as a defining feature of SHRM. However, these frameworks are predominantly derived from private-sector contexts and may not fully account for the distinct characteristics of public enterprises.

In the context of SOEs, SHRM must navigate public accountability, political oversight, and mission-driven mandates, which complicate direct transfers of private-sector models. Bureaucratic structures, economic constraints, and institutional rigidity often inhibit the full implementation of progressive HRM practices (Naveed, Farooqi & Rizwan 2022:280; Tessema & Soeters 2006: 14). Consequently, a rebooted SHRM framework in SOEs must be contextually adaptive, balancing performance imperatives with public service values, and enabling the strategic management of talent in increasingly complex operating environments.

Talent management as a strategic tool

Talent management is broadly defined as the strategic process of attracting, developing, and retaining individuals with critical skills and knowledge (Mitosis, Lamnisis & Talias 2021:11). As Thapa (2023:28) notes, talent management plays a pivotal role in navigating organisational complexity, particularly in volatile or resource-constrained environments. For SOEs, often grappling with brain drain, skills shortages, and low morale, talent management is not merely a growth strategy but a survival imperative. The talent management crisis within SOEs in South Africa is marked by persistent high turnover among both CEOs and employees, driven by unconducive working conditions and inadequate benefits packages (Mpete & Maier 2024:5; Thusi & Chauke 2023:129). Sobende and Beretu (2025:1427) also attest that effective talent management is a necessity, not an option. Furthermore, strategic talent management is not solely the responsibility of managers and should also entail a strong strategic focus (Collings & Mellahi 2009:307).

Global competition and rapid digitalisation have heightened the demand for differentiated talent strategies.

Wahdiniawati et al. (2024:410) stress that sustained competitive advantage in the public sector now hinges on a state entity's ability to identify and retain top performers.

Hongal and Kinange (2020:67) further link effective talent management to increased employee engagement and reduced turnover, highlighting its potential to drive organisational development.

However, there is a lack of consensus on how traditional talent management frameworks translate into the unique governance structures of SOEs. This gap underscores the need to reboot SHRM practices to better support talent strategies that reflect the dual objectives of public value and operational efficiency.

Collectively, the reviewed literature highlights the strategic importance of SHRM and talent management. However, there is a notable gap in the application of these models within SOEs, especially in the context of rebooting institutions facing legitimacy crises or declining performance. Most existing frameworks originate from private-sector logic, limiting their applicability to the complex dynamics of the public sector. Therefore, this study aims to explore how rebooted SHRM approaches can revitalise talent management systems in SOEs, enabling them to achieve performance transformation and developmental impact.

Roles of strategic human resource management and talent management in 21st-century organisations

Strategic human resource management has become a critical mechanism for aligning human capital strategies with broader organisational goals. In contemporary organisations, particularly in knowledge-driven and service-oriented economies, SHRM has shifted from a reactive and administrative function to a proactive strategic partner. Nyathi and Kekwaletswe (2024:199) argue that SHRM plays a key role in driving performance by ensuring workforce capabilities are aligned with strategic imperatives.

This evolution is also mirrored in talent management. Historically characterised by informal and often subjective practices, talent management is now recognised as a structured process of identifying, nurturing, and retaining high-potential employees to fulfil strategic roles (Al-Qudah et al. 2020:219). In the 21st century, dynamic market demands, rapid digitalisation, and shifting workforce expectations have compelled both SHRM and talent management to adopt integrated and forward-looking roles (Jian & Regua 2024:93).

Crucially, this transformation is particularly urgent in public sector organisations, including SOEs in emerging economies such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya, where poor talent retention, ageing workforces, technological unpreparedness, and political interference challenge human capital performance. Therefore, effective harmony between HRM and talent management practices is crucial for boosting organisational competitiveness (Okpara & Wynn 2007:72). As such, rebooting SHRM in these settings is not simply a matter of efficiency; it is a matter of institutional survival and legitimacy.

To further unpack the relationship between SHRM and talent management, it is critical to identify the key sub-factors that define and operationalise each domain within 21st-century public-sector organisations. These sub-factors in SHRM should focus on the alignment of employee practices with business objectives, whereas talent management focuses on employee capabilities for organisational competitiveness (Sobel-Uz-Zaman et al. 2022:12)

Sub-factors of strategic human resource management

Based on a review of contemporary HR literature and public sector reforms in emerging economies, the following are central sub-factors of SHRM (Table 1).

These sub-factors collectively enable a rebooted SHRM approach that is agile, reform-oriented, and capable of addressing complex challenges in SOEs. These sub-factors become particularly critical in African SOEs, where weak performance management systems and politically influenced HR decisions often undermine organisational effectiveness. Therefore, by aligning these sub-factors within a strategic and reform-oriented SHRM framework, SOEs can not only attract and retain high-performing talent but also build trust, legitimacy, and value in the public eye. Identifying these operational levers is essential for tailoring context-sensitive interventions that address the unique challenges of HRM in developmental states and post-colonial public institutions.

The relationship between strategic human resource management and talent management

There is increasing scholarly consensus that SHRM provides the strategic infrastructure within which talent management can thrive. Jian and Regua (2024:92) describe SHRM as the central mechanism for aligning HR functions such as talent

management with core organisational objectives. Similarly, Kravariti et al. (2023:1784) argue that effective SHRM empowers managers to create environments where talent development is prioritised, thereby enhancing individual and organisational performance.

In the South African public sector, empirical studies (Jarbandhan 2023) demonstrate that SHRM-led interventions such as performance-based recruitment and digital HR systems have helped revitalise talent pipelines in entities such as Eskom and Transnet. However, political appointments and misalignment between HR policies and strategic planning continue to erode these gains. These findings affirm that the relationship between SHRM and talent management in SOEs is mediated by institutional constraints and organisational culture.

As Kwong and Jang (2022:97) note, modern SHRM increasingly incorporates external acquisition strategies, digital analytics, and workforce segmentation, positioning talent management not as a support function, but as a strategic differentiator.

Driving competitive advantage through strategic human resource management and talent management

In turbulent or resource-constrained contexts such as many African SOEs, talent management must be reimagined not only as a tool for organisational effectiveness but also as a catalyst for legitimacy, trust, and development. Lukitasar et al. (2024:1076) argue that SHRM can drive sustainable competitive advantage by systematically integrating talent management practices into broader business strategies, particularly where institutional performance is a public concern.

Recent innovations in technology-enabled SHRM, such as artificial intelligence (AI)-powered recruitment tools

TABLE 1: Strategic human resource management and talent management sub-factors.

Domain	Sub-factor	Definition	References
SHRM	Greening human resources	Incorporating environmental values into HR processes, such as recruitment and selection, to attract environmentally conscious talent.	Nisar et al. (2022:3)
	Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	Organisational focus on social, ethical, and environmental accountability that enhances reputation and stakeholder trust.	Nel, Erasmus and Mans-Kemp (2025)
	Future of work adaptation	Adjusting to changing dynamics in how, where, and when work is performed due to technological and societal shifts.	Iqbal, Khalid and Baryn (2021:38)
	Unplanned change management	Responding to unexpected disruptions in strategic HR implementation with immediate corrective strategies.	Christie and Tippmann (2024:2)
	Employee well-being	HR-led initiatives that support the physical, mental, and emotional health of employees.	Salas-Vallina, Alegre and Lopez-Cabrales (2021:333)
	Employer branding	The organisation's external image is an attractive place to work, helping to recruit and retain talent.	Buchelt et al. 2021:3
	Strategic alignment	Ensuring HR practices are consistently aligned with organisational goals and performance metrics.	Nyathi and Kekwaletswe (2024:199)
	Digital transformation	The integration of digital technologies into HR processes increases efficiency, transparency, and adaptability.	Altindag and Gul (2025:32)
Talent management	Talent identification	Recognising individuals with high potential to meet present and future strategic organisational needs.	Altindag and Gul (2025:33)
	Talent development	Structured initiatives for knowledge-sharing and professional growth of high-potential individuals.	Altindag and Gul (2025:33)
	Talent culture	Creating an environment that fosters transparency, development, teamwork, and succession planning.	Urme (2023:129)
	Talent retention	Proactively sustaining key individuals essential to long-term success through strategic HR interventions.	Urme (2023:129)

Note: Please see the full reference list of the article, Malatji, M.A., Swarts, I. & Mukonza, C., 2026, 'Rebooting strategic human resource management to drive talent management in state-owned enterprises', *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* 29(1), a6383. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v29i1.6383>, for more information.

SHRM, strategic human resource management; HR, human resource.

and adaptive e-learning systems, have shown measurable impact on talent attraction and retention in public institutions. For example, in Rwanda, digital civil service reforms have been linked to improved efficiency, transparency, and workforce stability (Kshetri 2021). Altindag and Gul (2025:35) similarly highlight that competitive advantage in the public sector increasingly depends on SHRM's ability to foster organisational agility and digital readiness through proactive talent strategies.

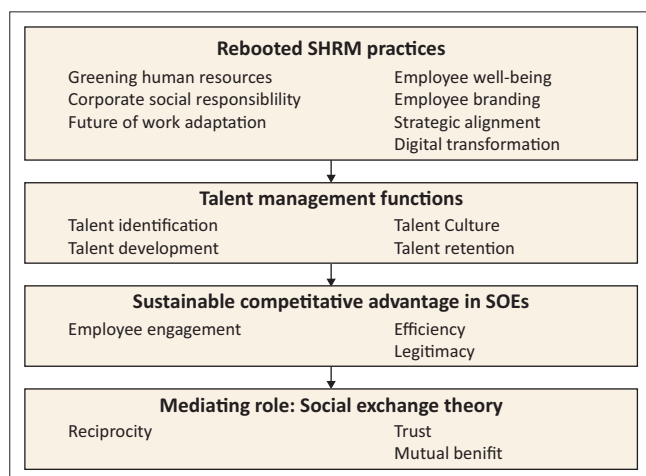
The persistent failure of SOEs in many Sub-Saharan African countries to achieve a competitive advantage can be partly attributed to weak SHRM-talent management integration, poor leadership accountability, and political interference. These issues demonstrate the urgent need to adopt a rebooted model, one that responds to the institutional logic of public enterprises while remaining anchored in performance and meritocracy.

Conceptual framework diagram

The conceptual framework presented below visually captures the key constructs and relationships explored in this study (Figure 1).

At the core of the model is the proposition that rebooted SHRM characterised by strategic fit, digital innovation, and reform-driven agility serves as a catalyst for more effective talent management. Enhanced talent practices, in turn, contribute to building sustainable competitive advantage within SOEs.

The framework positions talent management as a mediating mechanism through which SHRM translates into performance outcomes. By embedding agility and merit-based HR systems, rebooted SHRM enables SOEs to attract, develop, and retain critical talent, addressing long-standing challenges such as skills shortages, inefficiencies, and staff disengagement.



SHRM, strategic human resource management; SOEs, state-owned enterprises.

FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework-rebooted strategic human resource management, talent management, and competitive advantage.

Importantly, the framework also integrates insights from social exchange theory (SET) to explain the underlying mechanisms through which these HR strategies generate value. Social exchange theory posits that trust-based, reciprocal relationships between employers and employees are foundational for achieving enhanced performance outcomes.

In public sector contexts, where organisational trust is often eroded, SHRM practices that signal fairness, transparency, and investment in employee well-being are more likely to foster engagement, retention, and institutional legitimacy.

This conceptual framing is particularly relevant to emerging public-sector systems in South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, where the dual burden of bureaucratic legacy and developmental mandates creates both the necessity and opportunity for strategic HR reform (Isong et al. 2024).

Theoretical framework: Social exchange theory

To understand the interaction between SHRM and talent management in SOEs, this study adopts the SET as its conceptual anchor. According to Bannya and Bainbridge (2022), SET offers a lens for understanding workplace relationships based on reciprocity, trust, and mutual benefit. When organisations invest in employee development, recognition, and supportive work environments, employees reciprocate through higher engagement and improved performance (Kilroy, Dundon & Townsend 2023:512; Salas-Vallina et al. 2021). Though resource-based theory links employee performance to resources and human resource capabilities for organisational competitiveness advantage (Zake, Jonck & Pelser 2024:3). Whereas emphasis is placed on human resources as strategic assets that generate sustained competitive advantage, with limited attention given to reciprocal benefits for employees within the employment relationship (Agrawal et al. 2025; Nemar et al. 2025).

In SOEs, the theory provides a useful framework for analysing how trust-based relationships can be fostered despite bureaucratic rigidities. Storey, Ulrich and Wright (2019:1) reinforce that human resources should be treated as assets, not costs, a perspective that aligns with SET's emphasis on reciprocal value creation.

Recent case studies from Kenya's National Transport and Safety Authority and Ghana's Electricity Company (Omweri & Motari 2024; Osei-Appiah & Arthur 2022) highlight how HR reforms grounded in SET principles, such as leadership accountability, employee feedback loops, and performance incentives, led to measurable improvements in service delivery and staff morale.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the critical factors, relationships, and influences of SHRM practices and talent management outcomes

within the South African SOEs. These align with Leedy and Ormond's (2015) view that research design provides the overall structure guiding the entire research process, from sampling and data collection to data analysis, while clearly outlining the relationships among these study variables. These variables are guided by the reciprocity SET principles on fair SHRM practices, positively impacting employee work motivation for organisational sustainable competitive advantage. A positivist philosophical approach was adopted, as it echoes the goal of testing predetermined relationships between variables through objective measurement (Park, Konge & Artino 2020:691). This philosophical stance is particularly appropriate for the study as it aims to generate objective, measurable, and generalisable findings that prioritise empirical observation, systematic experimentation, and evidence-based inquiry, while intentionally minimising researcher bias and subjectivity (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2023). The behavioural and organisational variables under study can be reliably measured; hence, the positivist paradigm over the mixed-methods approach. Furthermore, a deductive approach was utilised for the statistical and numerical analyses, enabling the researchers to test pre-existing theories and hypotheses related to SHRM and talent management (Cooper & Schindler 2011; Saunders et al. 2023).

The adoption of a survey-based quantitative research methodology was considered appropriate for this study, given its efficiency in collecting data from a relatively large sample and its capacity to facilitate statistical analysis of relationships among variables. This approach is particularly well suited to identifying correlations and assessing the strength and direction of associations between specified variables and outcomes (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni 2019:83).

The research consistency matrix below (Table 2) followed a systematic approach, employing factor, correlation, and multiple regression analysis (Adeniran & Onasanya 2024:123). These techniques were implemented in SPSS ver. 28 to rigorously identify critical factors, assess their influence, and examine the relationships between SHRM and talent management sub-factors.

The study employed proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different organisational levels (Nguyen et al. 2021:666). This sampling technique involved dividing the population into distinct strata (executives, senior management, middle management,

and lower-level employees) and randomly selecting participants from each stratum. The demographics included age, qualifications, experience, job level, and department. The sample size was determined using the guidelines provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), resulting in a target sample of 300 employees to achieve 95% confidence.

It is important to acknowledge a key limitation related to the sampling strategy. The study was confined to a single SOE and its subsidiary, excluding the remaining two SOEs within the broader organisational context. This limited scope may restrict the generalisability of the findings, as the results may not fully represent the experiences or practices of the entire SOE population (Leedy & Ormond 2015; Kaliyadan & Kulkarni 2019:83).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to elicit quantifiable responses on SHRM practices and talent management (Creswell & Creswell 2023). To ensure data quality, the study employed previously validated measuring instruments to enhance the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Agarwal 2021; Farooq et al. 2016; Isabirye, Twinomurizi & Rammitlwa 2022; Kasula & Bisaso 2019; Olckers & Koekemer 2022; Pham, Tučková & Phan 2019; Rehman et al. 2022). Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process, with measures implemented to ensure respondent anonymity and protect privacy (Yussof, Arifin & Hadie 2021:97).

The questionnaires were distributed to the selected participants through designated contact persons within the SOE and its subsidiary. To maintain confidentiality, respondents were instructed to return the completed questionnaires in sealed boxes. The researchers personally emptied these boxes to further ensure anonymity. The researchers captured the collected data on an Excel spreadsheet. The Excel spreadsheet was cleaned, and missing entries were checked. The statistician analysed the data using SPSS (version 28). The statistical techniques applied included factor analysis, correlation, and multiple regression.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), Cronbach's alpha is used to estimate the internal consistency of the indicators, a measure of reliability. Therefore, construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding 0.947 for SHRM and 0.936 for talent management. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.7 or higher indicate a good level of internal consistency.

TABLE 2: Research consistency matrix.

Research objective	Research question	Data collected	Data analysis
RO1: Examining critical factors	What are the SHRM and talent management critical factors that are particularly salient within SOEs and may extend beyond those typically identified in the general literature?	From literature: SHRM and Talent management: Sub-factors	Factor analysis
RO2: Determining relationships	Which relationships exist between SHRM and talent management practices outcomes in SOEs?	From SHRM and talent management empirical sub-factors	Correlation analysis
RO3: Analysis of the influence of empirical SHRM and talent management sub-factors	What are the empirical SHRM sub-factors and talent management sub-factors within the SOE context?	From SHRM and talent management empirical sub-factors	Multiple regression

SHRM, strategic human resource management; SOEs, state-owned enterprises.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Tshwane University of Technology Research Ethics Committee (FREC), with ethical clearance number FCRE2023/FR/05/002-MS (2).

Results

Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 252 were fully completed and deemed usable. This yields a response rate of 84%, which exceeds the threshold required for reliable quantitative analysis (Sekaran & Bougie 2013).

Factor analysis: Identifying critical strategic human resource management and talent management sub-factors

To address research objective 1, principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was applied to determine the critical underlying sub-factors of SHRM and talent management.

Factorial structure of SHRM and talent management.

The SHRM scale had eight intended sub-factors, which contained 32 items. These were subjected to a PCA to determine the underlying factorial structure. Specifically, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was highly acceptable at 0.925, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p = 0.000$). Then, an assumption of sampling adequacy could, therefore, be determined.

Similarly, the talent management scale had four intended sub-factors, which contained 16 items. They underwent a PCA to determine the underlying factorial structure. The KMO was highly acceptable at 0.935, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p = 0.000$). An assumption of sampling adequacy could, therefore, be established.

The PCA with the varimax rotation (Table 3) was conducted for the SHRM and talent management scales.

For SHRM, the Kaiser criterion suggested that six factors could be extracted from the original 32 items, resulting with 62.73% of the variance in the dataset. A six-factor solution was explored using principal axis extraction and the direct oblimin rotation method. The SHRM scale originally had eight sub-factors; however, after rotation, six factors were extracted, based on eigenvalues of one or higher. The PCA varimax rotation was applied to identify the items influencing SHRM (Table 3).

Similarly, the original talent management scale had four sub-factors, after which the principal component varimax rotation method (Table 3) was applied to identify the items influencing talent management.

Talent management sub-factors: From the four intended sub-factors, two primary empirical categories emerged, that is, work motivation and workforce development.

Both scales demonstrated high sampling adequacy: SHRM (KMO = 0.925), talent management (KMO = 0.935). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming data suitability for PCA.

Correlation analysis: Strategic human resource management and talent management relationships

To address research objective 2, Pearson correlation analysis was used to assess relationships between SHRM and the talent management sub-factors (see Table 4).

The strength of the correlation between sub-factors (Table 5) is reflected in the correlation coefficient. The results showed that all relationships were positive and significant at the 5% level. However, the strongest correlations were greening the workplace and work motivation ($r = 0.678^{**}$) and work satisfaction and workforce development ($r = 0.665^{**}$).

These results affirm a significant, positive alignment between rebooted SHRM practices and effective talent management. The next section presents the findings of research objective 3, on the influence of SHRM on talent management sub-factors.

Regression analysis: Influence of strategic human resource management on talent management outcomes

Research objective 3 focused on determining the influence of SHRM sub-factors on talent management outcomes. Multiple regression models were developed for each dependent variable (Table 6).

Significant predictors: Greening the workplace ($p < 0.001$), CSR ($p = 0.009$), unplanned change management ($p < 0.001$), work satisfaction ($p = 0.004$) (Table 7).

Non-significant: Future of work ($p = 0.147$), internal customer service ($p = 0.327$).

Model 2: Predicting workforce development

- $R^2 = 0.590$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.580$
- Significant predictors: All predictors are significant, except internal customer service ($p = 0.188$), which is non-significant.

These models confirm that rebooted SHRM practices significantly drive talent management outcomes, particularly in enhancing work motivation and workforce development pathways.

TABLE 3: Rotated component matrix for strategic human resource management.

Rotated component matrix†	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Strategic human resource management						
'Greening the environment' is regarded as a priority in the organisation.	0.793	-	-	-	-	-
The organisation employs employees with knowledge and skills in environmental sustainability.	0.766	-	-	-	-	-
The organisation rewards those who contribute to 'greening the environment' by training employees.	0.722	-	-	-	-	-
The organisation offers career development opportunities to employees.	0.623	-	-	-	-	-
The organisation offers promotional opportunities to employees.	0.620	-	-	-	-	-
The organisation provides an adequate amount of 'greening the environment' training to employees.	0.598	-	-	-	-	-
This organisation sponsors socio-educational activities.	-	0.760	-	-	-	-
The organisation makes donations to social causes.	-	0.710	-	-	-	-
The organisation improves the quality of life of the local communities in which it operates.	-	0.693	-	-	-	-
The organisation encourages customer loyalty to ensure long-term economic survival.	-	0.597	-	-	-	-
The financial and non-financial rewards offered by the organisation retain talented individuals in the organisation	-	0.584	-	-	-	-
The financial and non-financial rewards offered by the organisation attract competent individuals.	-	0.472	-	-	-	-
The organisation continuously provides training to enhance employees' digital technology skills.	-	0.443	-	-	-	-
The organisation responds timeously to unplanned or unexpected changes.	-	-	0.714	-	-	-
Managing unplanned changes in the organisation has certain HRM implications.	-	-	0.703	-	-	-
The organisation implements the necessary measures to address unplanned changes.	-	-	0.692	-	-	-
The organisation communicates unplanned changes to employees.	-	-	0.611	-	-	-
The organisation enables employees to effectively deal with chaos in their work life.	-	-	0.586	-	-	-
The organisation designs jobs so that the work is not exhausting all the time.	-	-	0.452	-	-	-
The performance management system in the organisation addresses competency shortfalls in a timely manner.	-	-	-	0.730	-	-
The organisation's human resource strategy is aligned with the execution of its strategy.	-	-	-	0.686	-	-
Recruitment and selection of employees are based on the organisation's strategic workforce plan.	-	-	-	0.592	-	-
The organisation's human resource strategy views employees as assets rather than liabilities.	-	-	-	0.586	-	-
Supervisors are encouraged to regularly engage employees to ask about their well-being.	-	-	-	0.538	-	-
The organisation views favourable working conditions as a prerequisite to achieving effectiveness.	-	-	-	0.523	-	-
Selected human resources functions and services are outsourced.	-	-	-	-	0.763	-
Selected human resources functions and services are delivered online or electronically.	-	-	-	-	0.704	-
Human resources management in the organisation focuses on strategic issues rather than operational issues.	-	-	-	-	0.642	-
The organisation has systems in place to work effectively remotely or working from home.	-	-	-	-	0.568	-
The organisation regards the ability to use digital technology as a critical job skill.	-	-	-	-	0.543	-
Using digital technology improves customer satisfaction.	-	-	-	-	-	0.829
Using digital technology improves the organisation's efficiency.	-	-	-	-	-	0.740

Note: Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

HRM, human resource management.

†, Rotation converged in eight iterations.

TABLE 4: Rotated component matrix for talent management.

Rotated component matrix	Component	
	1	2
Talent management		
Employees receive salary increments in line with their career development level and performance.	0.736	-
This organisation recognises employees for exemplary performance.	0.734	-
The organisation offers stimulating job descriptions and performance requirements.	0.719	-
The organisation's human resource practices support employees' advancement in the organisation.	0.678	-
The organisation ensures that salaries are market-related.	0.666	-
The organisation involves employees in its strategy.	0.638	-
The organisation encourages talented employees to further develop their careers.	0.631	-
The organisation takes a genuine interest in fostering learning and promoting employees' career development.	0.621	-
The organisation provides employees with sufficient resources to fulfil their duties.	0.597	-
Human resource management systems in the organisation address poor performance timeously.	-	0.779
The organisation provides employees with up-to-date feedback for career development.	-	0.750
The organisation tailors training to employees' individual needs.	-	0.729
The organisation continuously assesses individual developmental needs.	-	0.726
The organisation is always on the lookout for talented employees to occupy critical positions.	0.409	0.68
The organisation continuously determines the knowledge and skills employees possess.	-	0.671
The organisation uses assessment tools to evaluate newly appointed employees' performance.	-	0.662

Note: Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

Discussion

The empirical evidence confirms that SHRM sub-factors, particularly greening the workplace, CSR, and unplanned change management, play a strategic role in fostering employee motivation and workforce development. These findings align with Fernandes, Costa and Lopes (2023), who assert that human-centred HR practices promote reciprocal value creation.

TABLE 5: Correlation results of strategic human resource management and talent management sub-factors.

Variable	Sub-variable	Work motivation	Workforce development
Greening the workplace	Pearson correlation	0.678**	0.637**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252
Corporate social responsibility	Pearson correlation	0.647**	0.648**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252
Unplanned change management	Pearson correlation	0.627**	0.591**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252
Work satisfaction	Pearson correlation	0.667**	0.665**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252
Future of work	Pearson correlation	0.556**	0.586**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252
Internal customer service management	Pearson correlation	0.403**	0.419**
	sig. (2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001
	<i>n</i>	252	252

*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.001$ (R2.12).

sig., significance.

TABLE 6: Model summary.

Model	Dependent variable: Work motivation					Dependent variable: Workforce development				
	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.784†	0.615	0.605	0.43205	1.918	0.768†	0.590	0.580	0.47074	1.734

Note: From the results model 1: Predicting work motivation reveal that $R^2 = 0.615$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.605$.

†, Predictors: (constant), internal customer service management, greening the workplace, future of work, unplanned change management, work satisfaction, corporate social responsibility.

TABLE 7: Predictive values of strategic human resource management sub-factors.

Model	Dependent variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients (Beta)	<i>t</i>	Sig.
		β	Std. error			
1	Work motivation					
	(constant)	0.119	0.117	-	1.011	0.313
	Greening the workplace	0.265	0.055	0.276	4.842	< 0.001**
	Corporate social responsibility	0.158	0.060	0.168	2.618	0.009*
	Unplanned change management	0.218	0.056	0.213	3.902	< 0.001**
	Work satisfaction	0.180	0.062	0.182	2.921	0.004*
	Future of work	0.074	0.051	0.082	1.455	0.147
1	Internal customer service management	0.034	0.035	0.046	0.983	0.327
	Workforce development					
	(constant)	0.009	0.128	-	0.070	0.944
	Greening the workplace	0.205	0.060	0.202	3.435	< 0.001**
	Corporate social responsibility	0.168	0.066	0.169	2.553	0.011*
	Unplanned change management	0.186	0.061	0.172	3.052	0.003*
	Work satisfaction	0.217	0.067	0.208	3.229	0.001**
	Future of work	0.138	0.055	0.145	2.495	0.013*
	Internal customer service management	0.050	0.038	0.064	1.320	0.188

*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.001$ (R 2.14).

Sig., significance; Std, standard.

The strong correlation and regression results reinforce SET, when organisations invest in employees through supportive, future-oriented, and ethical practices, employees reciprocate with higher engagement and commitment (Kilroy et al. 2023).

This study expands on existing literature by validating context-specific SHRM configurations within South African SOEs. It empirically supports calls for a rebooted HR model responsive to complexity, sustainability, and digital transformation imperatives (Atiku, Genty & Adeniji 2024; Asfahani 2024).

The results of the research also demonstrated a strong, positive correlation between SHRM and the talent management sub-factors. Therefore, according to Fernandes et al. (2023:14), this positive relationship posits a differentiated human resources practice that promotes adequate employee performance levels when implementing talent management practices, and subsequently gives rise to a positive relationship between employees and the organisation, aligned with the SET.

The multiple regression analysis, conducted to assess the influence of SHRM on talent management, revealed a strong, significant impact of SHRM and its sub-factors.

These results are based on SHRM sub-factors (greening the workplace, corporate social responsibility, unplanned change management, work satisfaction, future of work, and internal customer service management) and talent management sub-factors (work motivation and workforce

development). This implies that, to green the workplace, managing unplanned change is reciprocated by a developed, motivated workforce. In line with the results, Atiku et al. (2024:387) indicate that SOEs stand to benefit from talent development interventions, particularly through the strategic evolution of human resources. These interventions include policies that promote career growth aligned with future skill requirements, such as the adoption of innovative, data-driven talent management practices.

However, Asfahani (2024:25) highlighted that changes brought about by the modernisation of talent management may pose challenges, either of a 'technical, legal, and ethical nature', for example, the balance required between numerical efficiency and ethical HRM practices. Another perspective supports the positive relationship between SHRM and talent management, highlighting the role of culture and the idea that culturally aligned talent management is not only a critical factor in achieving organisational success but also a fundamental component of effective global HRM (Sulastrri 2024:254).

Conclusion and recommendations

The SOEs in South Africa face numerous challenges that impact their effectiveness and sustainability. These challenges emanate from governance issues, financial management, corruption and fraud, social and economic pressures, and talent and skill shortages. Therefore, advocating for the rebooting of SHRM is necessary to enhance talent management practices within SOEs. Hence, the rebooted SHRM will also advance the existing theory, the resource-based view and human capital theory, which focus on the importance of investment in valuable, rare human resources

Thus, by redefining strategies to attract, develop, and retain top talent, these organisations can improve efficiency, foster innovation, and adapt more effectively toward creating a dynamic business environment. Additionally, effective SHRM implementation can align human capital with organisational objectives, enabling SOEs to become more competitive in local and global markets. Accordingly, this shift is crucial for promoting sustainable growth, improving service delivery, and positioning SOEs as key contributors to global economic development and societal progress.

The study results highlighted and emphasised that examining underlying factors, relationships, and SHRM's influence on talent management practices can enhance organisational effectiveness and efficiency, particularly for 21st-century SOEs. Although HRM evolved from traditional personnel management to SHRM, the focus on talent management as a strategic practice remains transformative.

Furthermore, talent management integrates various human resource systems to foster organisational growth, innovation, and competitive advantage within the sector.

Notably, in recent years, organisations have embraced SHRM for strategic purposes, recognising its role in aligning human capital with long-term goals. However, contemporary issues such as greening the workplace, the future of work, and planning for unforeseen disruptions must now be prioritised. By leveraging the relationship between SHRM and talent management practices, SOEs can navigate emerging challenges, optimise workforce potential, and foster an environment that supports adaptability, resilience, and sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Therefore, rebooting SHRM to drive talent management in SOEs is crucial, especially given the study results that emit positive, significant correlational sub-factors to address evolving workplace demands. Hence, organisations must prioritise transformation by integrating sustainability practices, greening the workplace, enhancing corporate social responsibility initiatives, and preparing systems for unplanned changes driven by global competition and future work trends. Moreover, focusing on internal customer development is equally vital for fostering a dynamic and resilient workforce capable of navigating various sector changes. Thus, by leveraging the positive correlation between SHRM sub-factors and talent management for organisational success, SOEs can position themselves for sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Essentially, comprehensive planning, innovation, and adaptability will be key to thriving in this shifting landscape.

This study recommends rebooting SHRM to effectively drive talent management in SOEs and achieve a competitive advantage. More specifically, in an increasingly dynamic business landscape, SOEs must rethink conventional human resource practices and adopt strategic approaches that align human capital with organisational goals. Therefore, rebooting SHRM involves not only updating recruitment, development, and retention strategies but also fostering a culture that promotes continuous learning, innovation, and adaptability.

By doing so, SOEs can address critical workforce challenges, improve operational efficiency, and enhance service delivery. Moreover, a renewed focus on SHRM enables organisations to respond more effectively to contemporary issues such as sustainability, digital transformation, and the future of work. That said, with effective talent management strategies driven by SHRM, SOEs can position themselves as leaders in their sectors, contributing to national economic growth while remaining resilient and competitive in both domestic and global markets.

The study also highlights possible limitations; for example, SHRM may face several challenges when rebooting talent management in SOEs, as bureaucratic structures often slow decision-making processes and hinder the effective implementation of SHRM initiatives.

Political interference can further misalign human resource priorities, undermining strategic efforts. Resistance to change is another significant challenge, as both employees and management may prefer traditional practices over innovative approaches. Additionally, the shortage of skilled human resources professionals limits the adoption of advanced talent management strategies, and financial constraints restrict investments in training and development. Overall, evaluating the effectiveness of SHRM initiatives remains challenging because measuring their direct impact on organisational outcomes is difficult.

Finally, outdated systems may also hamper efficient talent management processes, reducing SOEs' ability to remain competitive. The study contributes significantly to advancing key areas essential for the strategic transformation of SOEs. Firstly, it emphasises the importance of greening the workplace by promoting sustainable practices that tend to minimise environmental impacts. Secondly, the study underscores the necessity of preparing for the future of work to enhance productivity. Thirdly, it highlights the need to plan for unforeseen disruptions, which foster organisational adaptability. Moreover, the study advocates for enhancing corporate social responsibility initiatives and strengthening the relationship between SOEs and the communities they serve.

Importantly, this study also demonstrates the positive correlation between SHRM sub-factors and talent management, which is vital for achieving long-term organisational success. Therefore, further research should be conducted on how SOEs can overcome bureaucratic delays, political interference, and resistance in new innovative approaches to ensure competitiveness.

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CRedit authorship contribution

Moshalagae A. Malatji: Writing – original draft. Ilze Swarts: Supervision. Chipo Mukonza: Supervision. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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