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The Research-Practice Gap in Human Resource Management (HRM): A Cross-Cultural Study (14-020)

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RUNNING HEAD: The Research-Practice Gap in HRM

The Research-Practice Gap in Human Resource Management: A Cross-Cultural Study

ABSTRACT

In this study, we examine the cross-cultural differences in human resource (HR) managers'

beliefs in effective HR practices by surveying HR practitioners in Finland (N=86), South Korea

(N=147), and Spain (N=196). Similar to previous studies from the U.S., the Netherlands, and

Australia, there are large discrepancies between HR practitioner beliefs and research findings,

particularly in the area of staffing. In addition, we find that interpersonal-oriented aspects of HR

practices tend to be more culturally bound than technical-oriented aspects of HR practices. We

interpret the differences using Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Power Distance, Individualism

versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term

Orientation, and Uncertainty Avoidance). We discuss the overall nature of the science-practice

gap in HR management, and the implications for evidence-based management.

Keywords:

Evidence-based management; HR practices; Cross-cultural comparison; International HR

The Research-Practice Gap in Human Resource Management: A Cross-Cultural Study

A manager is responsible for the application and performance of knowledge.

Peter Drucker

Scientific evidence indicates that certain human resource (HR) practices are positively related to organizational performance (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Subramony, 2009). High-performance work practices—such as selectivity in hiring, incentive compensation, and job-specific training and development—enhance employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), increase employee autonomy and responsibility, and motivate employees to perform well through performance feedback and rewards (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Huselid, 1995; Delery & Shaw, 2001). This skilled, motivated, and adaptable workforce is then able to drive organizational performance (Becker, Huselid, Pickus, & Spratt, 1997; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012). As such, it would seem reasonable that HR practitioners make use of scientific HR evidence in order to improve their decisions on which practices to implement within their organizations. However, it is unclear whether HR practitioners are aware of the results of the research that could boost the performance of their organizations (*knowledge gap*), or they are just not implementing the most effective practices as prescribed by research results (*knowing-doing gap*) (e.g., Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Briner, 2007; Rousseau & Barends, 2011; Rynes, 2012).

Evidence-based management (EBMgt) means basing decisions on the best available scientific evidence, evidence from the local context (i.e., organizational facts and metrics), practitioner judgment, and the perspectives of stakeholders (Briner, Denyer, & Rousseau, 2009; Rousseau, 2012). Evidence-based HR management, however, requires more than knowing simply

that "HR works" for organizations. As Briner (2007, p. 5) observed, evidence-based practitioners dig deeper to understand "whether, and the extent to which, certain practices solve particular sorts of problems and in which contexts" as well as "whether our practices might be doing more harm than good and whether the benefits they may accrue outweigh the costs." This approach entails not simply the acceptance of these high-performance work practices as "best practices" but rather an understanding of the sound scientific research in HR management, industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology, and related academic fields upon which such work practices are based. Only with this understanding can one begin to determine whether a particular HR practice will achieve desired outcomes in one's own cultural and organizational settings and in accordance with the perspectives of relevant stakeholders.

Rousseau and Barends (2011, p. 221) recently posed this provocative question to HR practitioners: "Do you know the scientific evidence for ANY of the HR practices your company uses?" They asserted that many practitioners would likely need to answer 'no.' Indeed, Rynes, Colbert, and Brown (2002) surveyed nearly 1,000 managerial and executive-level HR practitioners [members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)] in the U.S. regarding well-established HR research findings in multiple HR areas (general management and employment practices, training and employee development, staffing, and compensation and benefits). Items were constructed based on well-established (often meta-analytically derived) research results. Respondents indicated whether they agreed, disagreed, or were uncertain about each item, which served as a basis for comparison between practitioner beliefs and research findings. On average, HR practitioners answered only 57% of items (20/35) in line with research evidence, indicating discrepancies between research findings and practitioner beliefs.

Discrepancies were particularly large in the areas of selection, motivation through goal-setting, and performance management.

Two replications of this effort among Dutch (Sanders, van Riemsdijk, & Groen, 2008) and Australian HR practitioners (Carless, Rasiah, & Irmer, 2009) yielded very similar results. In both studies, respondents answered around 60% of the items correctly and fared the worst on selection-related items. On a micro level, the characteristics of the respondents have been discussed to be relevant factors (e.g., job level, tenure, education, information-seeking strategies, attitudes toward academics and research; Carless et al., 2009; Rynes et al., 2002; Sanders et al., 2008). Other research points to the fact that organizational context and corporate cultures may account for some of the differences in human resource practices and strategies (Gerhart & Fang, 2005). Another aspect to be taken into account is the cross-cultural generalizability of results regarding which practices are more successful than others. For example, Guest and Zijlstra (2012) surveyed 75 senior and eminent academics across Europe about their perceptions of research evidence. They reported that 72% of the respondents believed that some U.S. research findings would not transfer to Europe because of societal/cultural differences. Even though research has examined some cross-cultural aspects of the implementation of HR practices (e.g., Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002a; Gerhart & Fang, 2005), the role of national culture in shaping practitioners' beliefs about HR practices has received insufficient attention.

In the present study, accordingly, we replicate and expand the efforts of Rynes et al. (2002) in three countries: Finland, Spain, and South Korea. By doing so, we contribute to the literature by exploring the potential role of national culture on HR professionals' beliefs, an examination that is not possible within a single-country study (Carless et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2008; Rynes et al., 2002). Specifically, we examine the possibility that beliefs about some HR

practices, those that are more interpersonal-oriented, are culture specific while others, those that are more technical-oriented, are not (see e.g., Reich et al., 2012). We aim to explain the differences in HR professionals' beliefs using Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1993; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Finally, we discuss the overall nature of the science-practice gap in HR management, and the implications of our results for EBMgt.

Our research, through replication of the Rynes et al. (2002) study, adds to the work on HR professionals' beliefs regarding effective HR practices and enables analysis of the pattern of results across studies. Our research also contributes to an understanding of the influence of national culture on these beliefs. Academics and practitioners that are working to facilitate the practice of EBMgt cannot do so without a full understanding of the contextual factors that affect practitioners' knowledge of, beliefs in, or use of the "best available scientific evidence." Our findings and subsequent discussion will aid researchers in discerning how their research could be more relevant, credible, and accessible to practitioners. Such a development would naturally benefit practitioners, the potential end-users of such research. The focus on cross-cultural applicability including non-U.S. and non-Western countries, in particular, would benefit HR professionals who are working across countries (e.g., global HR consultants, HR professionals in multinational companies) because most of the research evidence for the effectiveness of HR practices is U.S.-based (Arvey, Bhagat, & Salas, 1991; Gelfand, Leslie, & Fehr, 2008). Relatedly, HR research's "heavy reliance on Western cultural contexts puts constraints upon both our theories and our practical solutions to organizational problems'' (Barrett & Bass, 1976, p. 1675).

The remaining paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss how beliefs about effective HR practices differ by national culture. Next, we describe our methodology, including the selection of countries in which we conducted our investigation, our survey, and our analytical

approach. We then conclude with a discussion of the empirical findings and their implications, limitations of our study, and directions for future research.

Cross-cultural differences in beliefs about effective HR practices

National culture can influence HR policy and practice (e.g., Chiang, 2005; Hofstede, 1993; Laurent, 1993; Morris et al., 2009; Schneider, 1993; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998, VonGlinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002). The most important mechanisms through which this occurs include managerial socialization processes, basic assumptions which shape HR practitioners' behavior, common value orientation and norms of behavior, influence of social elite within a country, and unique ways of operating reflective of the national business system (Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002a). National culture may also influence other relevant features of the external environment, such as the employment laws and regulations adopted by a country (Roehling, Posthuma, & Hickox, 2009). Indeed, research has shown that business performance is higher (Newman & Nollen, 1996) and employee withdrawal is lower (Peretz & Fried, 2011) when management practices are congruent with a national culture.

However, not all HR practices possess the same level of cultural-specificity. Previous research has proposed that HR practices that deal with more interpersonal relationships (e.g., career development, performance appraisal, and reward allocation) are likely to be more culture-bound than HR practices that deal more with technical aspects (e.g., recruitment, selection, and training; Reiche, Lee, & Quintanilla, 2012). This is because an employee is likely to need to possess similar skills and competencies in a profession, irrespective of the national cultural context (e.g., what an engineer or nurse needs to know does not dramatically vary from country to country). However, what types of behaviors are desired and rewarded is much more dependent on the cultural context. Indeed, Lu and Björkman (1997) examined 65 Western manufacturing

joint ventures operating in China and found significant differences across HR practices with respect to compatibility between standardized and local practices: recruitment and training did appear to be less culture-bound than promotion, appraisal, and compensation. Similarly, in a study comparing Chinese and UK companies, Easterby-Smith, Malina, and Lu (1995) found that culture differences drove differences in HR practices in "the 'softer' areas where interpersonal relationships are important: appraisal, reward systems, the process of assessing potential" (p. 55). Based on this logic and evidence, previous research questioned the universal applicability and effectiveness of HR practices across different cultural contexts (e.g., Verburg, Drenth, Koopman, van Muijen & Wang, 1999). Drawing on this research and Reiche et al. (2012), we expect that HR professionals' beliefs about interpersonal-oriented HR practices will be more culturally bound (i.e., show more cross-cultural differences) than beliefs about technical-oriented aspects of HR practices.

One of the most well established frameworks for interpreting differences between national cultures is that of Hofstede (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). Theoretical and empirical research has used Hofstede's dimensions to examine the effects of national culture on HR activities (for reviews, see, e.g., Aycan, 2005; Brewster & Mayrhofer, 2012; Harris, 2008; Stone & Stone-Romero, 2008). For instance, in high Power Distance cultures (see Table 1 for definitions of each dimension), there is great respect for and reluctance to challenge authority. This can manifest itself in the performance appraisal process, where managers in high Power Distance culture are reluctant to engage in two-way communication, employee participation in the appraisal/feedback is low, and the practice of peer evaluation is nearly absent (Huo & von Glinow, 1995). Employees in cultures high in Individualism not only prefer pay based on individual performance (Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998) but also benefit from individual-focused

training more so than employees in collectivistic cultures (Earley, 1994). Masculine cultures, which are focused on competition and performance more so than the relationships and quality of life emphasized in Feminine cultures, are reflected in the less prevalent use of benefits programs such as flexible benefits, workplace child care, and maternity leave (Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998), whereas Feminine cultures show lesser interest in material rewards (Chiang, 2005). Cultures high in Uncertainty Avoidance wish to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity, characteristics present in the selection process where organizations must make decisions about unknown individuals. Thus, organizations in such cultures conduct more interviews, use extensive testing, and audit their selection practices rather comprehensively (Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page, 1999). In cultures with a Long-Term Orientation, which emphasizes perseverance and future rewards, work units that emphasized employment security were found to be better performing, whereas those with less employment security were better performing in cultures with a Short-Term Orientation (Newman & Nollen, 1996). In light of this and similar research, we draw on Hofstede's cultural dimensions to examine the discrepancies across countries regarding HR professionals' beliefs about the effectiveness of HR practices and the role that national culture plays in creating them.

It is important to acknowledge that some research has criticized Hofstede's (2001, 2010) national culture framework. A common criticism stems from the narrowness of the research sample (e.g., respondents from a single company and primarily from a single discipline within that company, a very small number of respondents in some countries; McSweeney, 2002). Others highlight the fact that the company was an American multinational company; Ailon (2008) notes that Hofstede's work does not capture social reality but rather constructs it in ways that affirm Western values. Also, some empirical work (e.g., Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002b) has suggested potentially important new dimensions of national culture not captured by Hofstede's framework.

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However, such criticisms do not nullify the value of the framework. Virtually all subsequent attempts at national culture measurement draw from it; Taras and colleagues (Taras, Rowney, & Steel, 2009) reviewed 121 instruments for quantifying culture and noted that 97.5% of them contain at least some dimensions conceptually similar to those in Hofstede's framework. Nardon and Steers (2009) collapsed the values contained within six major cultural value models into five core dimensions, of which several are identical or very similar to Hofstede's (and his framework contains elements of the other dimensions). In addition, recent reviews (e.g., Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006; Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010) of empirical research that incorporated Hofstede's framework concluded that continued examination of Hofstede's dimensions was clearly relevant and warranted, with Kirkman et al. (2006) noting that most country differences predicted by Hofstede were supported.

Taken together, we examine beliefs about the effectiveness of HR practices by surveying HR professionals in Finland, Spain and South Korea, and compare the gaps between practitioner beliefs and research knowledge to earlier studies (Rynes et al., 2002; Sanders et al., 2008; Carless et al., 2009). We contribute to this discourse by assessing cross-cultural differences in HR practitioner beliefs. Finally, based on practitioner information sources and attitudes towards HR research, we offer directions for the advancement of EBMgt.

Method

Participants

We conducted the study in three countries: Finland, South Korea, and Spain that differ on several of Hofstede's national culture dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010; see Table 1). By choosing these countries, we ensured that our sample contained variation in the cultural dimensions (i.e., represented high and low scores on each of the five dimensions). Finland is

lower on Power Distance than Spain and South Korea (scores 33, 57, and 60 respectively).

Similarly, Finland is lower on Uncertainty Avoidance than Spain or Korea (scores 59, 86, and 85

respectively). Whereas Finland is a Feminine culture, Spain and South Korea are more Masculine

(scores 26, 39 and 42). Whereas South Korea is a Collectivistic culture (i.e., low on

Individualism), Finland and Spain are more Individualistic cultures (scores 18, 63, and 51

respectively). South Korea is also very high on Long-term Orientation whereas Finland and Spain

are much lower (100, 38, and 48 respectively).

In each country, we chose a distribution channel that would not only maximize the

number of participants but also yield a representative sample of HR professionals in each

country. These are discussed in more detail next. For reference, we also include in Table 1 the

scores on Hofstede's national culture dimensions for the U.S., the Netherlands, and Australia, the

countries examined in previous versions of this study (Carless et al., 2009; Rynes et al., 2002;

Sanders et al., 2008).

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Finland

The respondents for the survey were randomly selected from the Finnish Association for

Human Resource Management, a professional association for human resource management that

is similar to the Society for Human Resource Management in the U.S. It is the only HRM

association in Finland, and most HR professionals in Finland are members. Thus, a random

selection of respondents should be representative. Surveys were sent electronically to 1,002

members in spring 2010. In addition, 39 invitations were sent to HR practitioners in the public

sector to ensure that we would also get some responses from this sector. Responses were received

from 87 participants, for a response rate of 8.3%. Despite the overall low response rate, demographics of the respondents are rather representative of the population of HR professionals in Finland[1]. One response was omitted from the analysis because the respondent had only answered properly the first items (all other answers were "uncertain"). Thus, the size of the final sample was 86.

South Korea

Respondents were members of HR departments that subscribe to *The Magazine of Human Resources Management*, a monthly HR magazine with the largest circulation in South Korea that is published by the *Korean Personnel Institute*. This respondent group was estimated to be representative of South Korean HR professionals as *The Magazine of Human Resource Management* is the first Korean HR magazine funded by the government, and most medium to large-size organizations subscribe to it. Online surveys were sent to 912 practitioners in 2010, 147 individuals responded, yielding a response rate of 16%.

Spain

Respondents were HR professionals from the *Center for Human Resources at IE Business School,* a Center of Excellence in Spain, composed of alumni and practitioners interested in networking and staying up-to-date on HR issues and debates. As the Center is responsible for the technical analysis of the applications for the National HR Awards sponsored by *Expansión,* the largest economic newspaper in Spain, the members include most important middle and large companies in the country, and the sample should be rather representative of Spanish HR professionals. Online surveys were sent electronically to a sample of 1,153 HR practitioners in spring 2010; 196 responded, for a response rate of 17%. One response was removed from the sample because of severe missing data problems. Thus, the size of the final sample was 195.

Survey

The survey items are based on the Rynes et al. (2002) study and include statements about *Management Practices* (motivation, leadership, performance management, employee involvement, and HR roles), *General Employment Practices* (legal issues, performance appraisal, and employee attitudes), *HR Development* (training and development, and evaluation of training effectiveness), *Staffing* (recruitment, selection, and career planning), and *Compensation and Benefits* (job pricing, pay structures, compensation strategies, and effectiveness). These HR areas are included in the *Human Resource Certification Institute's* "Professional in Human Resources" exam in the U.S. The items were constructed to examine the extent to which the beliefs of HR practitioners are consistent with established research findings. Items were worded to be either true or false, based on well-established scientific evidence. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed, disagreed, or were uncertain about each item. As the original study was conducted about 10 years ago, we examined whether the current research evidence is consistent with the evidence available 10 years ago. We verified that the correct answers were still consistent with the body of current research evidence (examples of the effect of national culture on HRM are cited in conjunction with the interpretation of cultural differences). We do not include a full list of citations of research evidence published since Rynes et al. (2002) due to space limitations; however, this information is available from the authors upon request.

A subsequent study by Sanders et al. (2008) had dropped ten items from the original 35-item survey because they were deemed not relevant for the national context of the Netherlands. Similarly, we dropped one item in all samples "One problem with using integrity tests is that they have high degrees of adverse impact on racial minorities" since there is no legal definition for "adverse impact" in Finland, South Korea, and Spain. Furthermore, it could be unclear what

"racial minorities" would refer to in these countries. Two additional items were also excluded from the South Korean survey because their content was deemed irrelevant for the context (i.e., downsizing is unlikely to happen and drug tests are not used in South Korea). These items were also dropped from the study conducted in the Netherlands.

In addition, as in the original study (Rynes et al., 2002), we collected information about journals and magazines HR practitioners read, where they go to get help with HR problems or issues, and attitudes toward various sources of HR information. Lists of common informational sources in each national context were provided, and respondents indicated the frequency with which these sources were used. Both archival (e.g., Web sites and journals) and social (e.g., consultants, academics, and other HR practitioners) information sources were assessed. The relevant list in each national context was construed in collaboration with local experts.

In Finland, the survey was administered in English (i.e., not in their mother tongue Finnish or Swedish as the association that distributed the survey thought that English would be most convenient to avoid misunderstandings), in Korean in South Korea, and in Spanish in Spain. In Korea, the fifth author translated the survey into Korean, which was then reviewed by the sixth author, a Human Resource Management faculty member in Korea. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. An initial translation of the survey from the original U.S.-based English into Spanish was performed by a bilingual and native speaker of the local language, followed by a reverse translation from the local language to U.S. English by an HR professor, bilingual and expert in the technical terminology of the survey. After resolving small discrepancies and re-writing parts of some items, the survey was administered.

Differences between samples and response patterns

There were some differences in the demographics between the respondent pools from the three countries (see Appendix 1). In South Korea and Spain, most of the respondents were male (81.6% and 57.9%, respectively). In Finland, most of the respondents were female (84.9%). This can be explained by differences in culture because HR is considered a feminine profession in Finland. By contrast, in South Korea, HR is considered a masculine profession, and in Spain, managerial positions, including within the HR profession, are in general occupied by males.

Although the overall (formal) education level was highest in Finland, Finnish HR professionals had the largest number of "Uncertain" answers in the survey. Out of the 32 knowledge items, they answered on average 6.44 items "Uncertain" (4.15 items for Spanish HR professionals and 4.99 items for South Koreans). This difference is statistically significant (F[2,426] = 8.31, $p < .001$) and could be due to the cultural dimension of Masculinity-Femininity, as in feminine cultures such as Finland, modest behavior is desirable (Hofstede et al., 2010).

We explored whether any of the demographics (i.e., gender, formal education level, HR experience, job title, size of the company where the HR professional works, or its approach to HR) would explain overall knowledge levels. We found that in the Spanish sample, experience in HR was related to a higher knowledge level ($r = .205$, $p < .01$; this relation was not significant in the Finnish or South Korean sample). Rather surprisingly, our question about the highest formal level of education (or whether the person had majored in an HR-related area) was not a significant predictor of the accuracy of HR knowledge. This suggests that evidence-based knowledge in these countries is mostly learned through job experience or informal sources. However, a proactive approach to HR in the organization where the HR professional works (i.e., organizations that are often the first to adopt new or innovative HR practices) was positively related to a higher knowledge level ($r = .151$, $p < .05$ in Finland; $r = .240$, $p < .05$ in Spain; $r =$

.107, *n.s.* in South Korea; $r = .148$, $p < .01$ in the overall data). Because we do not know the causal direction, it could also mean that HR professionals with a higher level of knowledge are more likely to be proactive in their approach to developing HR practices.

Analysis methods

Similarly to previous studies, we report the overall percentage of correct answers in each country clustered by the different HR areas, and descriptive statistics of where practitioners get information, as well as attitudes towards academic research. We analyzed the mean differences in knowledge of the different HR areas and attitudes between the three focal countries using ANOVA. In addition to the clustering of HR practices (e.g., *Management practices*, *Training & development, and Compensation and benefits*; Rynes et al., 2002), we categorized the items by looking more carefully at the content of each individual item (i.e., whether the item dealt more with some aspect of *interpersonal* relationships or whether it was more about *technical* aspects of HR systems or practices). Three coders familiar with the HRM literature independently coded the items. The coders agreed on 22 items out of 34. They did not agree on 5 items and were unsure of how to categorize the remaining 7 items as these items included elements of both interpersonal-oriented and technical-oriented aspects of HR. For example, item number 29: "Merit pay systems cause so many problems that companies without them tend to have higher performance than companies without them" deals with the general effectiveness of a HR practice (i.e., a more technical aspect) as well as interpersonal-oriented aspects (e.g., the causes for the potential ineffectiveness of merit systems are often interpersonal). Using the coding of the 22 items that the expert coders agreed on, we analyzed the mean difference in beliefs about interpersonal- and technical-oriented aspects of HR using ANOVA, and report the difference in *F*-statistics.

Results

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What HR practitioners believe

The Finnish respondents answered on average 18 of the 34 items (52 %) correctly (see Figure 1a) with a standard deviation of 3.6. On average, Korean practitioners responded correctly to 17 out of the 32 items (53%), with a standard deviation of 4.2 (see Figure 1b). Spanish practitioners on average responded correctly to 20 out of the 34 items (58%), with a standard deviation of 3.7 (see Figure 1c). The histograms in Figure 1 show that the distributions of the responses in each sample approximate a normal curve. This was also the case in the original study by Rynes et al. (2002) where the respondents from the U.S. answered 20 (57%) items correctly. Dutch respondents answered on average 16 (62 %) correctly (out of 25 items; Sanders et al., 2008); Australian HR practitioners answered 60% of 34 items correctly (Carless et al., 2009).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Table 2 reports the average percentage of correct answers clustered in different areas, compared to earlier studies (Carless et al., 2009; Rynes et al., 2002; Sanders et al., 2008). Overall, as found in Rynes et al. (2002), the biggest gaps between the practitioner beliefs and research knowledge were in the area of *Staffing*: on average, the respondents answered less than half of the items correctly (see Table 2). In all other areas, the respondents in each sample answered more than half of the items correctly.

Insert Table 2 about here

Where HR practitioners get their information

As in the original study (Rynes et al., 2002), we asked how often the respondents read different periodicals on a scale from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*), how they searched information, and how frequently they attend HR conferences. These items had to be tailored to fit each national context. For that reason, the results are presented by country and are not included in a table. Yet, the results are very similar to those of other studies (e.g., Rynes et al., 2002) in that they indicate that, in general, practitioners do not read academic journals. Results from Finland and Spain are similar to the U.S. results as academic journals (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal*) were on average "never" read. International HR journals were not included in the Korean survey as it was considered very unlikely that they would be read because of the language barrier. Business readings, such as *Harvard Business Review* and local business periodicals, were most popular as they were "usually" or "sometimes" read in both Finland and Spain. However, HR practitioners attend multiple national conferences: on average 5.35 conferences in Finland, 5.46 in Spain, and 2.34 in South Korea.

We also asked the respondents where HR practitioners seek information to solve their HR problems in Finland and Spain (these items were not part of the Korean survey due to length concerns). The most popular source that was used "several times in a month" was other HR practitioners in the same organization (mean = 3.82 in Finland, 3.71 in Spain). The next most popular source was HR practitioners in other organizations (mean = 2.68 in Finland, 2.56 in Spain), which are consulted "about once a month." Academics were the least popular source (mean = 1.48 in Finland, 1.65 in Spain), which is similar to Rynes et al.'s (2002) findings. Contrary to Dutch practitioners (Sanders et al., 2008), where websites were the most popular source, HR practitioners from Finland appeared not to use this source for solving problems and

Spanish respondents indicated that they use websites a bit more often (mean = 1.53 and 2.38, respectively).

Practitioner attitudes towards academics and HR research

Finally, we asked respondents in each country about their attitudes towards academics and HR research on a scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). In general, practitioner attitudes towards learning about academic research were rather positive. As in the previous studies, Finnish, South Korean, and Spanish HR practitioners wish they had more time to read about academic HR research findings (see Table 3). HR practitioners in Finland and Spain, similar to those in the Netherlands (Sanders et al., 2008), would like to spend more time talking with academics about HR problems. South Koreans would like to call an academic to help solve HR problems. HR professionals from Finland and Spain, like those in the Netherlands and the U.S. (Rynes et al., 2002; Sanders et al., 2008), think that academic HR research is useful but were rather neutral about whether academic research results are applicable in practice. Koreans were much more skeptical about the applicability of research. All in all, the attitudes towards collaborating with academics were somewhat positive and quite similar in the different countries.

Insert Table 3 about here

Cultural differences in HR practitioner beliefs

We assessed whether there are statistically significant differences between the three focal countries in the different HR areas. We found that there was a significant main effect in the one-way MANOVA for country membership (three countries) on knowledge scores in the five HR areas (Wilk's λ = .83; $p < .001$). This finding suggests that countries vary in terms of HR area scores. Follow-up ANOVA results (see Table 2) show that there are significant differences

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between the countries in Management practices [$F(2, 419) = 11.347$ ($p < .001$)], General

employment practices [$F(2,419) = 9.517$ ($p < .001$)], and Compensation & benefits [$F(2, 419) =$

19.2533 ($p < .001$)]. The differences in Training & development [$F(2,419) = 2.511$, *n.s.*] and

Staffing [$F(2,419) = .809$, *n.s.*] were not statistically significant. Thus, in line with our prediction,

we found significant country differences in the beliefs about more interpersonal-oriented HR

practices (Management practices, General employment practices, and Compensation & benefits)

rather than more technical-oriented HR practices (Staffing and Training & development) (see

Reiche et al., 2012).

Based on the item-level secondary categorization, we tested whether there are statistically

significant differences between the three focal countries in more interpersonal- and more

technical-oriented beliefs about HR practices. At the item-level, we found that in 18 out of 22

cases (82%), the categorization aligns with the expectation in that beliefs about "interpersonal"

items differ between countries and "technical" items do not (see Table 4). Further, we tested

whether overall beliefs about interpersonal aspects of HR practices would be more culturally

sensitive than technical aspects of HR practices (see Reich et al., 2012). The difference between

the *F*-statistic [$F(2, 426) = 19.927$ for interpersonal and $F(2, 426) = 15.523$ for technical] was

statistically significant (4.605, $p < .05$), indicating that, as Reich et al. (2012) suggested,

interpersonal-oriented aspects of HR practices tend to be more culturally bound.

Next, we examined whether the country-level differences in beliefs about specific HR

practices can be explained using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Table 4 reports the percentage

of "correct" and "uncertain" answers in parentheses to each item in each area. We compared

whether the differences in the HR practitioners' research-based knowledge of the different issues

in each area were statistically different using ANOVA. In this comparison, "uncertain" answers were regarded "incorrect" because the percentage of correct answers was of focal interest.

Insert Table 4 about here

The high Power Distance culture in Spain and South Korea may explain HR professionals' belief that managers do *not* give employees lower performance ratings in the performance appraisal process than they objectively deserve (item 9, Table 4). High Power Distance cultures demonstrate a great respect for and are less likely to challenge authority (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, Spanish and South Korean HR professionals seem to assume that managers' appraisal ratings of employees must be accurate and assigned as deserved. It could also be that, because they believe in the ability of managers to accurately assess performance, they don't see problems in merit pay systems (item 29, Table 4). For instance, they may think that merit pay systems—generally based on managers' performance ratings—drive organizational performance. The low Power Distance culture, which does not exhibit such reverence for authority, could provide an explanation for why Finnish HR practitioners were more likely than their South Korean and Spanish HR equivalents to know that lecture (traditionally passive, listening to expert authority) is not as effective for training as other more active, participatory methods (item 15, Table 4; Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell; 2003; Gagne & Medsker, 1996).

Individualism and Collectivism have been used to explain compensation preferences (e.g., Chiang, 2005; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). South Korea, being a more collectivistic culture than Finland or Spain (see Table 4), scored significantly lower on the item that inquires whether individual incentives are preferred over team incentives (item 28, Table 4). South Korea's collectivism may also drive its low score on item 11 ("teams with members from different

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functional areas may indeed reach better solutions, but such diversity in background, information, or values also increases relationship conflict;" see Table 4), an undesirable circumstance in a culture valuing harmony (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). High scores on Individualism could also explain why HR practitioners in Spain and Finland tend to believe that employment interviews should be designed around a candidate's individual (or unique) background, i.e., an unstructured interview (item 19, Table 4).

Masculinity-Femininity is a likely explanation for why Finnish HR practitioners tend to believe that employees would be realistic about their performance ratings (item 13, Table 4). Finland is a feminine culture, in which modesty is a virtue. Therefore, individuals tend to underrate (not oversell) their own performance (Hofstede et al., 2010). It could also explain why Finnish HR practitioners do not believe that employees are likely to overestimate how important pay is to them, compared to Korean and Spanish HR professionals (item 34, Table 4). Individuals in feminine cultures work in order to live and tend to prefer more leisure time instead of more money (Hofstede et al., 2010). They also emphasize rewards based on equality (Hofstede et al., 2010), which may explain why Finnish HR professionals are less likely to believe in merit pay, compared to Spanish HR managers (item 29, Table 4).

Korean HR practitioners scored significantly higher than their Finnish or Spanish equivalents on the role of vision statements for organizational performance (item 14, Table 4). In terms of organizational life, a Long-Term Orientation culture focuses on the durability of organizations such that they are here to serve the stakeholders and society at large for many generations to come (Hofstede et al., 2010). Also, in such cultures, there is a willingness of individuals to subordinate themselves for a higher purpose (e.g., organizational purposes). Korean HR practitioners did not believe that ability to manage change is one of the most

important competencies for HR managers (item 7, Table 4), another belief that can be traced to Long-Term Orientation and belief in durability of organizations. Long-Term Orientation cultures value perseverance and sustained efforts towards slow results rather than quick fixes often associated with change management (Hofstede et al., 2010). Rynes et al. (2002) also mention that in internal labor market conditions with strong employment guarantees, such as historically has been in Korea (Kim & Park, 2006), no additional benefits might be gained from increasing retention. This, and the current growth in the use of irregular workers (Kim & Park, 2006), can explain why Koreans scored low on the item inquiring about the effectiveness of decreasing turnover (item 5, Table 4).

South Koreans disagreed strongly with the statement about employees preferring variable pay systems to fixed pay systems (item 33, Table 4) whereas Finnish HR practitioners were more likely to agree with the statement. The difference between South Korea and Finland could be explained by Uncertainty Avoidance because cultures lower on this dimension such as Finland are more likely to accept risk in pay (Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). In contrast to Finnish and Spanish respondents, South Korean HR practitioners believed that in a situation where pay has to be cut, nothing can be done to reduce dysfunctional employee behaviors (item 27, Table 4). This could be explained by high Power Distance, Collectivism, and Long Term Orientation because employees might not even exhibit dysfunctional behaviors if pay is cut for the sake of the collective good and the survival of the organization. Koreans have been shown to be more tolerant of unfair treatment from the organization and exhibit a lower level of turnover intentions in an unfair situation than their Western equivalents (Kim & Leung, 2007).

Discussion

Evidence-based management requires that practitioners make decisions by integrating the best available scientific evidence with evidence from the local context, their own judgment, and the viewpoints of relevant stakeholders (Briner et al., 2009; Rousseau, 2012). Thus, practitioners need to be familiar with basic scientific evidence. Our results suggest that HR practitioners are not evidence-based as their knowledge level of the research evidence on effective HRM practices can only be described as "fair." Across the six countries (Finland, South Korea, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, and the U.S.), the overall percentage of correct answers ranged from 52% to 61%, with an average of 57%. Practitioners were generally most knowledgeable about training and development items (the highest proportion of correct answers in five countries, and the second highest proportion of correct answers in South Korea).

Given this global gap, HR has the potential to add considerable value to organizations by acquiring, developing, and retaining human capital through evidence-based HR practices (Combs et al., 2006; Subramony, 2009). However, it does not appear that HR practitioners are prepared to leverage this potential through staffing practices given the large gap between their beliefs and HR scientific evidence in that HR area. Across the six countries, the overall percentage of correct answers in the area of staffing ranged from 30% to 49%, with an average of 38%. Thus, although Deadrick and Gibson (2009) found that staffing was a topic of equal and enduring interest for both academics and practitioners over the past 30 years and concluded that there is no *interest* gap, there clearly exists a *knowledge* gap. The importance of distributing the scientific evidence for staffing is further supported by Rynes, Giluk, and Brown (2007), who found that the importance of mental ability for performance is one of five scientific findings on which academics agree. Rynes et al. (2002) discusses several possible explanations for the results in the staffing area, including the technical and complex nature of selection research, the academic

focus on abstract/broad characteristics of people (e.g., general mental ability) versus the practitioner focus on specific job requirements (e.g., KSAs), negative press coverage regarding intelligence, and mean ethnic difference in general mental ability test scores. Past research has also raised the point that practitioners may resist research findings due to a general distrust of academics, statistics, and the scientific method (Giluk & Rynes, 2012; Rynes, 2012). In addition, practitioners may find certain types of research findings difficult to believe or accept, including findings that are threatening or anxiety-provoking (such as those on the validity of cognitive ability if you are not highly intelligent), findings that are contradictory to personal experience, or findings that would require practitioners to change (Giluk & Rynes, 2012; Rynes, 2012).

Empirical and theoretical research (e.g., Chiang, 2005; Hofstede, 1993; Laurent, 1993; Morris et al., 2009; Schneider, 1993; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998; VonGlinow et al., 2002) has drawn attention to the influence of national culture on HR policies and practices. These national differences are likely to exist because of institutional reasons (i.e., coercive, normative and mimetic institutional pressures; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and because of what practitioners believe to be effective and/or acceptable in a given cultural context (Stone, Stone-Romero, & Lukaszewski, 2007). In addition to the similarity in some HR practice areas where there seems to be a "global" gap between practitioner beliefs and research evidence, our research identified areas where the differential beliefs of HR professional could, in part, be explained by national culture. More specifically, our study demonstrates, in line with previous research on cross-cultural differences in HRM (Reiche et al., 2012; Lu & Björkman, 1997; Easterby-Smith et al., 1995; Verburg et al., 1999), that HR professionals' beliefs about interpersonal-oriented HR practices are more sensitive to one's cultural context than beliefs about technical aspects of HR practices. This was demonstrated in two analyses: one that clustered items in more interpersonal-

oriented HR practice dimensions (Management practices, General employment practices, and Compensation & benefits) and more technical-oriented HR practices (Staffing and Training & development) using the categorization by Rynes et al. (2002; see also Reiche et al., 2012), and a second one that clustered items based on the content of each item.

Hofstede's framework of national culture enabled valuable interpretation of these differential beliefs. We found that beliefs aligned in part with previous work on how national culture affects HR practices. Compensation and benefits was the area containing the greatest proportion of items with significant differences between respondents by country. In this area, for example, previous research has shown that incentives based on individual performance are a better fit in countries high on the Individualism dimension (Schuler & Rogosvsky, 1998). Previous research has also shown that financial rewards are not considered as important in Feminine countries (Chiang, 2005).

Although, the three expert coders were not able to unanimously categorize three of the items related to compensation and benefits (items 29, 30, and 31 in Table 4) into the two categories (i.e., more interpersonal- or more technical-oriented), we found statistically significant differences between countries on all of these items. This would indicate that these issues are more interpersonal-oriented. In retrospect, this makes sense because compensation is at the core of the employee-employer exchange relationship (Gerhart & Mikovich, 1992) and is thus likely to be viewed as a more interpersonal-oriented HR practice (Reiche et al., 2012). Alternatively, the differential beliefs in this area may also be a function of the relative lack of academic publications in this area. Deadrick and Gibson (2009) found divergent interests in this HR area, noting that the volume of interest (as evidenced by number of articles published) in compensation

was driven primarily by practitioners. Such a wide gap between practitioner interest and academic publication focus has troubling implications for the progress of EBMgt.

Implications for researchers and practitioners

Given the knowledge gap as well as the cultural sensitivities in HR professionals' beliefs regarding the effectiveness of HR practices, two conclusions are warranted. First, we need to better communicate the existing relevant cumulative research to practitioners across countries. Second, we need more attention to gaps in research from practitioners' point of view, particularly research on the cross-cultural applicability of the mainly U.S.-based research in different contexts (Arvey et al., 2001; Gelfand et al., 200). We offer concrete suggestions to address these conclusions next.

There are several options to improve communication and thus knowledge of our cumulative research. Our results highlight that practitioners are not likely to go to academics to ask for help or to solve their HR problems, nor do they read academic journals, or seek out other ways to gather information or collaborate with the academic community. However, our results indicate that attitudes about collaborating with academics are neutral or somewhat positive. To the extent there is an agreed body of knowledge, EBMgt will require scientific knowledge to be made more accessible to practitioners. One option is more user-friendly publication of scientific knowledge. For example, Locke's (2009) *Handbook of Principles of Organizational Behavior* is a compendium of general principles in science related to the management of people, work, and organizations; it integrates vast amounts of research to draw conclusions so that practitioners do not have to wade into primary studies on their own. The book presents both declarative (what we know) and procedural (how to apply it) knowledge about people management practices in a more accessible manner than academic journals. Latham (2009) undertook a similar effort in *Becoming*

the Evidence-Based Manager. In addition, he included engaging stories and examples of practitioners using evidence-based practices with successful results. These books are excellent, practitioner-friendly, North American publications, but they need a stronger emphasis on cross-cultural differences to increase applicability to HR practitioners outside of North America.

Another opportunity to bridge the science-practice gap is increased personal interaction between academics and practitioners. In her analysis of this gap in management, Bartunek (2007) suggested that it is critical to build social relationships between academics and practitioners in order to narrow the gap (see also March, 2005). Our results indicate that HR practitioners attend multiple national conferences per year, which offer an opportunity for interaction and potential future collaboration. A successful example of such interaction would be the Leading Edge Consortium series, organized by a professional organization for I/O psychologists in the U.S. (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology; www.siop.org). The Leading Edge Consortium Series brings together scientists and practitioners to focus on a single, relevant topic such as high-performance teams, executive coaching, and environmental sustainability at work.

Given our digital society, Guest (2007) observed that Web pages and virtual media may be more appropriate communication channels. A current effort in this regard is "I/O at Work" (www.ioatwork.com), a website whose tagline is "bringing the science behind HR to you." The site is intended to translate recent research in the field of I/O psychology for practitioners. Research is summarized in three to five practitioner-friendly paragraphs. Interaction through social networking sites, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, is also an opportunity to narrow the academic-practice gap. This might not translate to a smaller evidence-practice gap globally, however. Quite naturally, in each country, sources of knowledge vary. For example, given that Finnish HR practitioners tend not to use websites as a source to gather information, websites

might not be effective in Finland and other countries. Also, South Koreans and Spanish HR practitioners are not likely to read sources in English. Thus, materials need to be translated.

The academic literature needs also to be more receptive to the gaps in research from practitioners' point of view. Determining the cross-cultural applicability of research is a clear need. EBMgt advocates use of the "best available scientific evidence" to make decisions, but this evidence is heavily U.S.-based or Western, which affects its credibility outside of the U.S. or Western contexts (Arvey et al., 2001). EBMgt encourages incorporation of evidence from the local context and practitioner judgment. However, the skepticism of non-U.S. academics about our evidence-base (Guest & Zijlstra, 2012) illustrates the enhanced challenge for HR professionals outside of the U.S. to understand if and how this research applies to their culture and to practice EBMgt. Researchers need to ensure that relevant contextual features, including national culture, are investigated to facilitate practitioners' ability to meet this challenge. Given the results of our study, investigation of national culture is particularly important when studying interpersonal-oriented HR practices, such as career development, performance appraisal, and reward allocation.

In addition, we need to give sufficient attention to research significant to practitioners. The new *Academy of Management Discoveries* promises to publish this kind of research; it aims to "present timely evidence about issues currently at the center of public discussions," "replications and extensions of prior findings that improve understanding of a phenomenon's boundary conditions (e.g., replications conducted in new industries and countries)," and "assessments of the effectiveness of organizational interventions." This new journal joins other (e.g., *Human Resource Management*, *Academy of Management Perspectives*) practitioner-oriented scientific journals. The focus on boundary conditions (i.e., replications conducted in new

industries and countries) may be especially important in providing full ecological validity to our HR principles and improving their credibility within the international community of HR professionals. Also, articles in purely academic journals should discuss the practical implications in greater detail to help bridge the science-practice gap. Bartunek and Rynes (2010) argued that even if such implications cannot be immediately implemented, "it is important for academics to keep the potential end-users in mind" (p. 114).

These suggestions to facilitate the clear communication of our cumulative research evidence and to address research gaps relevant to practitioners were discussed in light of what academics can do. However, we emphasize that addressing the science-practice gap and advancing EBMgt is a partnership between researchers and practitioners and will thus require efforts on the part of practitioners as well. In ideal circumstances, practitioners will collaborate with academics to meet their needs for research evidence, for example, by sponsoring research, providing sites for data collection, and assisting academics in discerning the practical implications of the findings.

Limitations and future directions

More replications of the original study by Rynes et al. (2002) are desired (Sanders et al., 2008), and a sample of HR practitioners from three countries with relatively distinct cultures has allowed us to examine whether cultural dimensions explain differences in the research-practice gap between countries. However, our study is not without limitations. The samples from each country might not be entirely comparable because they were gathered using different distribution channels and administered in different languages. In hindsight, administering the survey in English rather than the respondents' native language Finnish or Swedish might have contributed to the low response rate in the Finnish sample. We had chosen to administer it in English as the

professional organization through which the survey was sent had sent other surveys in English as well and was in favor of this. Also, given that we could not control how many potential respondents had received the survey (because the survey was distributed via the professional organization email list and not researchers), the response rate is likely underestimated.

We followed the original survey as closely as possible. This means that some cultural dimensions are more relevant for explaining the HR issues inquired about in the survey. For example, HR professionals in Finland, residing in a more Feminine culture than South Korea or Spain, could have a different view on gender issues or work-life balance issues, but these kinds of items were not part of the original study. Future work might want to consider including HR issues reflecting differences in such dimensions as well as collecting additional information about the organizations in which the HR practitioners reside. Furthermore, future research might also want to consider including items that more clearly reflect the interpersonal and technical aspects.

Our results show a large variation in the beliefs within the samples from the different countries. This variability might be due to contextual factors such as the organizational culture (Gerhart & Fang, 2005), the current HR practices in use and their fit with corporate strategy (Subramony, 2006), in addition to individual background factors. Thus, certain country-level differences might have been statistically significant if we could have controlled for these issues. Also, not being able to control for these and other contextual factors (e.g., organizational culture, industry, organizational life cycle, system of practices) could explain why some of the cross-cultural differences in beliefs did not align with Hofstede's dimensions. Alternatively, they could be due to the limitations of Hofstede's framework (e.g., Ailon, 2008; Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002b; McSweeney, 2002). Given these limitations, future research should validate the robustness of our findings regarding cultural sensitivities of HR practitioner beliefs.

A response to an item "incorrectly" might indicate two different things: One is that the HR professional is not aware of research in this area. Alternatively, the professional may be aware of the scientific evidence but does not believe the research findings, whether in general or with respect to the national/cultural context. Future research could also consider asking whether practitioners would implement certain practices if there were enough evidence indicating that they are effective (i.e., to investigate the knowing-doing gap). Finally, future research could study the consequences of knowledge for HR practitioners and their organizations. It would be interesting to see whether higher knowledge is universally related to "good" outcomes, or whether the benefits would be culturally bound such that, for example, in highly Individualistic cultures, evidence-based knowledge could benefit the HR practitioner career wise more than it would in a culture low in Individualism, or knowledge could be less valued in a low Power Distance country due to value placed on power and status of the person.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that there is much to be done to further a dialogue between academics and practitioners and to advance EBMgt. Our results indicate that there are similarities in the beliefs of HR practitioners in Finland, South Korea, and Spain, comparable to the U.S., the Netherlands, and Australia, which demonstrate a gap in the awareness of scientific knowledge of practitioners, especially in the area of staffing. Furthermore, there are areas in which HR practitioner beliefs differ significantly across various countries and cultures. Given the evidence of these cultural sensitivities in HR professionals' beliefs, we concur with those researchers who have advocated an increased importance and the assessment of contextual factors, such as national culture (e.g., Johns, 2001, 2006; Rousseau & Fried, 2001). As our study

has illustrated, it is difficult to separate HR from the national context. We should simultaneously

"embrace the simplicity of science and the complexity […] of practice" (Dipboye, 2007, p. 96).

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TABLE 1

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions for the Studied Countries (from Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede et al., 2010)

	Power Distance Index[a]	Individualism Index[b]	Masculinity Index[c]	Uncertainty Avoidance Index[d]	Long Term Orientation Index[e]
Finland	33	63	26	59	38
South Korea	60	18	42	85	100
Spain	57	51	39	86	48
the U.S.	40	91	62	46	26
the Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67
Australia	36	90	61	51	21

Notes. [a]*Power Distance* is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

[b]*Individualism* stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: a person is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only. The opposite, *Collectivism* stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

[c]*Masculinity* is the degree to which values like assertiveness, performance, success and competition prevail over values like the quality of life, maintaining warm personal relationships, care for the weak, and solidarity. Femininity is defined as the opposite of masculinity.

[d]*Uncertainty Avoidance* is defined as the extent to which the members of institutions and organizations within a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous, or unstructured situations.

[e]*Long Term Orientation* stands for a society which fosters virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular adaptation, perseverance and thrift. The opposite, *Short Term Orientation* stands for a society which fosters virtues related to the past and present, in particular respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations.

TABLE 2

Mean Percentages for Correctly Answered Items for Each Area[a]

	Finland (34)	South Korea (32)	Spain (34)	ANOVA Mean Difference	the U.S. (35)	the Netherlands (25)	Australia (34)
Management practices	62 %	57 %	65 %	$F(2, 419)$ =11.347***	63 %	63 %	67%
General employment practices	54 %	71 %	61 %	$F(2, 419)$ =9.517***	68 %	64 %	61%
Training & development	68 %	64 %	69 %	$F(2, 419)$ =2.511 *n.s.*	71 %	80 %	77%
Staffing	30 %	34 %	32 %	$F(2, 419)$ =0.809 *n.s.*	39 %	43 %	49%
Compensation & benefits	53 %	55 %	66 %	$F(2, 419)$ =19.533***	50 %	66 %	57%
Total:	52 %	54 %	58 %		57 %	61 %	60%

[a]Notes. The number of items used in each sample is reported in parentheses. *** $p < .001$, *n.s.*= not significant. ANOVA analyses test differences between Finland, South Korea, and Spain only. The U.S. sample (N=959) was published by Rynes et al. (2002); the Dutch sample (N=646) was published by Sanders et al. (2008); the Australian sample (N=89) was published by Carless et al. (2009).

TABLE 3

Practitioner Attitudes towards Academics and HR Research [a]

Attitude	Finland	South Korea	Spain	the U.S.	the Netherlands
I wish I had more time to read about academic HR research findings.	4.21 (.75)	4.10 (.89)	4.14 (.97)	3.91 (1.03)	3.65 (.94)
Most research findings make sense in theory, but don't work well in practice.	2.95 (.98)	4.31 (.83)	3.14 (.93)	3.04 (.84)	2.71 (.76)
I often wish I could call an academic to help me solve HR problems.	2.43 (1.06)	4.16 (.92)	2.56 (1.01)	2.65 (1.07)	*n.a.*
I would like to spend more time talking with academics about HR problems.	3.45 (1.00)	*n.a.*	3.41 (.99)	2.86 (1.09)	3.38 (.92)
I generally don't find academic HR research to be very useful.	2.42 (.91)	*n.a.*	2.50 (1.05)	2.78 (.91)	2.42 (.82)

[a] *Notes:* The table reports means and standard deviations in parentheses. The U.S. sample was published by Rynes et al. (2002) and the Dutch sample was published by Sanders et al. (2008). These items were not published in the Carless et al. (2009) paper.

TABLE 4

Items, Answers Supported by the Research Evidence, and Comparison between Different Samples [a]

Items	Correct answer	Finnish Sample	South Korean Sample	Spanish Sample	ANOVA Mean Difference	Categorization
Management Practices						
1. Leadership training is ineffective because good leaders are born, not made.	FALSE	94 (4)	88 (3)	90 (7)	$F(2, 426)$ =1.09 *n.s.*	Technical
2. The most important requirement for an effective leader is to have an outgoing, enthusiastic personality.	FALSE	69 (6)	61 (7)	71 (6)	$F(2, 426)$ =2.19 *n.s.*	Both
3. Once employees have mastered a task, they perform better when they are told to 'do their best' than when they are given specific, difficult performance goals.	FALSE	66 (15)	72 (8)	79 (7)	$F(2, 426)$ =2.36 *n.s.*	Technical
4. Companies with vision statements perform better than those without them.	TRUE	79 (13)	92 (3)	85 (7)	$F(2, 424)$ =3.81*	Technical
5. Companies with very low rates of professionals' turnover are less profitable than those with moderate turnover rates.	FALSE	47 (33)	30 (30)	54 (19)	$F(2, 426)$ =10.63***	Technical
6. If a company feels it must downsize employees, the most profitable way to do it is through targeted cuts rather than attrition.	TRUE	64 (23)	–	54 (12)	$t(278)$=.14 *n.s.*	Technical
7. In order to be evaluated favorably by line managers, the most important competency for HR managers is the ability to manage change.	TRUE	62 (17)	31 (23)	59 (11)	$F(2, 426)$ =17.91***	Inter-personal
8. On average, encouraging employees to participate in decision-making is more effective for improving organizational performance than setting performance goals.	FALSE	15 (22)	26 (20)	26 (11)	$F(2, 424)$ =2.30 *n.s.*	Technical
General Employment Practices						
9. Most managers give employees lower performance appraisals than they objectively deserve.	FALSE	68 (19)	74 (16)	82 (8)	$F(2, 426)$ =4.87**	Inter-personal
10. Poor performers are generally more realistic about their performance than good performers are.	FALSE	87 (8)	86 (8)	81 (9)	$F(2, 426)$ =.54 *n.s.*	Inter-personal
11. Teams with members from different functional areas are likely to reach better solutions to complex problems than teams from single areas.	TRUE	89 (11)	56 (22)	89 (6)	$F(2, 426)$ =32.32***	Inter-personal

| Items	Correct answer	Finnish Sample	South Korean Sample	Spanish Sample	ANOVA Mean Difference	Categorization
12. Despite the popularity of drug testing, there is no clear evidence that applicants who score positive on drugs tests are any less reliable or productive employees.	FALSE	22 (60)	–	19 (59)	$t(278)=.67$ *n.s.*	Both
13. Most people over evaluate how well they perform on the job.	TRUE	39 (7)	88 (4)	74 (7)	$F(2, 426)$ =40.15***	Inter-personal
14. Most errors in performance appraisals can be eliminated by providing training that describes the kinds of errors managers tend to make and suggesting ways to avoid them.	FALSE	18 (13)	50 (15)	21 (7)	$F(2, 426)$ =23.04***	Inter-personal
Training & Employee Development						
15. Lecture-based training is generally superior to other forms of training delivery.	FALSE	98 (1)	78 (10)	81 (6)	$F(2, 425)$ =5.34**	Both
16. Older adults learn more from training than younger adults.	FALSE	70 (22)	78 (10)	71 (12)	$F(2, 425)$ =1.20 *n.s.*	Both
17. The most important determinant of how much training employees actually use on their jobs is how much they learned during training.	FALSE	49 (26)	60 (15)	59 (17)	$F(2, 425)$ =2.19 *n.s.*	Technical
18. Training for simple skills will be more effective if it presented in one concentrated session than if it is presented in several sessions over time.	FALSE	56 (18)	37 (13)	66 (7)	$F(2, 425)$ =15.90***	Both
Staffing						
19. The most valid employment interviews are designed around each candidate's unique background.	FALSE	41 (15)	54 (9)	29 (7)	$F(2, 426)$ =11.49***	Both
20. Although people use many different terms to describe personalities, there are really only four basic dimensions of personality, as captured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).	FALSE	67 (22)	35 (38)	44 (37)	$F(2, 426)$ =11.04***	Both
21. On average, applicants who answer job advertisements are likely to have higher turnover than those referred by other employees.	TRUE	19 (27)	54 (17)	34 (20)	$F(2, 426)$ =17.24***	Both
22. Being very intelligent is actually a disadvantage for performing well on a low-skilled job.	FALSE	42 (20)	54 (20)	68 (5)	$F(2, 426)$ =9.86***	Inter-personal
23. There is very little difference among personality inventories in terms of how well they predict an applicant's likely job performance.	FALSE	27 (37)	37 (32)	32 (40)	$F(2, 426)$ =1.52 *n.s.*	Technical

Items	Correct answer	Finnish Sample	South Korean Sample	Spanish Sample	ANOVA Mean Difference	Categorization
24. Although there are 'integrity tests' that try to predict whether someone will steal, be absent, or otherwise take advantage of an employer, they don't work well in practice because so many people lie on them.	FALSE	18 (54)	12 (22)	18 (45)	$F(2, 426)$ =1.53 *n.s.*	Technical
25. On average, conscientiousness is a better predictor of job performance than is intelligence.	FALSE	22 (45)	16 (13)	23 (23)	$F(2, 426)$ =1.23 *n.s.*	Both
26. Companies that screen job applicants for values have higher performance than those that screen for intelligence.	FALSE	6 (32)	5 (10)	11 (20)	$F(2, 424)$ =2.41 *n.s.*	Technical
Compensation and Benefits						
27. When pay must be reduced or frozen, there is little a company can do or say to reduce employee dissatisfaction and dysfunctional behaviors.	FALSE	75 (4)	43 (10)	83 (3)	$F(2, 424)$ =37.65***	Inter-personal
28. Most employees prefer to pay on the basis of individual performance rather than on team or organizational performance.	TRUE	61 (11)	42 (16)	73 (5)	$F(2, 425)$ =19.58***	Inter-personal
29. Merit pay systems cause so many problems that companies without them tend to have higher performance than companies with them.	FALSE	59 (28)	67 (18)	85 (8)	$F(2, 426)$ =14.88***	Both
30. There is a positive relationship between the proportion of managers receiving organizationally based pay incentives and company profitability.	TRUE	60 (29)	29 (25)	60 (15)	$F(2, 425)$ =20.08***	Both
31. New companies have a better chance of surviving if all employees receive incentives based on organization-wide performance.	TRUE	54 (32)	66 (19)	67 (12)	$F(2, 425)$ =3.01*	Both
32. Talking about salary issues during performance appraisal tends to hurt morale and future performance.	FALSE	58 (18)	66 (12)	60 (9)	$F(2, 425)$ =1.22 *n.s.*	Inter-personal
33. Most employees prefer variable pay systems (e.g. incentive schemes, gain sharing, stock options) to fixed pay systems.	FALSE	57 (11)	80 (11)	62 (4)	$F(2, 424)$ =9.81***	Inter-personal
34. Surveys that directly ask employees how important pay is to them are likely to overestimate pay's true importance in actual decisions.	FALSE	17 (12)	50 (21)	41 (17)	$F(2, 424)$ =14.60***	Inter-personal

[a] Notes. % Correct (% uncertain). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, *n.s.*= not significant. Finnish sample N = 86; South Korean sample N = 147; Spanish sample N = 196. For the categorization, "both" indicates that the items may include elements of both interpersonal-oriented and technical-oriented aspects of HR.
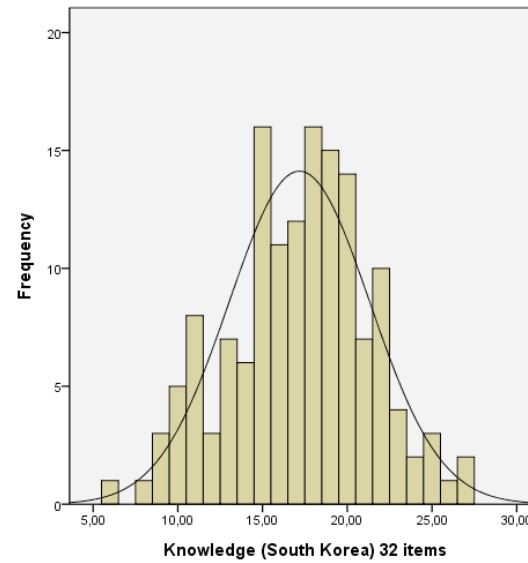
FIGURE1

Histograms of HRM Knowledge Scores
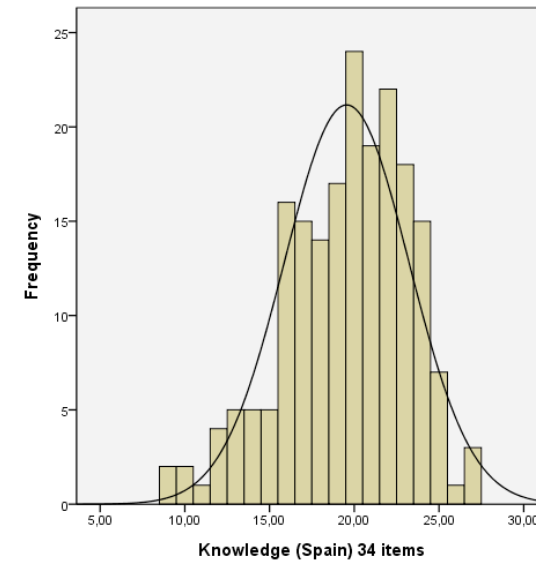

(a) Finnish Sample
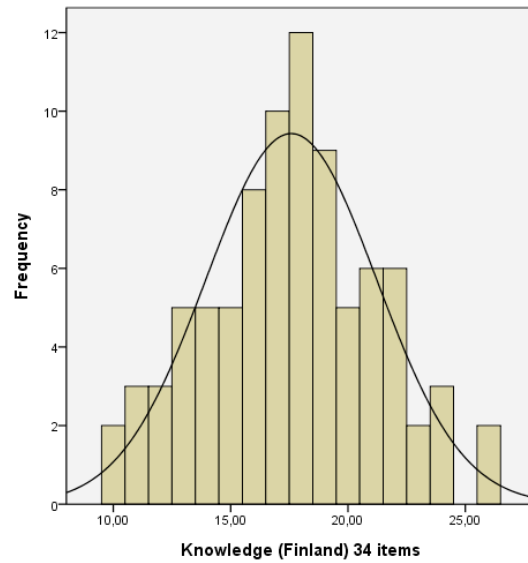
N=86
Mean=17.58
SD=3.64

(b) South Korean Sample

N=147
Mean=17.18
SD=4.15

(c) Spanish Sample

N=195
Mean=19.55
SD=3.68

ENDNOTES

[1] Sample Demographics for **Finland** (N = 86): *Gender*: Male n = 13 (15.1%), Female n = 73 (84.9%);

Job Title: Manager n = 50 (58.1%), Director n = 22 (25.6%), VP n = 7 (8.1%), SVP n = 3 (3.5%),

Other n = 4 (4.7%); *Education*: Vocational school n = 2 (2.3%), Bachelor's n = 19 (22.1%), Master's

n = 62 (72.1%), PhD n = 3 (3.5%); *Major in HR-related subject*: No n = 50 (58.1%), Yes n = 36

(41.9%); *Experience in HR (average)*: 11.9 years (SD = 7.23); *Size of the organization (average)*:

6,737 persons (SD = 16.76); *Approach to HR*: Do not change our HR practices very often n = 31

(36.9%), Adapt new HR practices shortly after they have been tried by other companies n = 38

(45.2%), First to adapt new or innovative HR practices n = 15 (17.9%). Sample Demographics for

South Korea (N = 147): *Gender*: Male n = 120 (81.6%), Female n = 27 (18.4%); *Job Title*: Manager

n = 73 (50.3%), Assistant Manager n = 32 (22.1%), General Manager n = 30 (20.7%), Chief HR

Officer n = 3 (2.1%), Other n= 9 (6.1%); *Education*: Junior college n = 2 (1.4%), Bachelor's n = 91

(62.3%), Master's n = 49 (33.6%), PhD n = 4 (2.7%); *Major in HR-related subject*: No n = 65

(44.2%), Yes n = 81 (55.1%); *Experience in HR (average)*: 6.65 years (SD = 4.79); *Size of the*

organization (average): 5,301 employees (SD = 9,807); *Approach to HR*: Do not change our HR

practices very often n = 57 (38.8%), Adapt new HR practices shortly after they have been tried by

other companies n = 49 (33.3%), First to adapt new or innovative HR practices n = 41 (27.9%).

Sample Demographics for **Spain** (N = 195): *Gender*: Male n = 99 (57.9%), Female n = 72 (42.1);

Job Title: Manager n = 65 (37.6%), Director n = 85 (49.1%), VP n = 7 (3.6%), Other n = 16 (9.2%);

Education: High school n = 52 (29.9%), Bachelor's n = 117 (67.2%), Master's n = 5 (2.9%); *Major*

in HR-related subject: No n = 111 (63.8%), Yes n = 63 (32.3%); *Experience in HR (average)*: 13.33

years (SD = 6.29); *Size of the organization (average)*: 15,434 employees (SD = 47,561); *Approach*

to HR: Do not change our HR practices very often n = 61 (34.5%), Adapt new HR practices shortly

after they have been tried by other companies n = 73 (41.2%), First to adapt new or innovative HR

practices n = 43 (24.3%). Valid percentages reported.

According to the available information, the demographics of the respondents are rather representative of

the population of HR professionals in the three countries. According to the statistics of the Finnish

Association for Human Resource Management (HENRY ry, 2013) 84.3% of the HR professionals in Finland are female, 15.7% male (84.9%; 15.1% in our sample). As for their major, 42.0% have majored in HR-related subject and 58.0% have not (41.9%; 58.1% in our sample). Further, most of the HR professionals operate in the private sector (74.6%), the rest (25.4%) in the public or other sector (77.9%; 22.1% in our sample). In South Korea, according to the statistics provided by Kwon, Kim, & Kim (2012), 88.0% of the HR professionals are male and 12.0% are female based on 404 HR managers (81.6%; 18.4% in our sample); most of them hold a Bachelor's degree (average = 3.04, SD = .64 when education level was coded as 1 = High school diploma; 2 = Junior college; 3 = Bachelor's degrees; 4 = Master's degrees, 5 = PhD) which is similar to our sample [Junior college n = 2 (1.4%), Bachelor's n = 91 (62.3%), Master's n = 49 (33.6%), PhD n = 4 (2.7%)]; and they have on average 8.76 (SD = 6.31) years of experience in HR, which is also similar to our Korean sample (average = 6.65, SD = 4.79 in our sample). According to PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2012), most HR managers (70%) in Spain are male, similarly as in our sample (57.9%). Most HR managers that participated in the Cranet survey had a University degree (90%; Cunha, Obeso, & Cunha, 2004), which is somewhat higher than what we found in our study (70.1%). Both of these figures can be somewhat higher because they focus on HR managers and not HR professionals in total.