The ranking of scholarly journals in international human resource management

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Abstract Based on the opinions of experts in the field of international human resource management (IHRM), scholarly journals were nominated and ranked. Each respondent nominated five journals he or she would reference when writing a manuscript or researching a topic in international human resource management. The same journals were also ranked. Based on both the nominations and rankings, strong agreement was found for the top journals in IHRM. These included both mainstream management journals (e.g., Academy of Management Journal) and sub-field journals (e.g., International Journal of Human Resource Management). This study suggests that, besides the mainstream journals, international management journals have both prestige and impact in the sub-field of international human resource management.

Introduction

The decision academics must make regarding which journal to send their research manuscripts to can be daunting. Academicians, for the most part, want to maximize both the *appropriateness* (i.e., selecting a journal read by scholars who are interested in their research) and the *prestige* of their journal outlet. An appropriate outlet will generally result in an article being cited by other scholars in the field (Sharplin and Mabry, 1985). A prestigious outlet will similarly result in scholarly recognition in the chosen field. Beyond recognition in one's chosen field, in many countries, the tangible rewards for successful publishing are high. Studies among US-based academicians have found that prestigious publications are related to both promotion and pay for university faculty (e.g., Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1992).

Given the influence of prestigious academic journals, it is critical for scholars to select the most appropriate journal outlets for their research. While selecting journals may be more straightforward in some academic disciplines, such as sociology or psychology, choosing a journal becomes substantially more complex in the academic field of business because it is a hybrid field. For example, prestigious business journals are found in such diverse disciplines as economics, accounting, finance, psychology, law, and sociology (Stahl *et al.*, 1988). In response to the diversity of disciplines, each field within business has created its own journal ranking list, for example, accounting (Prather and Rueschhoff, 1996), economics (Laband, 1990), management (e.g. Coe and

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Weinstock, 1984; Extejt and Smith, 1990; Johnson and Podsakoff, 1994), and international business (Morrison and Inkpen, 1991; Pierce and Garven, 1995).

Within these diverse business fields, subfields have also developed – complicating further the ranking of scholarly journals. In management, for example, Shane (1997, p. 84) suggests that 'the evaluation of scholarly research across subfields . . . is problematic since the definitions of "scholarly research" and "acceptable" journals are often controversial'. Thus, as sub-fields mature, academics within the given sub-field have conducted journal ranking studies to examine the prestige and appropriateness of their relevant journals. Journal ranking studies have been conducted in sub-fields, such as entrepreneurship (Shane, 1997), operations management (Barman *et al.*, 1991), and business policy (MacMillan, 1989).

International human resource management (IHRM) is another subfield that has reached maturity. Publishing in the subfield of IHRM is distinct for two reasons. First, IHRM is a clear intersection between two distinct areas of management: human resource management (HRM) and international management (IM). Relevant to scholarly publication outlets, each has its own list of prestigious journals – and the readership does not necessarily overlap. Second, IHRM has gained momentum over the past ten years to become its own academic sub-field. Specialty journals, such as the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* and *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, have arisen in the recent past. These two IHRM journals, as examples, would not currently be found on the mainstream management journal ranking lists. Thus, guidance on the appropriateness and prestige of journal outlets in IHRM is now warranted.

The current study attempts to identify which scholarly journals are the best publication outlets in the sub-field of IHRM. Given that both appropriateness and prestige are important factors in selecting an academic journal outlet, surveys were given to experts in the field of IHRM. As expert judges, these individuals have their finger on the pulse IHRM: they know where IHRM articles are being published, what journals are being read and cited by IHRM scholars, etc. Their journal nominations and journal rankings provide guidance for those scholars interested in publishing in IHRM.

Method

The sample of experts

The author generated a list of twenty-five experts in the field of IHRM. This list was derived from the frequently cited academic articles in IHRM textbooks. To ensure that the academics identified were the appropriate IHRM experts, the original twenty-five individuals were asked to nominate four more academic colleagues 'who they felt were experts in IHRM'. Of the twenty-two completed surveys (a response rate of 88 per cent), 68 per cent of those experts on the list were nominated by two or more people on the list. Thus the initial list was a highly accurate representation of the experts in the field of IHRM – according to the experts on the list.

Fifty per cent of the people on the list were affiliated with US-based universities, 12 per cent were from Canadian universities, 12 per cent were from German universities, 8 per cent were from Australian universities, 8 per cent were from UK-based universities, the remaining five individuals were from South Africa, Norway, The Netherlands, Hong Kong and France.

The journal nomination survey

In addition to the peer nominations described above, these experts were also asked two questions. The first question asked the respondents to 'Name five academic journals that you would reference when writing a manuscript or researching a topic in International Human Resource Management'. Five lines were available for the respondents to write in their responses. For each journal nominated, a ratio was created dividing the number of times it was nominated by twenty-two (the number of possible times a journal could be nominated). Thus, the highest possible nomination score would be 1.0 (nominated by every person) and the lowest would be .05 (nominated by only one person). Twenty-one journals were nominated. The scores ranged from .77 through .05.

The second question asked the respondents to 'Rank the top five journal outlets for publications in International Human Resource Management'. The five blanks ranged from 'Good' to 'Better' to 'Best'. These rankings were coded from 1 = good to 5 = best. A mean was created by adding all the ranking scores for a given journal and dividing by twenty-two (the total number of raters). Using this method, scores ranged from the highest of 2.52 to the lowest of .10.

Results

Two ranked lists were created from the data collected. The first list, presented in Table 1, indicates the rank order of academic journals based on the nomination scores. As Table 1 suggests, there was high agreement regarding the top five journal outlets for the sub-field of IHRM. The top five journals are (1) Journal of International Business Studies, (2) International Journal of Human Resource Management, (3) Academy of Management Journal, (4) Academy of Management Review, and (5) Human Resource Management.

Table 1 IHRM journals ranked according to nomination scores

Rank	Title	Score
1	Journal of International Business Studies	.77
2	International Journal of Human Resource Management	.59
3	Academy of Management Journal	.55
4	Academy of Management Review	.50
5	Human Resource Management	.45
6	Management International Review	.41
7	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	.18
8	Journal of World Business	.18
9	Journal of Applied Psychology	.14
10	Journal of International Management	.14
11	Academy of Management Executive	.14
12	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	.14
13	Human Resource Management Journal	.09
14	Administrative Science Quarterly	.09
15	Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology	.09
16	International Business Review	.05
17	Journal of International Compensation	.05
19	Journal of Management	.05
20	European Management Journal	.05
21	International Journal of Selection and Assessment	.05

Table 2 IHRM journals ranked according to ratings

Rank	Title	Score
1	International Journal of Human Resource Management	2.52
2	Journal of International Business Studies	2.24
3	Academy of Management Journal	2.10
4	Academy of Management Review	1.48
5	Management International Review	1.19
6	Human Resource Management	.95
7	Journal of Applied Psychology	.62
6 7 8 9	Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	.48
9	Journal of World Business	.43
10	Journal of International Management	.38
11	Human Resource Management Journal	.33
12	International Business Review	.24
13	Administrative Science Quarterly	.19
14	Journal of International Compensation	.19
15	Academy of Management Executive	.19
16	International Labor Review	.19
17	Journal of Management	.14
18	International Journal of Intercultural Relations	.14
19	European Management Journal	.14
20	International Journal of Selection and Assessment	.14
21	Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology	.10

The second list ranking these academic journals, based on rating scores, produced similar results. This list suggested that the top five journals are (1) International Journal of Human Resource Management, (2) Journal of International Business Studies, (3) Academy of Management Journal, (4) Academy of Management Review and (5) Management International Review.

Conclusion

Given the rapid increase of globalization in today's economy, research addressing the management of the human capital across national borders is becoming more critical for the success of multinational enterprises. IHRM scholars examine meaningful topics, such as cross-national comparative human resources, expatriate management, cross-cultural diversity within multinational enterprises, and the like. IHRM is not a passing fad. Rather, IHRM is a highly relevant management sub-field contributing both theoretically and practically to the success of organizations operating worldwide.

This study was intended to provide IHRM scholars with guidance regarding the most appropriate and most prestigious journal outlets for their research. Given the high consensus among the experts involved in the study, the goal of providing this list was accomplished. It is interesting to note that the top five journals on each list reflect the state of IHRM as a sub-field: IHRM has its roots in the academic field of management (reflected in the high rankings of Academy of Management Journal and Academy of Management Review). IHRM is a combination of two sub-fields, IM (reflected in the high ranking of Management International Review and Journal of International Business Studies) and HR (reflected in the high rankings of Human Resource Management). Most importantly, IHRM has become its own mature management sub-

field. This is clearly recognized in the high ranking of the International Journal of Human Resource Management.

This study utilized peer nominations of IHRM scholars who provided the journal nominations and rankings. This method naturally limits the number of journals and participants who provided rankings. As such, given the growth of IHRM, repeating this study in a few years may be warranted – as new scholars and journals continue to reshape the contour of IHRM. This study should be regarded as part of a dynamic process to better understand the sub-field of IHRM. As a mature sub-field, IHRM should continue to set its own standards for evaluating scholarly contributions.

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