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Special issue: Managing people, markets, and businesses in the new India

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Following the worldwide disruptions caused by Covid-19 (see, e.g. Zhang-Zhang & Varma, 2020; Liu et al., 2020), and the ongoing conflicts, the global economy has become more precarious, with supply chains being disrupted and employment contracts being redefined (Liu, 2024). As an example, gig work has been steadily gaining currency around the world, with an increasing number of employers and employees choosing gig work over traditional employment (see, e.g. Ray et al., 2024). During these uncertain times, one of the countries that have shown signs of stability and continued to grow in the Asian context is India. Indeed, over the last decade, the Indian economy has gone from strength to strength. The first major impetus for this were the economic reforms of the early 1990s when the Government of India decided to allow foreign investment into India in numerous sectors and remove barriers for various products and services. These changes resulted in the influx of innumerable foreign corporations setting up shop in India to manufacture products and offer services, including leading global corporations like Toyota, LG, Samsung, and Microsoft. One side effect of this was that the products and services offered by Indian companies that did not match up, lost ground, and some simply went out of business (e.g. Indian car companies Hindustan Motors and Premier Automobiles). The next big change occurred in 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge of the Indian government (see Thite, 2014). Since then, the Indian economy has been on a steep upward climb with numerous indicators showing tremendous growth as well as improvement (Singh et al., 2020). As an example, India is currently the world's fifth largest economy by GDP (gross domestic product) and third largest by PPP (purchasing power parity) (see, e.g., The Hindu, 2024). Not surprisingly, it has been pegged as the fastest growing economy in the world in 2022 and 2023 and is tipped to be so again in 2024 (Yetsenga, 2024).

One of the major outcomes of the opening up of the Indian economy was the influx of multinational corporations into India, and the external movement of Indian corporations into various parts of the world. As a result, India is now the third largest market for automobile sales and the fourth largest in terms of manufacturing (ETAuto.com, 2023). Indeed, this trend is reflective of the global trend of emerging market firms venturing abroad (Liu & Meyer, 2020; Ray et al., 2023). Indeed, a number of Indian firms, such as Hindalco, Infosys, and Tata Consultancy Services are present in numerous overseas markets, sometimes through acquisition, as in the case of the Tata group's acquisition of the automobile company, Jaguar Land Rover. Such outward movement of emerging market multinational necessitated rethinking of how HR systems work in such corporations (Patel et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2020), as the cultural, economic, and socio-political contexts can vary substantially between the home country and the host country (Ray et al., 2023). For example, Indian companies doing business in foreign shores needed to rethink how they manage their human resource systems such as performance management, and recruitment and selection, as the original systems and processes were not likely to work as well in the new location, due to the change in context, as we noted above. Similarly, multinationals from other countries that came into India had to adapt and adopt their systems for the Indian environment. While one outcome of the arrival of multinationals to India was that they often brought expatriates to work in their operations, the growth of the Indian economy also saw an increasing number of Indian expatriates returning to live and work in India (Varma & Tung, 2020). This homeward movement required multinationals and domestic organisations to develop systems to host expatriates and returning Indians, source them, recruit them and evaluate them differently from home country nationals. Another critical aspect of this

development was the outward movement of Indian expatriates to various parts of the world (see, e.g., Varma et al., 2021a, 2021b), once again, requiring Indian corporations that were going global to rethink and redo their selection, compensation and performance management systems. As is well known, simply taking home developed systems to the foreign location and adapting and adopting them at the new location does not work. Very often, the systems have to be adapted to account for the local cultural context as well as legal requirements as the case may be. As an example, for multinationals emerging from the West, there is often a need to address the “West-Meets-East” context (Liu & Meyer, 2020) as well as the emerging economy context (Søderberg & Romani, 2017). As the Indian economy continues to grow (see, e.g. Singh et al., 2020) and India’s economic marvel is being recognised around the globe, there is increased interest in research on India by scholars from around the globe (Budhwar et al., 2017, 2019; Mishra & Varma, 2019; Patel et al., 2021; Pattnaik et al., 2021; Tripathi et al, 2021). Several different areas of research are being pursued by Indian scholars. Recently, Jaiswal et al. (2021) examined the increasing need to train employees to keep pace with the increasing demand for various skillsets, in response to the advent of new companies and technologies in the Indian landscape. Relatedly, Vittal et al. (2022) examined the impact of employee interactions with external beneficiaries on service performance, something that has become critical in the increasingly competitive landscape, while Malik et al. (2021a, 2021b) examined innovations in a traditional Indian ayurvedic firm. Next, given India’s leadership role in the Information Technology (IT) sector worldwide, Pereira et al. (2017) and Patel et al. (2021) examined the training programmes designed for expatriates in Indian IT firms—focusing specifically on their western subsidiaries. Another interesting study (Norlander & Varma, 2019) looked at the impact of H1-B

sponsored Indian guest workers in the USA on organisational strategy and operations. Other emerging scholarship from India has examined the role of artificial intelligence (AI) applications in relation to people management in organisations in India, both domestic and multinational (Dutta & Mishra, 2023; Malik et al., 2021a, 2021b; 2022). Articles in this Issue In this special issue, we present seven interesting articles, which examine a diverse array of subjects including (i) impact of organisational culture and transformational leadership on innovation, (ii) impact of leadership on change, (iii) social networking and employer branding, (iv) digitalisation and workforce agility, (v) the 'jugaad' culture, (vi) impact of working from home on stress and creativity, and (viii) leadership behaviour preferences among the different generations. Table 1 presents an overview of the articles included in this issue, while detailed summaries are presented below. In the first article, Kumar, Raj, Salem, Singh, Goel, and Bhatia delve into the interconnected influences of organisational culture, transformational leadership, and their impact on corporate innovation, particularly within Indian firms. The authors highlight the significant role these factors play in fostering corporate learning and subsequently driving innovation. The article begins by underscoring the limitations within existing management literature, emphasising that prior empirical studies on organisational culture and leadership have been constrained by simplistic conceptualisations. It asserts that these limitations fail to encapsulate the intricate and multilayered impact of these elements on fostering innovation within organisations. To address these limitations, the researchers draw from various theories, notably the competing values framework for culture, leader-member exchange, and organisational learning theories. The authors of this article propose a novel, four-dimensional model of organisational culture that is designed specifically for organisations in India. It sheds

light on how the different dimensions influence innovation within Indian organisations. The authors conducted tests to validate the hypothesised relationships between organisational culture and innovation while further examining how this relationship is moderated by the variable of transformational leadership. The results yield positive support for the relationship between organisational culture and innovation including how transformational leadership moderates this relationship. One of the principal findings of this research was the understanding that transformational leadership influences how organisational culture impacts innovation. This indicates that the manner in which leaders motivate and encourage their team members is critical in leveraging the potential of an organisation's culture to drive innovation. This article concludes by discussing the implications of these findings and providing a better understanding of the relationship between organisational practices. The authors also discuss some key limitations of their study and highlight areas for future research directions in this domain. For instance, some of the limitations include the generalisability of findings beyond the context of Indian firms and the need for further addition of new variables that might further shed light on new moderated or mediated relationships between organisational culture and innovativeness. In summary, this research provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between organisational culture, transformational leadership, and organisation innovativeness within the setting of Indian organisations. By offering a more nuanced and comprehensive model for understanding these relationships, it contributes significantly to the body of knowledge in management and paves the way for future research in this area.

The next article, by Rao-Nicholson, and Mohyuddin, investigates the influential

factors that catalysed organisational change within a public organisation involved in the construction of the Delhi Metro. Drawing on theories of transformational leadership

and institutional entrepreneurship, the study aims to uncover the fundamental drivers behind significant reforms in the operational structure of this public organisation.

This article aims to fill an important research gap in understanding the underlying reasons that instigate organisational change within the research setting of public organisations. Through an exploration of the antecedents driving this change, this research aims to untangle the interconnection between leadership, entrepreneurship, and substantial reforms in the functioning of public organisations. It further aims to delve into the institutional structures, culture, practices, and routines that went through alterations or add-ons during the construction of Delhi's metro rail system underlining the role of transformational leadership and institutional entrepreneurship in setting off and enforcing such changes. The research demonstrates how certain actions as directed by the leadership and entrepreneurial components played a decisive role in influencing the direction of organisational change within a large-scale public infrastructure project in India. The results from the research demonstrate the significant role that transformational leadership and institutional entrepreneurship played in leading successful outcomes within India's major public infrastructure organisation. The authors, therefore, emphasise on the importance of conducting longitudinal studies when approaching problems that are grounded in similar contexts—particularly, the need for observing and recording transformations occurring

in developing nations like, India. The lessons learned from these experiences are

critical in understanding how to better manage infrastructure projects in the developing world. To summarise, this study offers valuable insights into the causal variables of organisational change in the context of Indian public organisations and with a special emphasis on Delhi's metro rail construction project. By highlighting the roles of transformational leadership and institutional entrepreneurship in driving these changes, the study contributes to the understanding of how effective leadership and entrepreneurial actions can instigate substantial reforms within public institutions.

Moreover, the documentation of these changes in a specific longitudinal study context is seen as instrumental for unlocking the developmental potential of infrastructure in a developing country like India.

The third article, by Nayak and Budhwar, explores the intersection between social networking sites (SNS) and the establishment of an organisation's brand effectiveness,

specifically in the context of human resource management (HRM). Despite the substantial impact of SNS on individuals' lives, there has been a lack of focus on their application within the HRM discipline. Building on social networking theory, the study aims to contribute to an enhanced comprehension of the increasing use of SNS, particularly in shaping employer branding within organisations.

The research methodology involves an in-depth investigation, comprising 54 interviews

with HR professionals representing various organisations operating in India.

The empirical findings of the study reveal that firms actively utilise large, widespread,

and high-performing social networking sites to bolster their employer branding strategies in diverse ways. These strategies encompass a range of methods and approaches, shedding light on the multiple ways in which SNS are leveraged for employer branding purposes. The study articulates the benefits derived from the use of SNS for employer branding in organisations, delving into the nuances and intricacies

involved in employing SNS as a core strategy for establishing and reinforcing employer brands. By doing so, the research contributes to the existing body of literature

in two main ways: firstly, by addressing the gap in research on SNS concerning employer branding, and secondly, by highlighting the significance of online or virtual means in the context of employer branding. Moreover, the research responds to the call for a more comprehensive exploration of 'doing business in India', particularly

emphasising approaches that encompass employer branding strategies and the integration of SNS in the business landscape. This serves as a vital contribution to the literature, further advancing interdisciplinary discussions on the evolving dynamics of business practices in the Indian context. In summary, the study provides valuable insights into the strategic utilisation of social networking sites for employer branding within Indian organisations. Through qualitative analysis and indepth

interviews with HR professionals, it uncovers the multifaceted ways in which organisations leverage SNS to enhance their employer branding strategies.

Additionally,

the research contributes to the broader discourse by addressing the gap in literature

and emphasising the significance of online platforms in the realm of employer branding, especially within the unique landscape of business operations in India.

The fourth article, by Sameer, explores the dynamics between digitalisation, organisational support, workforce agility, and task performance within the context of blended working environments, particularly in response to the challenges posed by unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Acknowledging the rapid and unpredictable changes in the business environment, the study focuses on the potential threats to business continuity and the traditional modes of operation.

It highlights the emergence of blended working arrangements as a viable alternative under such circumstances. Drawing upon survey results from 201 managers in Indian public sector organisations, the study unveils several key relationships. It finds positive associations between PUD, WA, and task performance (TPBW).

However,

it suggests that perceived organisational support (POS) does not directly influence or moderate these relationships. Furthermore, the study reveals that workforce agility (WA) partially mediates the relationship between the perceived usefulness of digitalisation (PUD) and task performance (TPBW).

Theoretical contributions emerged from the impact of WFH on employees: role improvisation, stress, isolation, and self-initiated creativity. The study identified common themes across the two industrial sectors regarding the impact of WFH on employees, such as stress and isolation. Employees in the service sector reported immediate work-related stress, whereas those in the manufacturing sector expressed concerns related to future issues. Notably, the research discovered instances of creativity among employees during this period. In the technology-

enabled sector, creativity was oriented towards personal development and self-nurturing, while in the manufacturing sector, it was directed at resolving long-standing organisational issues.

The study emphasises that these sparks of creativity were self-initiated by the employees. The research is deemed significant as it delves into the impact of widespread WFH implemented during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It sheds light on the multifaceted impact on employees, including stress, improvisation in roles,

isolation, and most notably, self-initiated creativity, offering a novel perspective on the experiences and responses of employees during this extraordinary period.

In summary, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Indian employees across different sectors. By identifying distinct dimensions such as stress, role improvisation, isolation, and self-initiated creativity, the research captures the diverse experiences of employees in adapting to remote work. This study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted effects of remote work during a crisis and the emergence of self-initiated creativity among employees in response to the challenges imposed by working from home.

The seventh and final article by Yadav and Chaudhari in this issue addresses a critical issue, the fact that the current workplace is multigenerational, and employees of different generations work together in the same workplace. While many studies acknowledge the presence of Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z workers along with baby boomers, the study specifically addresses leadership behaviour, preferences, and the

differences in these preferences among the various generations. The authors also

point out that generational differences are another dimension of diversity, which is often ignored. The authors begin by describing the Indian context, in some detail, specifically focusing on the demographics of the Indian workforce. The authors conducted structured interviews with 30 respondents, 10 each from Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z. Their findings confirm that there are critical differences in the leadership behaviour preferences of the current and future corporate leaders. Thus, to be effective, Indian managers will need to adapt their leadership styles to the generation they are dealing with, often within the same meeting. The traditional one-size-fits-all style of leadership is not likely to work.

Future Research Directions

We believe these seven articles address a critical set of variables related to the economy, people, and workplace in India. However, they also point to the need for further investigations in several critical areas, such as

(i) The application and use of generative AI While this topic has started to receive some attention globally (e.g. Budhwar et al., 2022, 2023), research is needed specifically looking at the use of AI in India, as India is among the leading provider of IT and ITes (Information and Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services) worldwide. As generative AI platforms, such as ChatGPT and Bard, are growing and penetrating our day-to-day lives at home and in the workplace, at a rapid pace (e.g. Varma et al., 2024), it is important that scholars examine the impact of such technologies on the average worker,

who is most likely to be impacted, especially in a labour-intensive economy such as India.

(ii) Innovation The Chatterjee et al. paper in this issue examines the unique Indian practice of innovation, known as “Jugaad” which emphasises the practice of getting things to work, one way or another. We believe this is an important contributor to the growth of the Indian economy and needs to be investigated as such—as an antecedent of business growth. In addition, we believe that scholars should also conduct in-depth investigations of the factors in the Indian culture that give rise to the practice of “Jugaad.”

(iii) Next, India now boasts the world’s largest population of 1.4 billion with a median age of 28.7, as opposed to China’s 38.4 and Japan’s 48.6. The size of this population and the related age dividend are like a double-edged sword that has the potential to help India continue to grow (young workforce) or pull it back (due to the needs of and for such a large population). While the government has launched innumerable schemes to address these issues, such as the new education policy (see Varma et al., 2021a, 2021b, for a detailed analysis), we believe scholars should investigate the role and impact of the Indian population and workforce in its future economic growth.

In conclusion, we believe that the Indian success story is still unfolding and deserves close attention from other scholars so we can learn (i) what worked, (ii) what did not/does not work, (iii) what are/were the critical success factors, (iv) the unique Indian contextual factors that contribute to the success/failure of ventures, and (v) the role of the government and other institutions in contributing to the economic

story. We are confident you will enjoy reading the articles in this issue and

hope that these authors' arguments and findings may trigger new and interesting investigations in the years to come.

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Table 1 Overview of the articles published in this special issue

Authors	Theoretical underpinning	Research methodology	Key results and/or findings	Theoretical and practical contribution	Implications for Asian Business and Management
Sanjeev Kumar, Rahul Raj, Irfan Saleem, Etminder Pal Singh, Kavita Goel, Rishi Bhatia	The competing values framework	Quantitative	There results find a positive relationship between organisational culture and organisational innovativeness while transformational leadership moderates this relationship	The authors propose a novel four-dimensional model of organisational culture that is developed for Indian organisations. Further, organisations in emerging markets like, India need to focus on developing an organisational culture that is conducive to innovation by recruiting transformational leaders	This study focuses on organisational culture and innovation as well as transformational leadership in the Indian context
Rekha Rao Nicholson, Syed Molyuddin	Transformational leadership, institutional entrepreneurship	Mixed methods (secondary research and qualitative method)	Transformational leadership and institutional entrepreneurship play a significant role in public organisations and have the ability to influence change within the organisation	The study contributes to the understanding on how effective leadership and entrepreneurial actions can instigate substantial reforms within public organisations in emerging economies like, India	The study focuses on the antecedents of organisational change, particularly transformational leadership, and institutional entrepreneurship in Indian public organisations

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Theoretical underpinning	Research methodology	Key results and/or findings	Theoretical and practical contribution	Implications for Asian Business and Management
Akanksha Jaiswal, C. Joe Arun	Typology of crises	Qualitative	The psychological impact of work from home on employees varied between industry sectors. Further, employees were found to be engaged in self-initiated creativity during the Covid-19 period which led to them either nurturing themselves (i.e. visible in the technology-enabled sector) or towards solving long pending organisational issues (i.e. visible in the manufacturing sector)	The study explores the psychological impact of large-scale teleworking enforced during crisis times. The study has implications for employers who must revisit their workforce models and policies for the post-pandemic workforce in India	The study explores the psychological impact of work from home during the Covid-19 lockdown on employees working in India's manufacturing and technology-enabled industry sectors

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Theoretical underpinning	Research methodology	Key results and/or findings	Theoretical and practical contribution	Implications for Asian Business and Management
Ruchika Yadav, Sushama Chaudhri	Leadership behaviour	Qualitative	Gen X prefers leaders to be communicative, knowledgeable, supportive, and flexible. Whereas Gen Y prefers leaders to be communicative, knowledgeable, and acting as mentors. While Gen Z prefers leaders to be communicative, knowledgeable, acting as mentors and respectful	The findings of the study should help leaders in India better understand the expectations of subordinates from them	The study focuses on exploring leadership behaviour preferences of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z employees in India

