



STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN CHINESE COMPANIES OPERATING IN BANGLADESH: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Bangladesh geographical location, economic and population fundamentals, has attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) that allows it to fully participate in regional and continental development based on partnerships with its neighbors especially China. China viewed Bangladesh as a crucial and vital partner to its regional development plans especially to its land locked western region. These led to Chinese companies entering the Bangladesh economic sectors to invest and execute projects. However, there operations faced problems in managing the human resources especially the indigenous workers working together with their Chinese counterparts. The aim of this research work is to examine the issues and challenges pertaining to strategic human resource management in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh business environment across all sectors. This study was limited to the Perception of the various HR specialist and Professionals working with the Chinese companies and businesses within the various sectors of the Bangladesh business environment. Interviews were used as the mono qualitative methodology for this study. The results highlighted the issues and challenging areas that influence the strategies required for managing HR in Chinese companies in Bangladesh based on similarities and differences, which ultimately affect the human resources management in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Business, China, Collaborations, Human Resources, Strategy, Sectors



INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a South Asian country with the world's eighth ranked population with about 168,065,920 people and the fifth in Asia by population. It shares land borders with India and Myanmar (worldometers.info). Nepal, Bhutan, and China are also its close neighbours but do not share a border with it (Jha, 2016), but its geographical location is vital to India, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. Dhaka is its capital and largest city, followed by Chittagong, which has the country's largest port. Bangladesh forms the largest and easternmost part of the Bengal region (Eyetsemitan and Gire, 2003). Since 2004, Bangladesh averaged a GDP growth of 6.5% that is driven by its exports of ready-made garments, remittances, and the domestic agricultural sector. The country has pursued export-oriented industrialization; with its key export sectors include textiles, shipbuilding, fish and seafood, jute and leather goods. It has also developed self-sufficient industries in pharmaceuticals, steel and food processing. Bangladesh's telecommunication industry has witnessed rapid growth over the years, receiving high investment from foreign companies. Bangladesh also has substantial reserves of natural gas and is Asia's seventh largest gas producer. Offshore exploration activities are increasing in its maritime territory in the Bay of Bengal. It also has large deposits of limestone (Daily Star, 2012). The government promotes the Digital Bangladesh scheme as part of its efforts to develop the country's growing information technology sector. In 2016, per-capita income was estimated at US\$3,840 (PPP) as per IMF data and US\$1,466 – Nominal (Daily Star, 2015). These facts have given Bangladesh the potentials to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and to participate fully in regional development in partnership with its neighbors. These economic and population fundamentals (see figure 1-1 and 1-2) made Bangladesh an important and strategic partner for regional and international development with its neighbours and the continent at large. Such development collaborations include:

- i. Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum (BCIM) for Regional Cooperation;
- ii. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI);
- iii. D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.
- iv. The Asia Development Bank (ADB);
- v. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB);
- vi. The International Monetary Fund (IMF);
- vii. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC);
- viii. The World Bank (WB);
- ix. The World Trade Organisation (WTO);

China is being acknowledged to play a leading and significant role in these regional development efforts such as the BCIM, BRI, ADB, and AIIB. As such, it viewed Bangladesh as a

crucial and vital partner to the success of these collaborations for regional development. These led to Chinese companies entering the Bangladesh economic sectors to invest and execute projects based on/within these frameworks and the bilateral relationship between the two countries. As a market-based economy that is the 43rd largest in the world in nominal terms, and 30th largest by purchasing power parity, Bangladesh is classified among the Next-11 emerging market middle-income economies and a Frontier market. According to the IMF, Bangladesh's economy is the second fastest growing major economy of 2016, with a rate of 7.1% (Dhaka Tribune, 2014; Devnath, 2016). Dhaka and Chittagong are the principal financial centers of the country, being home to the Dhaka Stock Exchange and the Chittagong Stock Exchange. The financial sector of Bangladesh is the second largest in the subcontinent (ibid). According to the World Bankdata, Bangladesh's GDP is approximately \$250 billion (US dollars). The figures below show the population history of Bangladesh and its GDP from 1960 upwards.

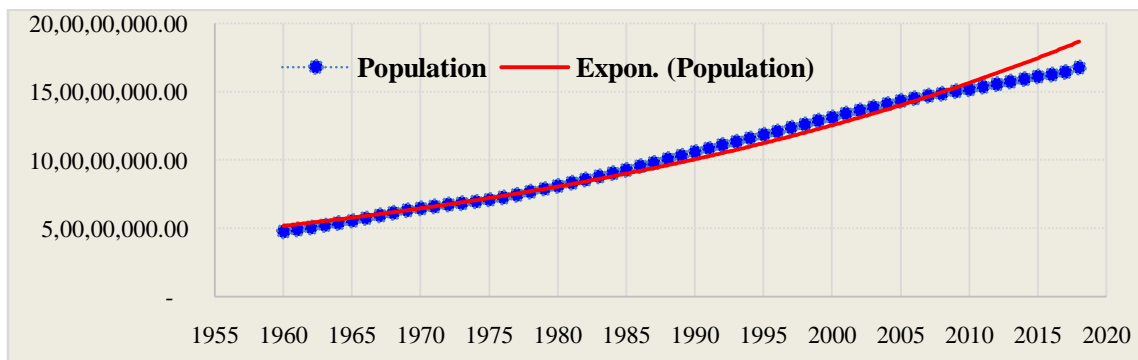


Figure 1: Population Growth of Bangladesh

Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/>

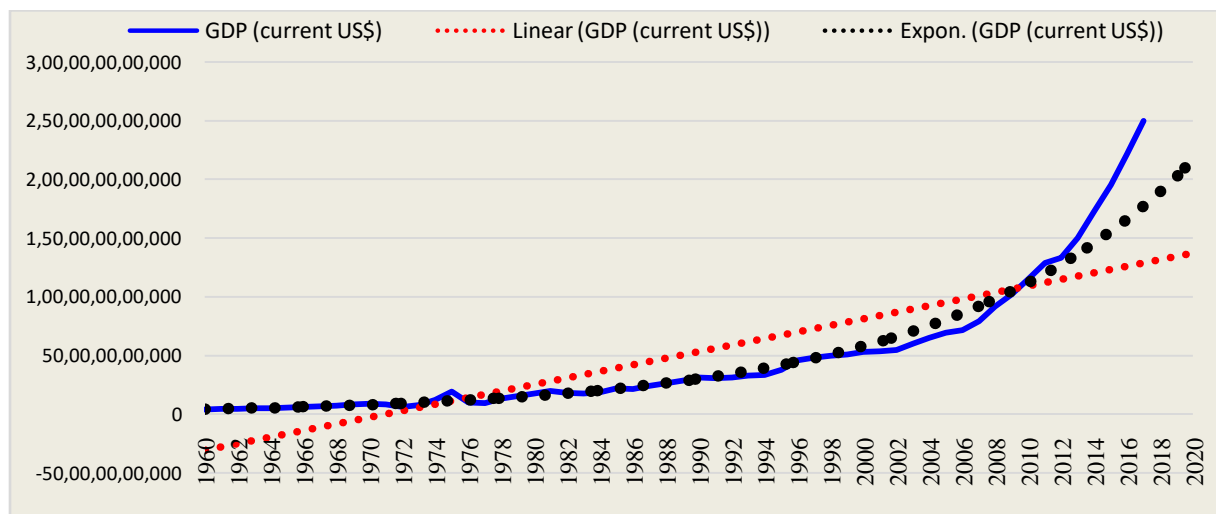


Figure 2: Bangladesh GDP (current US\$)

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

Research Problem

The Bangladesh economy faces challenges of infrastructure bottlenecks, insufficient power and gas supplies, bureaucratic corruption, political instability, natural calamities and a lack of skilled workers (Daily Star, 2015). Mahmood and Nurul Absar (2015) concluded that while developments in Human Resource Management (HRM) are obvious, but developments in different functional areas of HRM are not even. Both high commitment HRM practices (development-oriented) and high-performance HRM practices (cost-focused) are now emerging to some extent in private sector organizations. The effectiveness of those practices usually varies based on industry, sector, markets, and competitiveness of the Bangladesh economy. Previous research works has focused on analyzing and improving inter-cultural encounters within organizations (Gelfand *et al.*, 2007).

Cross-cultural challenges warranting Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) within the human resources or work teams were not new. Black and Mendenhall (1990) opined that work-related cross-cultural interactions are not always successful. Studies have found that 16 to 40 percent of all expatriate managers who are given foreign assignments end these assignments early because of their poor performance or their inability to adjust to the foreign environment (Baker & Ivancevich, 1971; Black, 1988; Dunbar & Ehrlich, 1986; Tung, 1981). In addition, as high as 50 percent of those who do not return early, function at a low level of effectiveness (Copeland & Griggs, 1985). Other studies have found that negotiations between businesspersons and or executives of different cultures often fail because of problems related to cross-cultural differences (Adler, 1986; Black, 1987; Graham, 1985; Tung, 1984).

In order to understand and improve one's ability to behave effectively in different cultural settings, a reliable and valid measure of one's understanding of cultural diversity is essential. Until recently, there has been a "gap in our understanding of why some individuals are more effective than others in culturally diverse situations" (Ang *et al.*, 2007). In addition, the priorities of collaboration across various sectors may differ between the Bangladesh government and the Chinese companies. On the government side, there may be sector prioritization, development policies, sensitivity of some sectors and regulations (Laws); whereas, the Chinese companies may prioritize their return on investment, individual key strength areas, organizational missions, targets, objectives and the effects of globalization on international projects or operations. These divergent priorities may hinder and influence HR teams, their management, performances, successes and failures. Which will ultimately affect the Chinese companies within the Bangladesh business environment across sectors.

Research Aim, Scope and Delimitations

The aim of this research work is to examine the issues and challenges pertaining to strategic human resource management in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh business environment across all sectors. This study was limited to the Perception of the various HR specialist and Professionals working with the Chinese companies and businesses within the various sectors of the Bangladesh business environment.

THEORETICAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The nature of the research problem and research aim, which is wholly on the issues and challenges pertaining to strategic human resource management of Chinese companies and businesses across various sectors in Bangladesh led to review and adoption of organization theory, Resource based theory and Performance theory as the focal point for the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework.

Organization Theory

Organization theory developed over many decades with many authors contributing to organization theory. Researchers and research works Hatch (2018), Hendrickson (1992), attribute the foundation of organization theory to key scholars such as Taylor (1914), Fayol (1919), Weber (1922), among others. Organization theory describes the organizational designs and organizational structures, relationship of organizations with their external environment, and the behavior of managers and technocrats within organizations. It suggests ways in which an organization can cope with rapid change” (Taylor, 1914). Current ideas in organization theory focus on organizational challenges such as competitive global market or globalization, demographic changes, social responsibility, diversity, and technological developments. Organizations are complex and varied and apply processes, structure, and decision-making differently from each other. Crowther and Green (2004) stated that, “the earliest approach to organization theory was based on the assumption that there was a single best way of organizing the factors of production, and was brought about by the increasing size and complexity of organizations. Initially it was based upon the organization of jobs within the organization but later changed to organizing functions either within the organization or within the wider environment in which the organization operates”. They described various approaches that were applied in organization theory over time. These include, Critical Approach, Postmodern Approach, Social Constructionism, and Environmentalism. They observed that organizations are an integral part of society and concluded that the problems of organizing is yet to be solved despite the extensive development of theory, as each theory only contains a partial solution.

Other authors added that numerous challenges, such as “globalization, diversity, ethical concerns, rapid advances in technology, the rise of e-business, a shift to knowledge and information as organizations' most important form of capital and the growing expectations of workers for meaningful work and opportunities for personal and professional growth”. These require new responses or approaches to the problems faced by organizations (Taylor, 1914; Fayol, 1919; Crowther & Green; 2004). Given this explication, it is established that organization theory (understanding organization design, structures, relationships, and behavior of managers and technocrats within the organization) is necessary when designing solutions for problems that affect the organization. It is relevant that each business, terrain, region, country and or environment influences how companies operate, perform and survive. As such, they altogether assists organizations in executing business plans and realizing business goals. Past projects, operations or collaborations provide experiences for new tasks. Organizations must objectively evaluate all new tasks for selection and prioritized to be delivered or terminated and or de-prioritized. This will enable resources allocation to the active and performing projects and business components. This applies to all Chinese companies (organizations) operating in Bangladesh business environment. It can be concluded from this discussion that there is a cohesive relationship between organization theory and Projects, operations, businesses and collaboration projects across international borders (Jeffs C., 2008; www.pmi.org; Koskela & Howell, 2002).

Resource Based Theory / Approach / View

The resource-based theory (RBT) comprises a rising and dominant area of the strategy literature that addresses the question of an organization s identity and it is principally concerned with the source and nature of strategic capabilities. The resource-based perspective has an intra-organisational focus and argues that performance is a result of firm-specific resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). The basis of the resource-based view is that successful firms will find their future competitiveness on the development of distinctive and unique capabilities, which may often be implicit or intangible in nature (see Teece et al. 1991). Other relevant concepts and literature on RBT includes:

Strategy is defined by the firm s unique resources and capabilities (Rumelt, 1984); A potential of strategy will sustain a profitable market position based on an organisation capacity to harness its underlying resources and capabilities (Conner, 1991; as cited by Theriou, 2009). Strategy research tries to explain macro (firm) phenomena on the basis of independent variables that are usually also collective firm variables which may be firm resources and capabilities, organizational routines (Molina-Azorín, 2014); Firms can create

and sustain competitive advantages through the collection and integration of rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991; Sirmon et al., 2011). This theory has become important for business, strategic and management research due to its ability to deconstruct the sources of a firm's competitive advantage both internally and across cooperative partnerships; Operations Management research has continued to develop RBT by focusing on the processes within and across firms that can collectively create, or destroy, competitive advantages (Hitt et al., 2015).

Stemming from Penrose's classic work on how firms grow (Penrose, 1959), the Resource Based Views (RBV) examines how an organization's resources drive competitive advantage. The RBV assumes that resources and capabilities are not uniform across competing organizations, and uses this heterogeneity to explain differences in organizational success rates. (Killen et al., 2012). According to the RBV, resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) or valuable, rare, inimitable, and involve organizational focus and support (VRIO), form the best basis for sustainable competitive advantage by being difficult for other organizations to copy or acquire (Barney, 1991, 2001; Priem and Butler, 2001; Wernerfelt, 1984). However, only a handful of a company's assets are strategic assets that contribute to its competitive advantage (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). Examples of strategic resources include intellectual property rights, reputation, brand, and culture (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2002; Kaplan et al., 2001; Kogut, 2000; Nonaka, 1994). The figure below shows how organizational resources interact in RBV concept.

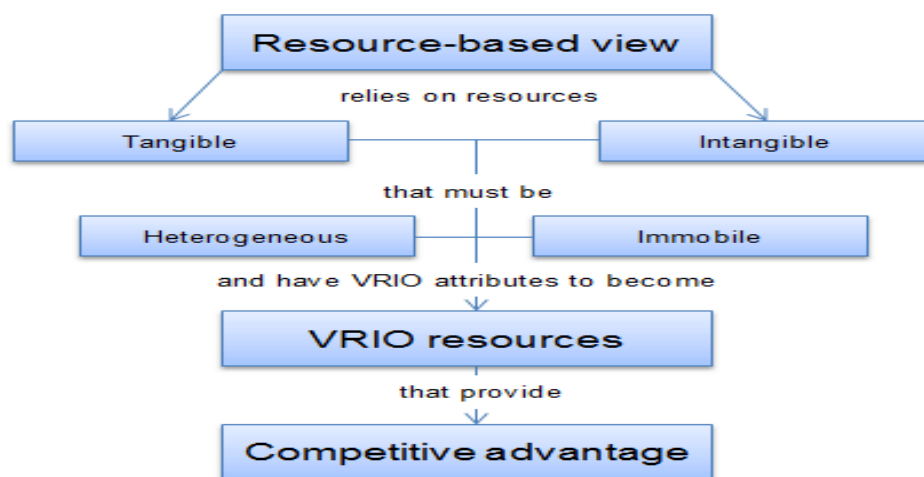


Figure 3: Organizational resources interact in RBV

Source: www.strategicmanagementinsight.com

Such strategic assets involve explicit and tacit knowledge that is embedded in a company's unique skills, knowledge, resources, and ways of working (Rumelt et al., 1994). These intangible resources are more likely to serve as sources for competitive advantage than tangible resources (Brush et al., 2001; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Ray et al., 2004), as knowledge-based resources are embedded in a company's unique skills, knowledge, and ways of working (Foss, 1997; Molloy et al., 2011). The RBV has gathered momentum over the past three decades and continues to hold merit as an influential, popular, and fruitful area of strategy research (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Verona, 1999). The related VRIN and VRIO frameworks are widely used in empirical studies on strategic assets (Barney et al., 2011; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Newbert, 2007; Ray et al., 2004). As the RBV has matured and become a well-established theory, some authors prefer the label RBT (Resource-based Theory) and a special issue of the Journal of Management was recently devoted to its future (Barney et al., 2011).

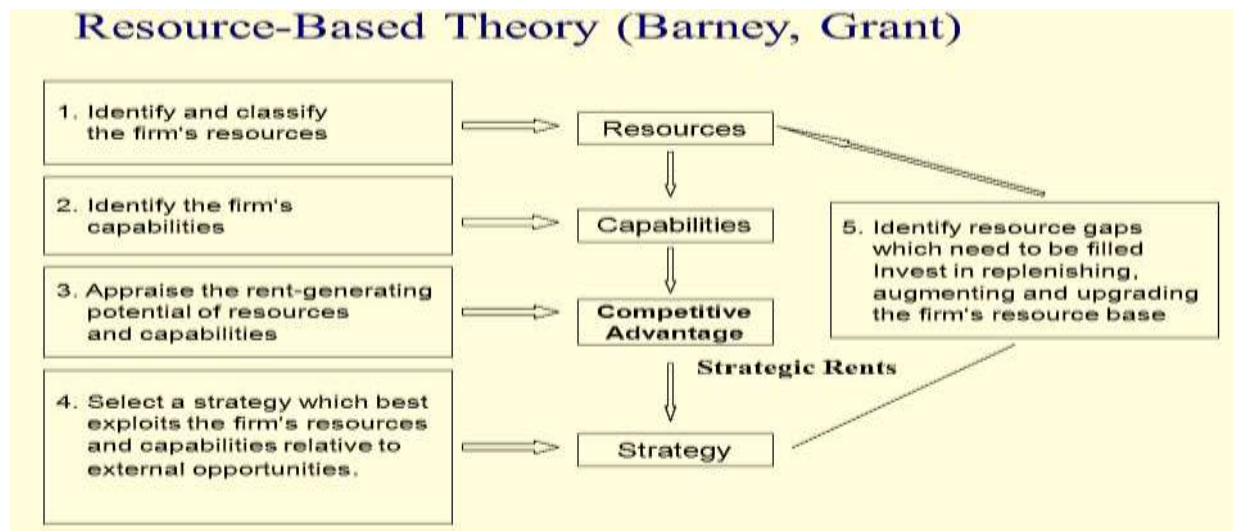


Figure 4: Resource Based Theory Concept

Source: Barney 1991, 2001

According to Theriou et al., (2009), the resource-based view comprises a rising, dominant area of the strategy literature that addresses the question of an organization's identity, and it is principally concerned with the source and nature of strategic capabilities. The resource-based perspective has an intra-organisational focus and argues that performance is a result of firm-specific resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). The basis of the resource-based view is that successful firms will find their future competitiveness on the development of distinctive and unique capabilities, which may often be implicit or intangible in nature (Teece et al. 1991).

Performance Theory

The understanding Rationale for a Theory of Performance is based on the premise that Humans are capable of extraordinary accomplishments (Wiske, 1998). Though, not easy, but because they are hard, every goal will serve to organize and measure the best of skills. Organizational Learning informs learning by organizations through the idea of examining the “level of performance” of the organization. To perform is to take a complex series of actions that integrate skills and knowledge to produce a valuable result. Performance, as the adage goes, is a “journey not a destination.” The location in the journey is labelled as level of performance.” Each level characterizes the effectiveness or quality of a performance (Elger, n.d.). These perspectives are not mutually exclusive but approach the performance phenomenon from different angles which complement one another (Sonntag & Frese, 2002). Agarwal (2011) stated that there is no single universally accepted model of performance management. Various experts have explained the concept in their own ways. Mabey et al.,(1999) has prescribed the performance model in the form of ‘performance management cycle’. This cycle has five elements, which suggest how performance management system were implemented in an organization, and it includes Setting of objectives, measuring the performance, Feedback of performance results, Reward system based on performance outcomes and Amendments to objectives and activities.



Figure 5: Performance management cycle

Source: Author, 2019 based on Mabey *et al.*,(Mabey et al., 1999).

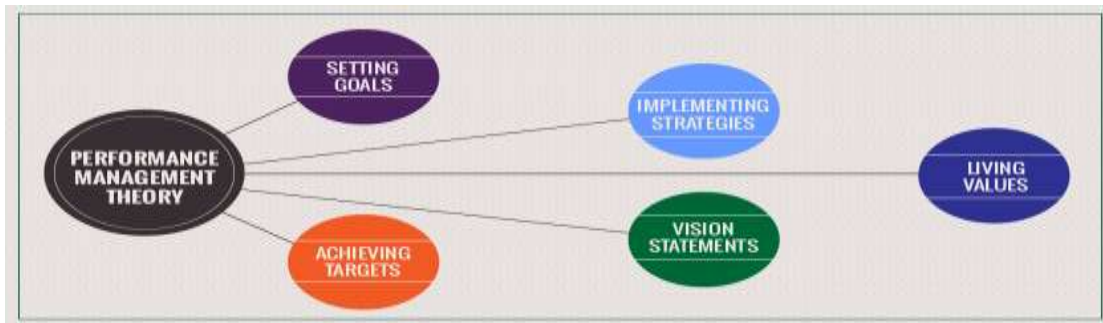


Figure 6: Performance Management theory

Source: www.performancemagazine.org

The conceptual approach relevant to this study is to address the outlined research problems, leading to use of organization theory, Resource Based theory and Performance theory to structure the conceptual flow of this study. Altogether, these theories were central to the research concepts used in this study to ascertain the issues and challenges regarding the strategic human resource management in Chinese companies in Bangladesh business environment. The reviewed literature relates how these theories influences the study. These also shapes the methodological step which outline the necessary method analogy to examine, evaluate and assess data obtained for the performances of Chinese companies in Bangladesh business environment.

Bangladesh: FDI from Multi-National Companies and Regional Development

Bangladesh with a population of 168 million, arable agricultural land, forest reserves, natural gas deposits, and a growing economy has provided the requisite potentials to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) from all over the world and its geography made it a vital country to participate fully in regional development in partnership with its neighbours. Gross FDI inflows during the fiscal year 2016-17 reached US\$ 3037.92 million. The size of disinvestment (including capital repatriation, reverse investment, loans to parents, and repayments of intra-company loans to parents) during the fiscal year 2016-17 recorded US\$ 583.11 million that was 19.19% of gross FDI inflows. Hence, net FDI inflows in Bangladesh during the fiscal year 2016-17 were US\$ 2454.81 million. Gross FDI inflows during the quarters July-September, October-December, January-March and April-June of the fiscal year 2016-17 were US\$ 705.78 million, US\$ 1035.58 million, US\$ 652.59 million and US\$ 643.97 million respectively. The sectors that attracted maximum FDI (Net Inflows) for the fiscal year 2016-17 include Telecommunication (US\$ 593.89 million), Textiles & Wearing (US\$ 360.35 million), Power (US\$ 334.26 million), Banking (US\$ 155.58 million) and Gas & Petroleum (US\$ 133.67 million) which were 24.19%, 14.68%, 13.62%, 6.34% and 5.45% respectively towards the contribution of total net FDI inflows (Bank of Bangladesh, 2017).

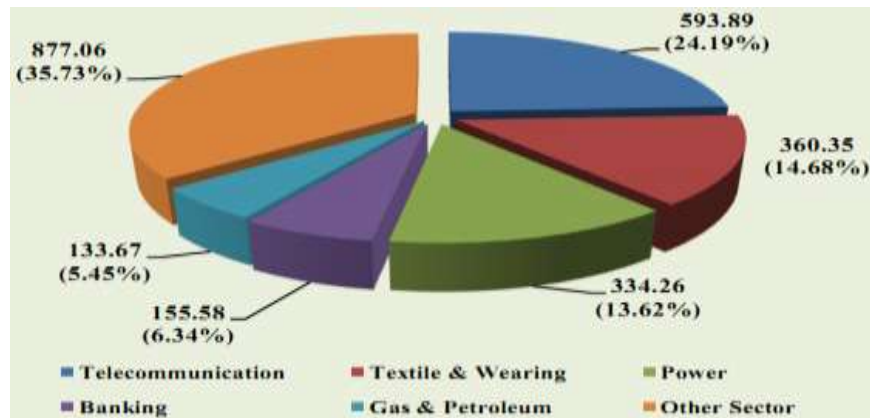


Figure 7: FDI Inflows (Net) by Major sectors during FY 2017 (In million US\$)

Source: Bank of Bangladesh, 2017

The Asia Development Bank (ADB) report of April 2018 stated that since 1973, ADB has approved \$20.4 billion for 279 loans, \$258.4 million for 432 technical assistance projects, and \$787.1 million for 35 grants to Bangladesh. ADB provided the following assistance to Bangladesh:

- Projects contributing to regional connectivity, which will foster the development of economic zones and corridors.
- Develop Bangladesh's road and rail networks, seaports, and urban mass transport systems.
- Enhance power and energy transmission and distribution, develop renewable energy plants and encourage regional grid interconnection.
- Deliver improved education and skills development, primary health care services, water and municipal services, rural infrastructure, and water resource management.
- Continue to foster public-private partnerships and develop small and medium-sized enterprises. Gender mainstreaming, governance and institutional strengthening, and climate change mitigation and adaptation will all remain major pillars for ADB operations in Bangladesh (ADB, 2018).

Moreover, the market economy, population, and geographical location have made Bangladesh be of strategic importance to its neighbors. These have led to Bangladesh to be a very important participant, partner and crucial member in Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum (BCIM) for Regional Cooperation; Belt and Road Initiative; The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank; The World Trade Organisation; The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

The most notable of the above were the Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum (BCIM) for Regional Cooperation, and or within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These are

regionally based economic development concepts driven by partnerships that are mutually beneficial to all participating countries. Bangladesh is one of the three key countries expected to be the biggest beneficiaries of China-led \$1.5 trillion 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), reports Tokyo-based Nomura. Bangladesh, it says, is set to receive a total investment of \$38 billion, equivalent to 15 percent of its 2017 gross domestic product (GDP), under the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor, which is aimed at improving land, rail, water, and air interconnection among the four countries (en.prothomalo.com). The Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM) is a sub-regional organization of Asian nations aimed at the greater integration of trade and investment between the four countries (Xinhua News, 2012; International, 2012). The Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor is an initiative conceptualized for significant gains through sub-regional economic cooperation within the BCIM. The multi-modal corridor will be the first expressway between India and China and will pass through Myanmar and Bangladesh (Saibal, 2013; Observer Research Foundation n.d.) The BCIM forum and the BRI has many mutual advantages envisaged as follows:

- Greater market access for goods, services, and energy,
- Elimination of non-tariff barriers,
- Better trade facilitation,
- Investment in infrastructure development,
- Joint exploration and development of mineral, water, and other natural resources,
- Development of value and supply chains based on comparative advantages, by translating comparative advantages into competitive advantages, and through closer people to people contact (Rahman Mustafizur, n.d).



Figure 8: *BCIM economic corridor beneficial for the region's economy*

Source: <https://images.search.yahoo.com/> and post.jagran.com

The proposed BCIM corridor will cover 1.65 million square kilometers, encompassing an estimated 440 million people in China's Yunnan province, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and West

Bengal in Eastern India through the combination of road, rail, water and air linkages in the region. This interconnectedness would facilitate the cross-border flow of people and goods, minimize overland trade obstacles, ensure greater market access and increase multilateral trade (Dezan Shira & Associates, n.d.). The construction of industrial zones will have a twofold benefit. Firstly, it will lead to industrial transfer boosting industries such as processing, manufacturing and commerce logistics. Secondly, as labor costs rise in China, labor-intensive industries such as textile and agro-processing will eventually be shifted out of China. These industries will need to be transferred to new regions with lower labor costs. Companies operating in China will likely give priority to the trade corridor region given its established infrastructure, improved logistics and ease of access (Dezan Shira and Associates, n.d.; Lal Neeta, 2013). India has isolated eastern and northeastern states stand to gain by higher trade and connectivity with China and the rest of Asia Lal Neeta, 2013). As such, Bangladesh is strategically important for the economies of Northeast India, Nepal and Bhutan, as Bangladeshi seaports provide maritime access for these landlocked regions and countries (Daily Star, 2013; Dhaka Tribune, 2013; Financial Express, 2013).



Figure 9: Opportunities for Bangladesh in the BRCIM Forum and the BRI Initiative

Source: media.dhakatribune.com

China views Bangladesh as a potential gateway for its landlocked southwest, including Tibet, Sichuan, and Yunnan. All these have led to various investments by the Chinese government, its' companies, and businesses in various economic sectors in Bangladesh. However, these Chinese companies must take (or have taken) into cognizance the labor laws, the available Human resources, the level of human capacity, the business terrain and the cultural ramifications of the Bangladesh workforce. These will necessitate a strategic approach to the

human resources management from the cultural point of view and other perspectives that will impact their organizational operations.

These organizational or entrepreneurial orientation (EO) approaches beyond international borders comes with Risk taking propensity, Pro-activeness, Competitive aggressiveness with autonomy relies heavily on collaborations, readiness and friendly partnerships among countries. Altogether, they serve as the backbone for Chinese companies decisions to invest and or partake in various sectors of Bangladesh economy such as Agricultural Sector, Banking & Financial Sector, Construction Sector, Defence and Security Sector, Education Sector, Energy and Power Sector, ICT Sector, and Sports and Tourism Sector. They performed satisfactorily / fair across four sectors namely Health Sector, Manufacturing Sector, Natural Resources and Mining Sector, and Transportation Sector.

Globalization effects on Chinese Companies Human Resource Management in Bangladesh

Globalization has resulted in a growing prevalence of international organizations, rising numbers of employees participating in international assignments and an increase in multicultural teams operating in home countries. Accordingly, an ability to interact with people of different cultures has become especially important to organizational well-being generally, and to international organizations in particular (Dalton & Daily, 2000 as cited by Yousofpourfard, 2010). Black and Mendenhall (1990) stated that increased internationalization in the economic, political, and social arenas has led to a greater frequency of, and depth in, cross-cultural interactions (contacts between two or more people from different cultural backgrounds). These interactions occur in a variety of work-related situations, including short-term business trips to foreign countries, long-term overseas assignments, and even work in one organization.

International business issues which have been identified as among the most important critical strategic issues facing organizations (Hoffman & Gopinath, 1994) continue to be a point of focus for organizations as they join the global market (Tsui et al., 2007). Globalization and international business have reduced boundaries across nations, leading to what has been described as an increasingly "flat world" (Friedman, 2005), necessitating greater cross-cultural understanding. Not surprisingly, then, cultural studies have become increasingly prevalent (Yousofpourfard, 2010). More teams in organizations are becoming multicultural (Adler, 2002) and global teams have grown to be a source of competitive advantage (Kirkman et al., 2001). Because of the growing cultural diversity in the workforce, and its accompanying challenges e.g. conflict in culturally diverse teams (Jehn et al., 1999). Within-team cultural diversity continues to be of considerable interest to scholars and practitioners alike (Yousofpourfard, 2010).

These have buttressed the need to manage human resources strategically especially in a deep culturally rooted country like Bangladesh. As such, the Chinese investors and other Multi-National Companies (MNCs), through their Human Resource Managers must adopt and implement strategies that will lead to harmony and effective performance of workers employed. This is called Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Boxall et al., (2007) as cited by Lengnick-Hall et al., (2009) distinguish among three major subfields of human resource management (HRM): micro HRM (MHRM), strategic HRM (SHRM), and international HRM (IHRM). Micro HRM covers the sub-functions of HR policy and practice and consists of two main categories: one with managing individuals and small groups (e.g., recruitment, selection, induction, training and development, performance management, and remuneration) and the other with managing work organization and employee voice systems (including union-management relations). Strategic HRM covers the overall HR strategies adopted by business units and companies and tries to measure their impacts on performance. Within this domain, both design and execution issues are examined. International HRM covers HRM in companies operating across national boundaries.

SHRM has been defined as the planned pattern of human resource (i.e., workforce) and human resource management (i.e., functional) deployments and activities intended to enable the organization to meet organizational goals and objectives (Wright & McMahan, 1992; McMahan et al., 1999). SHRM research has primarily focused on evaluating the linkages among organizational strategies, SHRM (e.g., human resource management (HRM) policies, practices, systems, etc.), and organizational effectiveness (Chadwick & Cappelli, 1999; Wright & Sherman, 1999).

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) focuses on aligning internally consistent human resource management (HRM) practices to build employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities in an effort to support competitive strategies and achieve business objectives (Huselid et al., 1997; Becker & Huselid, 1999; Wright & Snell, 1991). SHRM is gaining increasing importance because strategic management, in a knowledge-based economy, emphasizes that employees are considered to be a primary component for attaining a competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 1998; Hitt et al., 1998). In this environment, the adoption of appropriate HRM practices is important to ensure effective strategy implementation (Shaw et al., 2002). HRM practices create procedures that institutionalize the building of employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities throughout the organization to promote valued, unique, and difficult to imitate organizational competencies that support competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research involves the collection of information (Saunders *et al.*, 2016) in a ‘systematic way’ based on logical relationships and not just beliefs (Ghauri, and Grønhaug, 2010). Easterby-Smith *et al.*’s (2012) point regarding the use of knowledge from other disciplines, it also emphasises that the research ‘cannot be reduced to any sum of parts framed in terms of contributions to associated disciplines’. In particular, this is vital as practical knowledge through which research on business and managerial practice are correlated (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). Research method adopted in this study is shown in the figure below.

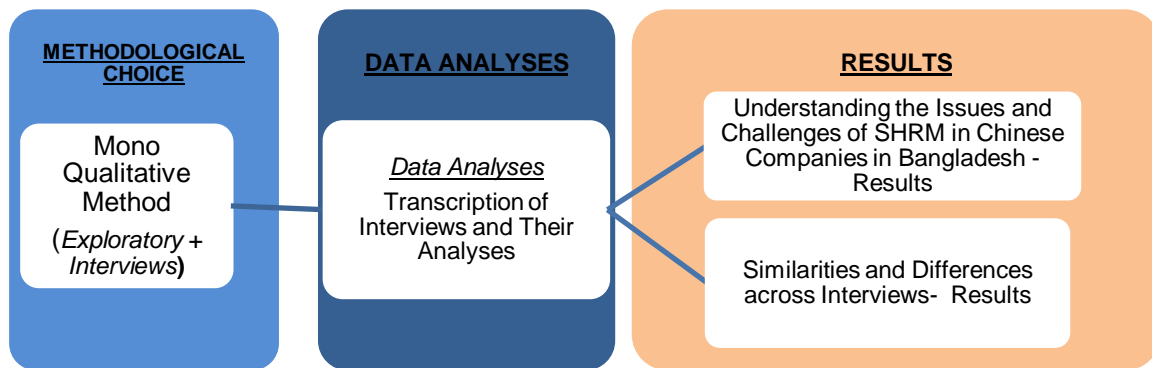


Figure 10: Research Methodological Framework

The data collection methods comprises of the Secondary and the primary sources of data. The secondary sources involves the review of existing literature to acquire an in-depth understanding of relevant issues related to the subject matter. The required information for this part was obtained from Textbooks, Published national and international journals, reports, magazines, Newspapers, Conference proceedings, etc., that are relevant to the topic.

The primary sources that is the use of questionnaires survey techniques for this study; called the *Mono Qualitative Method* (MQM). The purpose of qualitative research is based on “researcher immersion in the phenomenon to be studied, gathering data which provide a detailed description of events, situations and interaction between people and things, [thus] providing depth and detail.” Quantitative research is often used for theory testing requiring that the researcher maintain a distance from the research to avoid biasing the results. Qualitative research sometimes labelled interpretive research because it seeks to develop understanding through detailed description often builds theory but rarely tests it. Quantitative data often consist of participant responses that are coded, categorized, and reduced to numbers so that these data may be manipulated for statistical analysis. One objective is the quantitative tally of events or opinions, called frequency of response (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Qualitative data are all about texts. Detailed descriptions of events, situations, and interactions, either verbal or visual, constitute the data. Data may be contained within transcriptions of interviews or video focus groups, as well as in notes taken during those interactions. But by definition they generate reams of words that need to be coded and analysed by humans for meaning. While computer software is increasingly used for the coding process in qualitative research, at the heart of the qualitative process is the researcher and his or her experience framing and interpreting the data (Saunders et al., 2016). The figure below elaborate the steps for the methodological choice in the research.



Figure 11: Three stepped Research Methodological approach for the *Mono Qualitative Method (MQM)*

Exploratory survey was used in this study. Such survey in research works is a valuable means to ask open questions to discover what is happening and gain insights about a topic of interest (Saunders et al., 2016). Exploration is particularly useful when researchers lack a clear idea of the problems they will meet during the study. Through exploration, researchers develop concepts more clearly, establish priorities, develop operational definitions, and improve the final research design. Exploration may also save time and money. If the problem is not as important as first thought, studies that are more formal can be cancelled (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). However, it is also important to recognise that some research approaches and research strategies start in a more exploratory and emergent direction. A researcher undertaking this type of research, her or his finalised research question may only emerge during the process of data collection and analysis as she or he discovers the exact focus of her or his research project and refines its direction (Saunders et al., 2016).

The various sectors that the Chinese companies & business operate in Bangladesh business environment were the main target of the interview. Ten renowned Chinese companies with large operations, offices and branches in the capital Dhaka and other cities like Chittagong were identified through exploratory survey. Such companies' Human Resource strength encompasses the indigenous workers. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1979) table for

sampling a given population, where the total population is ten, then all the said population forms the sample size for the given study.

These ten renowned Chinese companies are the target population in this study and the research sample size. Such Chinese companies do hire HR specialist / consultants to advertise, screen and employ suitable Bangladesh people to work for them. As such, the ten HR specialists were approached, because they were well established and possess the experiences in provision of HR services to Chinese companies in various cities in Bangladesh.

ANALYSES

The Respondents Interview: Responsive and Non-Responsive

The respondent's responses from the fieldwork were shown in table and figures below.

Table 1: Responsive and Non-Responsive Interviews

Research Interviews	Frequency	Percentage
Responsive for Interviews	6	60%
Non Responsive for Interviews	4	40%
TOTAL	10	100%

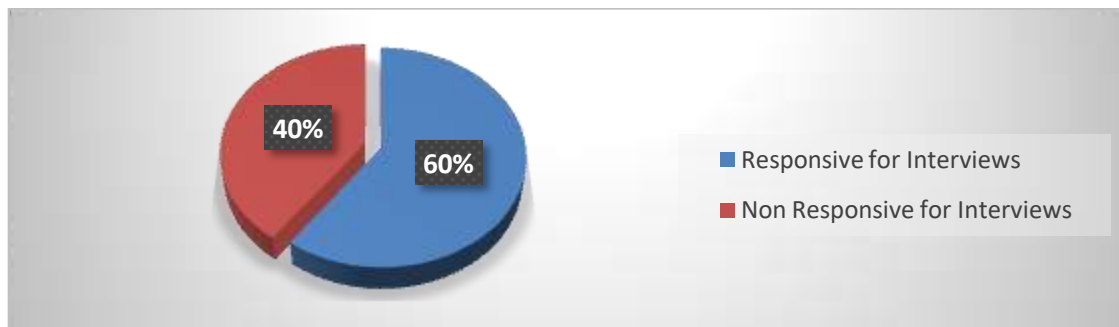


Figure 12: Responsive and Non-Responsive Electronically and Manually Distributed Questionnaires

Six human resource management professionals with 20 years and above experiences in Bangladesh labor market whom also have good experiences with the Chinese companies in Bangladesh were interviewed with respect to how Chinese companies strategically approach, manage and respond to cultural diversity of Bangladesh people when working in various sectors. The interviewees were asked about their perception regarding HR issues, challenges arising from similarities and difference between Bangladesh and China with respect to Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh; the Human resource management employed by Chinese

companies and the impact of Cross-Culture on the Chinese companies. The following comprises the summary of the transcript of six interviews.

Interview Number One

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the first respondent.

“The Chinese people representing or leading the Chinese companies in Bangladesh are highly history minded with a strong sentimental attachment and admiration of their Culture, way of life that dates back to several thousand years. As such, they are curious about the Bangladesh culture. This curiosity makes them ask questions that will enable them understand the local culture, work, integrate and socialize with the indigenous workers as well as the locals in the city or town. As the employers, the Bangladesh workers obey and follow their directives. However, where there are no cultural differences, any action that is initiated by the Chinese companies will force the workers to adjust and cooperate. But where such organizational demands is contrary to the culture, the Bangladesh workers complain and try to defy orders which most often is not okay with the Chinese companies. This causes disagreements and disharmony between the indigenous workers and their Chinese employers”

Interview Number Two

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the second respondent.

“The Chinese people working in Bangladesh are very flexible in the sense that they are ready to cooperate, train, work and assimilate with the local Bangladesh people. They view everything from a business perspective, so they avoid cultural conflicts that will affect their business and operations in Bangladesh. However, a close contact with them will show how they value and strongly believe in their own culture and traditions.

Interview Number Three

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the third respondent.

“The Bangladesh leaders and the people viewed Chinese companies and their investments as key to the country’s development, so they are cooperating willingly. These understanding has led to adjustments, understanding and better communication that ultimately bridges cross-cultural differences when working together. However, the Chinese new-year celebrations, and the Bangladesh festivals differs in duration and time of the year and slows their related businesses and operations.

Interview Number Four

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the fourth respondent.

“All Chinese companies working in various sectors in Bangladesh do have their management style which the indigenous workers adjust with time while working with the Chinese counterparts. However, adjusting to somebody’s culture in your country is difficult but

necessary. This requires various strategies that will be cognizance of both cultures while also achieving the goals of the companies in this regard”.

Interview Number Five

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the fifth respondent.

“The financial strength and the development level of China has given an already advantage to Chinese companies operations in different sectors in Bangladesh. As such, the quality of technology, expertise and experiences they bring along in their projects and operations earned them respect within the indigenous experts. These allows them to train, shape and direct the local workers in the right direction thereby forcing the locals to adjust to these companies in terms of work schedule and working habits. Altogether, both gradually adjust to each other’s culture”.

Interview Number Six

The following consist of a transcribed version of the interview from the sixth respondent.

“Most Chinese Companies in Bangladesh usually employ the local people on contract arrangement which ranges from few months to few years depending on their target duration. In most cases, with wages that are at normal rates. This affects the long-term commitment of the locals to such companies and makes cultural adjustments, tolerance and harmony somehow difficult because the workers do not foresee their future with such companies. However, where the situation is opposite, the indigenous workers will put more effort to impress their employers and help the companies to expand and make more profits. Most often, such employees were rewarded with promotions, retraining programmes in China and other incentives”.

Implications of the interview results

The table below shows the issues, similarities, differences and challenges regarding SHRM in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh based on the transcribed interviews.

Table 2: Issues, similarities, differences and challenges regarding SHRM in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh

S/N	Issues and Challenges arising from Similarities and Differences of SHRM in Chinese Companies in Bangladesh	1st - Interview	2nd - Interview	3rd - Interview	4th - Interview	5th - Interview	6th - Interview
1	Abundance Local Human resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Skilled Local Human resources	✓	✓	□	✓	✓	✓
3	Cultural Diversity and challenges in Human resources Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	□

4	Motivation within Local Human resources	✓	✓	✓	☐	✓	✓	Table 2...
5	Disparity of wages in Human resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	✓	
6	Good Strategy for Human resource Management	✓	✓	☐	✓	✓	✓	
7	Long and Short term Hiring in Human resources	☐	☐	☐	✓	✓	✓	
8	Effects of Perception of Chinese Companies within the Local Human resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9	Chinese Organizational effects on the Local Human resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

It is worthy to note that these Issues and Challenges arising from Similarities and Differences in SHRM in Chinese Companies in Bangladesh based on the interviews were deduced as follows:

- If the Chinese company's product, services, businesses and or their operations in Bangladesh has a positive relationship with the Bangladesh people's human resource management concepts and mentality, then the company can employ and adopt an aggressive and active strategy in directing its human resource management towards achieving strategic organizational objectives due to non-conflict of HR issues.
- The Chinese people have a sentimental attachment and admiration of their Culture, but they view everything from a business perspective, so they avoid cultural conflicts that will affect their business and operations in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh leaders and the people viewed Chinese companies as friendly development partners; as such, they are cooperating willingly. However, adjusting to somebody's culture in your country is difficult but necessary. In addition, they earned their respect from the indigenous experts due to quality of technology, expertise and experiences they bring along into their projects, operations and organizations.
- The levels of readiness and collaborations of Bangladeshi people, government and country towards the Chinese companies across various sectors will make both to adjust their organizational, HR and working culture when working together as the companies or organizations' human resources. Altogether, and over some time will lead to better understanding of each other's work habit, culture, barriers and differences that may hinder future collaborations and performances.
- The Chinese companies' performances shapes the perception of the Bangladeshi people, government and country towards the Chinese companies in terms of confidence in the companies; the desirability to work for such companies. In addition, any good

performance by Chinese companies boost their knowledge about the requisite requirements and culture of the Bangladesh people; and how to manage and approach them as their local human resources.

- If the Chinese company's product, services, businesses and or their operations in Bangladesh has a divergent or weak relationship with the Bangladesh people's human resource management concepts and mentality, then the company has to employ a patient strategy in directing its human resource management towards its operations and services in achieving strategic organizational objectives until a good opportunity present itself.
- In addition and on the contrary, the higher the wages and better the working conditions the more the people commit and get motivated to work and adjust to organizational needs. Hence, a good strategy (Active, Aggressive, Passive, Patient and Conservative) by the Chinese organizations will enable work-place harmony, which will ultimately smoothen the achievement of organizational goals and objectives.
- Altogether, with a better understanding of the indigenous workers' habits, mentality, motivations, labour laws and regulations; the Chinese companies can roll out and implement a good strategy for its human resource management that will shape, direct and achieve organizational long and short term objectives.

These results concur with those of Hui Li, et al., (2019), Ahi et al., (2018), Piening et al., (2016), Zhang et al., (2015), Mudambi et al., (2014), Michailova and Zaidah (2012), Williams and Lee (2011), Hallin et al., (2011), Hong and Nguyen (2009), Andersson et al., (2001). In addition, the results further buttressed the arguments, discussions and concepts brought by Cemal Zehir et al. (2016); Jofre (2011); Yousofpourfard (2010); Tsui *et al.*, (2007); Boxall *et al.*, (2007); Adler (2002); Dalton & Daily (2000); Jehn *et al.*, (1999); McMahan *et al.*, (1999); Chadwick & Cappelli (1999); Wright & Sherman (1999); Lumpkin and Dess (1996); R. C. Hoffman & Gopinath (1994); Wright & McMahan (1992); Black and Mendenhall (1990). Their works reflect the effects, impacts and perceptions of globalizations, cross-cultures, human resource management, professional expatriates, multi-national companies, their respective operations that influences their performances in different business environments especially at the international stages and settings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is about the issues and challenges regarding SHRM in Chinese companies operating in Bangladesh. The study adopted a qualitative approach by interviewing six out of ten targeted HR specialist with experiences about Chinese Companies across Various sectors of

Bangladesh. It also provides a summary of the main findings in line with the research problem and the research aim. The literature reviewed led to review of related theories and SHRM issues and challenges in multinational companies. The interview results highlighted areas that influence the strategies required for managing HR in Chinese companies in Bangladesh based on similarities and differences that ultimately affect the local human resources in Bangladesh.

The Chinese companies add to the foreign direct investments (FDI) in Bangladesh. Chinese people whom have a sentimental attachment and admiration of their Culture lead these companies. However, as investors they viewed everything from a business perspective, thereby allowing them to collaborate with Bangladesh government and its people in various sectors. These enable both to adjust their working culture when working together as the companies or organizations' human resources. The perception of the Chinese company's product, services, businesses and or their operations in Bangladesh determines the relationship with the Bangladesh people's human resource management concepts and mentality while also dictating the HR strategy requisite to achieving strategic organizational objectives due to a conflictual or non-conflictual HR issues. Such strategies may be Active, Aggressive, Passive, Patient and Conservative strategies and combination of one or more strategy as the situation permits.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

This study like most studies is constrained by some unavoidable factors and situations. Among these were lack of full cooperation of some interviewees regarding divulging some information that they deemed corporate secret or private information; some of them were hesitant, reluctant and request rephrasing of questions where necessary; they also deflect on answering some key words in questions asked. The six HR specialist / consultants as the respondents granted interviews after months of several formal requests. Due to such limitations, further studies should consider a wider research encompassing a larger sample of respondents from all stakeholders involved. Where possible, both quantitative and qualitative research methodology should be applied.

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