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**BRIDGING THE GAP: IHRM STRATEGIES TO COMBAT GLOBAL
UNEMPLOYMENT**

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Abstract

Global unemployment continues to pose a formidable threat to economic resilience and societal progress, especially amid accelerating globalization, technological upheaval, and evolving labour market paradigms. Within this complex landscape, International Human Resource Management (IHRM) serves as a pivotal framework for crafting responsive strategies to address employment disparities across diverse global regions. This systematic review consolidates insights from open-access scholarly sources to examine the strategic role of IHRM in mitigating unemployment. It draws upon cross-regional studies, emphasizing critical approaches such as workforce upskilling and capacity enhancement, cross-cultural leadership, international talent flow, inclusive human resource practices, and digital integration. The review offers a critical assessment of these strategies' execution and their measurable influence on job creation, employability enhancement, and long-term economic sustainability. Key findings reveal that contextually nuanced, adaptable, and culturally aligned HRM practices are essential for impactful intervention. Moreover, the analysis highlights the significance of synergistic collaboration among multinational enterprises, government bodies, and community stakeholders in developing holistic and sustainable employment solutions. Advocating for a forward-looking orientation, the study underscores the need for innovative policy frameworks that champion lifelong learning, entrepreneurial development, and inclusive workforce participation. It concludes by proposing an integrative model for embedding IHRM strategies into both national agendas and corporate policies to bridge employment divides and cultivate resilient, future-ready human capital. This review offers vital implications for policymakers, HR professionals, and scholars dedicated to combating global unemployment through strategic, internationally informed HR initiatives.

Keywords: International Human Resource Management (IHRM), Global Unemployment, Skills Development, Talent Mobility, Inclusive HR Policies, Sustainable Employment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment persists as one of the most urgent and complex socio-economic issues confronting nations across the globe. It not only hampers economic prosperity but also inflicts profound social and psychological consequences on individuals, families, and communities. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022), the worldwide unemployment rate stood at approximately 5.7% in 2022, which equates to hundreds of millions of individuals actively seeking employment opportunities yet unable to secure suitable jobs. The impact of unemployment is especially severe among specific vulnerable groups, including young people entering the workforce, women facing gender-based barriers, marginalized communities, and populations in developing economies. These groups often encounter additional obstacles such as limited access to education, financial resources, and social networks, which further hinder their employment prospects.

The roots of unemployment are multifaceted, arising from structural deficiencies within economies, technological shifts, and policy shortcomings. Structural issues such as inadequate education systems and mismatched skills between workers and industry demands create persistent employment gaps. Furthermore, macroeconomic factors including inflation, recession, and economic instability exacerbate the problem. In recent years, the rapid pace of technological

innovation—particularly automation, digitalization, and artificial intelligence—has significantly transformed traditional industries. These technological advances generate new employment opportunities but also lead to the displacement of existing roles, often leaving workers unprepared for the evolving job market (World Economic Forum, 2020). For instance, the automation of manufacturing processes and the rise of digital platforms have redefined skill requirements, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and continuous learning.

The interconnectedness of the global economy through the processes of globalization has further complicated the employment landscape. Countries are increasingly interdependent, with cross-border trade, investment, and labour mobility shaping employment opportunities and challenges. This interconnectedness underscores the necessity for strategic approaches to manage workforce transitions effectively. Policymakers and organizations are thus tasked with designing adaptive strategies capable of addressing these dynamic conditions. They need to incorporate innovative frameworks that account for technological change, demographic shifts, and socio-economic disparities.

International Human Resource Management (IHRM) emerges as a vital strategic approach in this context. IHRM focuses on managing diverse, geographically dispersed workforces, emphasizing practices that bridge cultural differences, facilitate talent mobility, enhance skills development, and promote inclusivity (Brewster et al., 2019). By adopting an international perspective, organizations and governments can develop policies that are more responsive to the complexities of the modern labour market. The core aim of this review is to systematically examine recent scholarly literature to identify effective IHRM strategies that contribute to reducing unemployment and fostering resilient, inclusive labour markets worldwide. Through this analysis, the goal is to highlight best practices, contextual adaptations, and policy implications that can guide future interventions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The dynamics of employment and human resource management are increasingly influenced by globalization, technological transformation, and socio-economic shifts. Scholars have analysed these developments from multiple perspectives, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities shaping the future of work.

Digital Transformation and Employment

Alvarez and Kim (2021) highlighted how digital transformation redefines labour markets by creating new employment opportunities while simultaneously displacing certain traditional roles. Their study emphasized the dual challenge of integrating technology-driven efficiency with safeguarding workforce inclusivity. Complementing this, Lee, Tan, and Ng (2021) examined Singapore's *SkillsFuture* initiative, underscoring the importance of digital literacy in workforce participation. They argued that lifelong learning and government-led reskilling programs are critical to sustaining employability in the digital economy.

Globalization and Strategic HRM

Brewster, Chung, and Sparrow (2019) explored the globalization of HRM, stressing the need for organizations to balance global integration with local responsiveness. Their work illustrated how HR practices must adapt across cultural and institutional contexts to support transnational strategies. Similarly, Martinez and Zhou (2020) focused on cross-cultural leadership within multinational corporations, showing that effective leadership requires sensitivity to cultural diversity, inclusive communication, and adaptability in decision-making.

Employment Trends and Policy Responses

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022) reported on global employment trends, revealing persistent inequalities and vulnerabilities in labor markets exacerbated by technological disruption and economic uncertainty. Nguyen and Tran (2022) linked talent mobility policies with economic growth, demonstrating how cross-border movement of skilled labor contributes to national competitiveness. These insights highlight the significance of policy frameworks that facilitate talent circulation while addressing domestic employment challenges.

Skills Development and Vocational Training

Kumar and Patel (2021) analyzed the role of skills development in emerging economies, arguing that aligning education systems with labor market demands enhances employability and productivity. Smith and Lee (2019), in their comparative analysis of vocational training and employment outcomes, reinforced the importance of context-specific training models that integrate both technical and soft skills. Together, these works point to skill alignment as a cornerstone of sustainable employment strategies.

Inclusive HR Practices and Equity

Osei and Mensah (2018) examined inclusive HR practices, noting their role in advancing employment equity and workplace diversity. They argued that equitable HR systems not only enhance employee well-being but also contribute to organizational legitimacy and social cohesion. Their findings support the idea that inclusivity in HR is both a moral and strategic imperative in contemporary labor markets.

Synthesis

Across these studies, a common thread emerges: employment and HRM are undergoing profound transformation

driven by digitalization, globalization, and socio-economic restructuring. While technological advancements create opportunities for innovation and productivity, they also necessitate continuous investment in skills, inclusive practices, and adaptive HR strategies. Moreover, the integration of cross-cultural leadership and talent mobility into HRM frameworks underscores the global dimension of modern workforce management.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a systematic review methodology, an approach that enables a comprehensive and transparent synthesis of existing scholarly work. The process adheres to established guidelines articulated by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), ensuring rigor and reproducibility. The primary objective is to identify, evaluate, and synthesize academic studies that explore the role of IHRM strategies in promoting employment and mitigating unemployment.

Data Collection and Search Strategies

The review involved an extensive search across multiple open-access academic repositories such as Google Scholar, PubMed Central, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and institutional repositories. The search employed a combination of targeted keywords, including "IHRM strategies," "global unemployment," "workforce development," "international HRM," "skills training," "talent mobility," "digital HR practices," "automation and employment," "inclusive HRM," and "remote work policies." To ensure the relevance of findings, the search was limited to articles published between 2015 and 2023, capturing the latest developments aligned with current global trends.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria mandated that selected articles:

- Focus explicitly on strategies within IHRM aimed at generating employment or reducing unemployment.
- Offer empirical evidence, case studies, or comprehensive reviews providing data-driven insights.
- Be peer-reviewed and freely accessible to facilitate open scholarly dialogue.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria eliminated articles that:

- We're not written in English.
- Lacked empirical evidence or relied purely on theoretical frameworks.
- Focused solely on domestic HRM practices without an international component.

Analytical Approach

From the initial pool, 25 articles met the inclusion criteria. These were subjected to a thematic analysis, which involved identifying recurring patterns, strategies, challenges, and outcomes across different contexts. The synthesis aimed to distil practical insights, best practices, and policy recommendations grounded in empirical evidence. The thematic approach facilitated a structured comparison across diverse geographical, economic, and cultural settings, enabling a comprehensive understanding of effective IHRM interventions in addressing unemployment.

4. FINDINGS

The review uncovered a series of core IHRM strategies that have demonstrated efficacy in reducing unemployment and enhancing workforce resilience across various regions and sectors. These strategies are interconnected but adaptable, depending on local socio-economic conditions and industry needs.

4.1 Workforce Upskilling and Capacity Building

A prominent theme across recent literature is that continuous skills development is central to improving employability in a rapidly changing job market. As technological innovations reshape industries, the demand for new competencies—such as digital literacy, data analysis, and advanced manufacturing skills—has surged (Smith & Lee, 2019; Kumar & Patel, 2021). Governments and organizations have responded by launching targeted vocational training programs, digital literacy initiatives, and lifelong learning schemes. For example, Singapore's SkillsFuture program exemplifies a government-led effort to promote lifelong learning, enabling workers to acquire new skills aligned with emerging industry trends (Lee et al., 2021). Such initiatives have contributed to increased employment rates and entrepreneurial activity in the region.

However, a significant challenge remains: ensuring equitable access to upskilling opportunities. Marginalized groups, including low-income workers and rural populations, often face barriers such as limited digital access or cultural resistance to continuous learning. Addressing these disparities requires policy measures that promote inclusive

participation and remove structural barriers.

4.2 Cross-Cultural Leadership and Management

The diversity inherent in international workforces necessitates effective cross-cultural leadership. As Martinez and Zhou (2020) observe, organizations that invest in developing intercultural competence among managers tend to foster more inclusive, adaptable, and resilient workplaces. Training programs that focus on intercultural communication, conflict resolution, and leadership in diverse settings enable multinational corporations to better integrate migrant workers and culturally diverse teams.

Such competencies are vital for reducing turnover and enhancing organizational stability. Moreover, culturally sensitive leadership practices can facilitate smoother adaptation to local contexts, thereby boosting employment stability and organizational performance.

4.3 International Talent Mobility

Facilitating the free movement of skilled workers across borders remains a powerful mechanism for addressing labour shortages and stimulating economic growth. Nguyen and Tran (2022) highlight that countries with streamlined visa processes, mutual recognition of qualifications, and bilateral agreements have successfully attracted talent, leading to job creation and technological transfer. For instance, the European Union's Blue Card scheme has promoted intra-European mobility of skilled workers, addressing critical shortages in sectors like healthcare and IT.

Despite these successes, political and regulatory barriers often hinder talent mobility. Restrictive immigration policies, lengthy visa procedures, and lack of recognition for foreign qualifications limit the flow of talent. Policy reforms aimed at simplifying immigration procedures and fostering international recognition of credentials are essential to harness the full potential of global talent flows.

4.4 Inclusive Human Resource Practices

Promoting diversity and inclusion within organizations is increasingly recognized as a strategy to broaden participation in the labour market. Osei and Mensah (2018) demonstrate that organizations adopting inclusive HR policies—such as gender parity initiatives, employment of persons with disabilities, and minority representation—experience improved productivity, innovation, and social equity.

For example, Nordic countries have pioneered gender-inclusive policies, resulting in higher female participation in leadership roles and lower unemployment rates among women. Such policies not only advance social justice but also enhance organizational resilience by leveraging a broader talent pool.

4.5 Digital Integration and Remote Work

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital tools and remote working arrangements globally. Alvarez and Kim (2021) note that digital platforms facilitate job access in regions with limited physical infrastructure, thus democratizing employment opportunities. Remote work arrangements offer increased flexibility, reduce geographic barriers, and support work-life balance.

However, disparities in digital infrastructure and skills remain significant barriers. Addressing the digital divide through targeted investments in connectivity, device accessibility, and digital literacy is crucial for maximizing the benefits of digital employment models.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that successful IHRM strategies are deeply context-dependent, requiring alignment with local socio-economic, cultural, and political realities. For example, skills development initiatives should be designed with due consideration of regional industry needs, cultural attitudes toward education, and resource availability. In developing economies, combining vocational training with entrepreneurship support can foster sustainable employment.

Collaboration among diverse stakeholders—governments, private sector entities, educational institutions, and civil society—is vital for scaling effective interventions. Partnerships that leverage resources and expertise can accelerate progress; for instance, public-private collaborations in vocational training have yielded significant employment gains in several emerging markets (UNDP, 2020).

Addressing structural barriers such as gender inequality and digital divides demands comprehensive policy reforms. Policies promoting social inclusion, access to quality education, and entrepreneurship can catalyse a more inclusive labour market. Moreover, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset encourages self-employment and innovation, further reducing unemployment.

While digital technologies promise to democratize access and improve efficiency, they can also deepen existing inequalities if disparities in infrastructure, skills, and access are not proactively addressed. Investments in digital infrastructure, alongside digital literacy programs, are essential to ensure equitable participation in the digital economy.

6. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive review underscores the transformative potential of well-conceived IHRM strategies in tackling the persistent challenge of global unemployment. Core strategies such as workforce upskilling, fostering inclusive HR practices, nurturing cross-cultural leadership, facilitating international talent mobility, and embracing digital integration form the pillars of resilient and inclusive labour markets.

An integrated framework that combines policy reforms, organizational practices, and multi-stakeholder partnerships is critical for embedding these strategies into national development agendas and corporate policies. Such a holistic approach can bridge employment gaps, foster social cohesion, and support sustainable economic growth.

Future research should focus on longitudinal analyses to assess the long-term impacts of these strategies, especially in light of rapid technological change. Additionally, understanding regional specificities—such as cultural attitudes and economic conditions—can inform tailored interventions that maximize effectiveness and promote equitable development.

7. STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS

AI Statement: The authors declare that they have not used generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, in the writing of this manuscript and/or in the creation of images, graphics, tables, or their corresponding captions.

Authorship Contribution: Swapna S: Carrying out the data collection, data curation, and writing the original manuscript and reviewing the manuscript.

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