

Self-Management, Personal Management, Individual Management, and Personnel Management: A Simplified Introduction and Differentiation

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Abstract

This theoretical and foundational paper explores four interrelated yet distinct concepts, i.e., Self-Management (SM), Personal Management (PM), Individual Management (IM), and Personnel Management (PMgt) which are highly relevant to the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) but are often used interchangeably. Despite their significance, clear distinctions and well-defined meanings for each term remain underdeveloped, particularly within local academic and practical contexts. This paper aims to address this gap. Nominal definitions were developed for all four terms, establishing their potential as independent constructs. Using eight conceptual bases, the terms were carefully differentiated with a high degree of definitional precision and conceptual clarity. The resulting framework prevents confusion in teaching and practice, supports the design of HR policies and personal development programs, and reinforces both internal discipline (through self-regulation) and external managerial support. It is believed that this paper offers an original contribution to Sri Lankan HRM literature and will stimulate local academic discourse and teaching applications.

Key Words: Individual Management, Human Resource Management, Nominal Definition, Personal Management, Personnel Management, Self-Management, Working Definition

Introduction

We are all human beings. As human beings we have a variety of goals for our lives. These goals are about our personal life, work life, and other aspects of life. We all do not have the same goals, and we differ substantially or significantly in terms of goals. However, it is generally agreed that everyone has the goal of happiness. Some specific goals that we have may be: (1) To contribute significantly to improve standard of living of certain people; (2) To contribute significantly to certain institutional development; (3) To be a person who is special, giving

from his/her heart, making the world a better place for those whose lives he/she touches; (4) To be a highly successful professional in a certain field of development; (5) To become a person of excellent personal quality; (6) To be a person who has passion as well as a mental and physical fit for continuous learning and self-development; and (7) To work towards for betterment of life after death (spiritual development) (Opatha and Teong, 2014). We all need to perform something called *Management* to achieve these goals. There is no argument to deny that we are unable to achieve these life goals without efficient and effective management. The term *Management* may have different meanings for different people and indeed different scholars have defined it differently. It can occur at individual level, group level, organizational level, as well as national level. Management simply means a set of activities to be performed to achieve goals. It includes planning and controlling basically. The term becomes foundational.

In the realm of Human Resource Management and organizational effectiveness, certain foundational terms are frequently used, sometimes interchangeably or ambiguously. Among them, Self-Management (SM), Personal Management (PM), Individual Management (IM), and Personnel Management (PMgt) stand out as particularly significant. Despite their relevance, a clear understanding of what each term means and how it differs from the others is lacking, specially in local academic and practical contexts. This theoretical article is a systematic attempt to address this gap by offering simplified yet precise definitions, basic differentiations, and a comparative overview that will aid practitioners, students, and early-career researchers in understanding and applying these four concepts meaningfully and effectively in the field of HRM.

SM, PM, IM, and PMgt are foundational terms in the sense that one is unable to fully grasp HRM without understanding these terms. Further, these terms are considered as core or basic concepts which are the essential building blocks or starting points for understanding HRM and organizational effectiveness. These four terms are fundamental ideas upon which more complex theories or practices can be built.

This conceptual paper aims to address a set of specific theoretical research questions:

1. What do Self-Management, Personal Management, Individual Management, and Personnel Management mean?
2. Can these terms be distinguished from one another?
3. If so, how can they be differentiated?

Currently, there is a noticeable lack of studies that provide clear and comprehensive answers to these questions, particularly within the Sri Lankan or broader Asian context. This represents a theoretical gap in the extant literature. Furthermore, investigating and clarifying such fundamental theoretical distinctions is both intellectually valuable and timely. The objective of this paper is to offer precise, lucid, and contextually relevant definitions and differentiations of the four terms that can enrich scholarly understanding and practical application in the field of HRM.

Self-Management

It seems that the term Self-Management is rooted in psychology and personal effectiveness literature. McShane, Glinow, and Sharma (2008, p. 131) write: *“Self-management. This represents how well we control or redirect our internal states, impulses, and resources. It includes keeping disruptive impulses in check, displaying honesty and integrity, being flexible in times of change, maintaining the drive to perform well and seize opportunities, and remaining optimistic even after failure. Self-management involves an inner conversation that guides our behaviour”*. According to the authors, SM is the ability to regulate and control our internal feelings, impulses, and resources. It involves managing disruptive urges, acting honestly and with integrity, adapting to change, staying motivated to perform well and take advantage of opportunities, and maintaining optimism despite setbacks. Essentially, SM is guided by an internal dialogue that directs the person’s behavior. SM provides employees with strategies that may improve their performance without intervention from their managers (Unsworth & Mason, 2016). This means that SM is an internal thing executed by the employee himself or herself. Self-reward, self-punishment, self-goal setting, self-observation, and self-cueing are SM strategies which enhance employee work engagement (Unsworth & Mason, 2016; Dhanpat, etc., 2021). SM refers to how employees manage their behaviour, evaluate their performance and discipline themselves when they do not reach necessary personal standards (Bakker, 2017). According to Bakker (2017), SM is one of the proactive (bottom-up) approaches to work engagement. Lechner (2023) defines *“the art of regulating your thoughts, feelings, and actions within the workplace to be a more successful employee”*. She highlights how SM drives productivity and career growth, especially in remote and hybrid work environments.

Two nominal definitions of SM are presented. SM is management by a person of himself or herself or his or her personal affairs. SM is about finding the self-control and mastery needed to take control of one's work (e.g., to manage one's effort, time, workflow, emotional regulation and adaptability, and communication to achieve his or her personal or work goals). It is emphasized that this definition captures key aspects of self-management. It indicates that SM involves an individual taking responsibility for managing their own actions, behaviors, emotions, and personal affairs. This includes self-control and self-discipline to maintain focus, motivation, and productivity. The important elements of the definition are:

1. Management by a person of themselves or their personal affairs — emphasizing personal responsibility.
2. Self-control and mastery — crucial for regulating impulses and maintaining consistent effort.
3. Taking control of one’s work such as managing effort, time, emotional regulation and adaptability, workflow, and communication — showing practical applications of self-management in a work or life context.

Self-Management is the process by which a person plans, organizes, directs, and controls their own thoughts, emotions, moods, behavior, and time to achieve personal or professional

goals. This defining shows a strong and comprehensive way to define self-management. It emphasizes:

1. Self-management as a process — highlighting that it involves ongoing actions, not just a one-time event.
2. Planning, organizing, directing, and controlling — which are classic management functions applied internally to oneself.
3. Managing thoughts, emotions, moods, behavior, and time — covering a broad range of internal and external factors that affect personal effectiveness.
4. The ultimate aim is achieving personal or professional goals — showing the purpose and outcome of effective self-management.

This definition is more detailed than the first one and underlines the psychological and behavioral dimensions, as well as a goal-oriented framework. Hence, it is mentioned here that it is well-rounded and widely applicable.

Personal Management

PM is a concept that often overlaps with SM but broader in application. It refers to managing one's whole life in terms of responsibilities, roles, work-life balance, career, finances, and development. Sometimes it can be considered part of "life management" or an equivalent or an alternative term. Opatha (2010, p. 117) defines: *"Personal means 'relating to a person'. Management means 'planning and controlling'. Personal Management refers to a deliberate and systematic attempt to plan and control a person's life for achieving his or her life goals without wasting time, energy, and available resources. It is also defined as the totality of knowledge, attitudes, skills, techniques and systems that assist you to plan and control your precious life to achieve what you want as a person of good personal quality. As a graduate student or a professional you must manage your life efficiently (minimising wastage) and effectively (achieving your goals which are legally and ethically right)."* Further, Opatha (2010) and Opatha and Teong (2014) present seven aspects of PM and they include (1) ascertaining life goals; (2) having positive thinking; (3) making decisions ethically (to have ethical decision-making); (4) having a balance between work life and family life; (5) planning and controlling time (time management); (6) planning and controlling career (career management); and (7) planning and controlling stress (stress management). Furthermore, they emphasize that a person must have competencies or abilities with regard to the above seven aspects in order to be successful at work life as well as non-work life.

An attempt was made to find how PM has been defined in the third chapter (Principles of Personal Management) of book titled *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* written by Stephen Covey (1989) and it could not find any specific defining done by him. The chapter does not contain a single, explicit formal definition of PM. Instead, Covey (1989) approaches the concept implicitly through his principles and habits, especially focusing on personal leadership and self-mastery rather than providing a precise definitional statement. He does not provide a specific, stand-alone definition of PM in Chapter 3 or elsewhere. Instead, he articulates the concept through his proactive habit formation, goal setting, prioritization, and

self-renewal habits, portraying personal management as a principle-based, habit-driven process of self-leadership aimed at achieving personal effectiveness and independence.

PM can be considered as a separate concept and is not an alternative term to SM. PM is conceptualized as a broader concept compared with the concept of SM. SM is included in PM. In my previous writings (Opatha, 2010; Opatha and Teong, 2014), PM was perceived as the second dimension of the concept called personal quality, and SM and IM were mentioned as alternative terms or as the terms which could be used interchangeably. However, this research paper includes an advanced approach to provide a more theoretical clarity and precision.

In this theoretical article the definition (first one) provided by Opatha (2010, p. 117) of PM is considered valid and more appropriate as a nominal definition of PM. The reasons include (1) it is insightful and aligns well with foundational management principles but tailored to the individual rather than an organization; (2) it has conceptual clarity because of that the terms “personal” and “management” are broken down clearly to relate management concepts to an individual’s life rather than to business or organizational processes; (3) it defines PM as a deliberate and systematic attempt and this underscores the intentionality and structured approach needed for managing one’s life; and (4) it has a focus on goal achievement. The emphasis on achieving life goals without wasting time, energy, and resources mirrors classical management’s efficiency and effectiveness. This links well with management theory, which stresses optimizing resource use to meet objectives.

The second definition provided by Opatha (2010, p. 117) is also valid and appropriate to consider as a nominal definition of PM. The reasons are: (1) it has broader scope beyond planning and controlling. The definition extends the understanding by including knowledge, attitudes, skills, techniques, and systems as essential to personal management. This is a holistic view emphasizing that managing oneself requires more than just planning and controlling; it involves developing competencies and mindset; (2) it has an ethical dimension. Highlighting the need for goals to be legally and ethically right is a critical addition. It ensures that personal management is not just effective but also responsible, which is often overlooked in management frameworks focused on outcomes; (3) it has practical implication for students and professionals. The statement that as a graduate student or professional one must manage life efficiently and effectively is practical and motivational, linking theory to everyday application.

Individual Management

IM is rare as a standalone term in literature. It can be interpreted as the management of an individual by another (e.g., a supervisor managing the individual). Literature surveys reveal that IM is a less commonly used term. I would like to define it to the extent to which a particular organizational manager manages a particular subordinate's performance, tasks, or development within an organization. This can mean an external managerial perspective focused on handling a single employee’s work or growth. IM is the managerial process through which a specific organizational manager directs, monitors, and supports a specific

subordinate's work performance, task execution, or professional development within an organization. Thus, it is conceptualized that IM is not management of a person by himself or herself. It is management of an employee by his or her superior or supervisor in work setting. IM can occur at work setting while SM and PM can occur at personal setting.

A nominal definition of IM is the managerial process through which a supervisor or organizational manager directs, monitors, motivates, supports, and develops a specific subordinate's work performance, task execution, and professional growth within a formal organizational setting. IM involves ongoing communication, feedback, and relational engagement to align individual contributions with organizational goals while fostering employee motivation and competence. It is a distinct top-down process focused on optimizing employee efficiency, effectiveness and development through structured supervision. It is emphasized that this nominal definition is appropriate because of the reasons that include (1) it has clear role orientation. It explicitly states that IM involves a managerial process where a manager or supervisor directs, monitors, and supports a subordinate's work performance, emphasizing the hierarchical relationship. This aligns well with traditional management theories where a superior exercises formal authority and responsibility over employees; and (2) it has context-specificity. The emphasis that IM occurs within an organizational/work setting sets important boundaries distinguishing it from SM and PM which are individual-centered and can happen outside the workplace. This helps reduce confusion in terminology often seen where IM is used interchangeably with SM.

Personnel Management

PMgt is a very popular term, and it was the label used for HRM grossly in the 1970s and 1980s. PMgt is indeed an established standalone term in literature. Refer to Exhibit 1 that provides some classic definitions of PMgt.

Exhibit 1. Some Classic Definitions of PMgt

1.	"Personnel is that function of all enterprises which provides for effective utilization of human resources to achieve both objectives of the enterprise and the satisfaction and development of the employees."- Glueck (1979, p.6)
2.	"Personnel management is the study of how employers obtain, develop, utilize, evaluate, maintain, and retain the right numbers and types of workers."-Werther and Davis (1981, p. 493)
3.	"Of great importance to organizations today is how to effectively use their human resources. Effective PM is the recognition of the importance of a company's work force as vital human resources and the utilization of several functions and activities to ensure that they are used effectively and legally for the benefit of the individual, the organization and society."- Schuler and Youngblood (1986, p.6)
4.	"Personnel Management is a set of activities focusing on the effective use of human resources in an organization."- Mathis and Jackson (1988, p.11)
5.	"Personnel Management is that part of the management function which is concerned with people at work and with their relationships within an enterprise. Its

aim is to bring together and develop into an effective organisation the men and women who make up an enterprise and, having regard to the well-being of an individual and or working groups, to enable to make their best contribution to its success.” – The British Institute of Personnel Management (currently The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) (as in Graham and Bennett, 1992)

Recent writing of the author (Opatha, 2024) discusses that HRM is an alternative term to PMgt, HRM is a more modern name for the long-established name PMgt for the work of managing people at work in an organization, and HRM is a particular new approach to the management of people at work which is significantly different from PMgt. Discussion of these things is beyond the objective of this research paper. PMgt is a traditional HRM function focused on the administration of employee acquisition, employee training and development, employee relations, employment policies, compensation, and compliance with labor laws—primarily organizationally directed. It is considered as the precursor to modern HRM. A main aspect of modern HRM is high-performance work practices (Iddagoda and Opatha, 2018).

A nominal definition of PMgt is the process of managing all employees in an organization by using personnel systems to ensure effective and efficient utilization of employees for accomplishing the organizational goals.

Differentiation

In this section, an attempt is made to differentiate between the four concepts, i.e., SM, PM, IM, and PMgt. Can they be differentiated? Yes. Even the consideration of adjectives in the terms shows that they are different in terms of the words. A systematic attempt based on valid aspects of differentiation is needed. For the purpose of differentiation, the first base is differentiating in terms of nominal definitions. Refer to Exhibit 2 for a comparison of the four terms in terms of nominal definitions.

Exhibit 2. A Comparison of the Four Concepts in Terms of Nominal Definitions

Term	Nominal Definition	Focus
Self-Management	The process by which a person plans, organizes, directs, and controls their own thoughts, emotions, moods, behavior, and time to achieve personal or professional goals.	Self-regulation
Personal Management	The deliberate and systematic attempt to plan and control a person’s life for achieving his or her life goals without wasting time, energy, and available resources.	Life organization
Individual Management	The managerial process through which a supervisor or organizational manager directs, monitors, motivates, supports, and develops a specific subordinate’s work performance, task	Managerial action on one employee

	execution, and professional growth within a formal organizational setting.	
Personnel Management	The process of managing all employees in an organization by using personnel systems to ensure effective and efficient utilization of employees for accomplishing the organizational goals.	Workforce administration

The second base is differentiating in terms of working definitions. Generally, there is no difference between a nominal definition and a working definition of a term. A nominal definition given by Babbie (1986, p.102) who is a classic authority of Research Methods is: “A nominal definition is one that is assigned to a term. In the midst of disagreement and confusion over what a term really means, the scientist specifies a working definition for the purposes of the inquiry.” According to Babbie (1986), a working definition is alternatively named a nominal definition. Davis and Cosenza (1985) who are also classic authorities of Research Methods discuss a type of definition namely Constitutive Definition. They (1985, p. 22) write: “Constitutive definitions define concepts with other concepts and constructs. It sets the domain of interest for the concept of interest. Operational definitions put empirical meaning to constitutive definitions by specifying the means the concept or construct will be measured in reality. Specifically, operational definitions specify the procedures by which the concept will be measured or manipulated.” The term *constitutive definition* used by these two authors is in line with the term *nominal definition*. It is possible that the terms *nominal definition* and *working definition* can be used interchangeably. Discussion about the operational definition is beyond the objective of this research article as this is a conceptual one, not an empirical one.

A step further is taken in this research paper by explicitly distinguishing nominal and working definitions, which will enhance the clarity and rigor of this simplified paper. In conceptual research, the clarity of definitions is essential for theoretical understanding and scholarly communication. This paper adopts two types of definitions for each concept or term discussed: nominal definitions and working definitions. A nominal definition provides a general, abstract explanation of the concept, capturing its commonly understood or theoretical meaning. A working definition, by contrast, is formulated specifically for the purposes of this paper, to explain how the term will be interpreted and used within the context of the current conceptual discussion. This differentiation is consistent with established research methodology literature, particularly the works of Babbie (1986), Davis and Cosenza (1985), and Sekaran (1992), whose guidance on definitional precision remains foundational to social science inquiry including business inquiry. Thus, the purpose of nominal definition is to state what the concept means in general or theoretical terms. Its domain is conceptual. The purpose of working definition is to define how the concept will be interpreted or utilized in the researcher’s current work, theory, or paper. Its domain is contextually theoretical. The purpose of operational definition is to specify the measurable indicators or procedures used in measuring the concept in reality. Its domain is empirical. While a nominal definition is a general, dictionary-like definition that explains what a term means in a linguistic or conceptual sense, a working definition is a temporary or context-specific definition crafted

for the purpose of the current study or discussion. It is believed that providing both definitions is methodologically sound because it allows conceptual rigor (via nominal definition) and application relevance (via working definition). Refer to Exhibit 3 which provides a comparison of the four terms in terms of working definitions.

Exhibit 3. A Comparison of the Four Concepts in Terms of Working Definitions

Term	Working Definition	Focus
Self-Management	An individual's internal ability to regulate and control their own daily work thoughts, feelings, and behavior in order to perform personal and job tasks efficiently and effectively without direct supervision of any designated manager or leader or any external party.	Self-regulation
Personal Management	The way by which an individual consciously plans, organizes, and controls various aspects of personal life including ethical decision making, personal character, health, family, finances, and career with the aim of achieving long-term life goals efficiently and meaningfully.	Life organization
Individual Management	The personalized efforts a manager takes to manage a specific employee's performance, development, and work-related behavior through regular interaction, feedback, and support.	Managerial action on one employee
Personnel Management	The organizational function adopted to manage efficiently and effectively all the employees within the organization through policies, procedures, rules, and systems in areas such as resourcing, training & development, appraisal, rewards, and employee & labour relations to achieve organizational success.	Workforce administration

Further, refer to Exhibit 4 for examples of practical illustrations for the four types of management. They show how each type of management operates in practice. These examples strengthen our understanding of the four terms as distinct and separate concepts.

Exhibit 4. Examples of Practical Illustrations of the Four Types of Management

Types of Management	Practical illustrations
Self-Management	A bank officer sets a daily goal and finishes tasks on time. An employee prioritizes tasks, manages distractions, regulates emotions under stress, and completes work without supervision.

Personal Management	A bank officer plans a savings plan for her family, health check-ups, and vacation. A university lecturer sets life goals, balances career with family responsibilities, maintains healthy routines, and manages personal finances.
Individual Management	A senior manager assigns tasks and gives feedback on the daily work to a subordinate. A supervisor regularly reviews a subordinate's performance, assigns developmental tasks, and offers coaching and encouragement.
Personnel Management	A bank's HR department does job evaluations, decides fixed salary changes, and formulates a separate plan of incentives to increase productivity. The HR department of a manufacturing firm introduces recruitment guidelines, conducts employee training programs, updates welfare policies, and handles staff grievances.

The third base of differentiating is 'Agency' which is a key concept in philosophy, psychology, and organizational theory. Agency refers to the capacity of an entity (usually a person or institution) to act intentionally and make decisions that influence outcomes (Markus, 2019). It answers two questions: (1) Who is taking responsibility for the action? and (2) Who is managing? Refer to Exhibit 5 which provides a comparison of the four terms as per agency. Frie (2008, p. vii) writes in the preface: *"Agency is a lived phenomenon that is evidenced in everyday experience and in those therapy clients who seek help for problems in living. The question of agency also relates to how we choose to live our lives and the responsibility we have for the decisions we make. As such, agency is both a psychological concept with direct clinical implications and a central philosophical issue pertaining to the ethics of choice."* This quotation highlights that agency involves the ability to make choices, take control of one's life, and accept responsibility for decisions made. Agency manifests in daily life and becomes especially salient when individuals confront challenges or moral dilemmas. It is therefore a multidimensional concept with implications across psychology, clinical practice, and philosophy, particularly with regard to ethical decision-making. Exhibit 5 presents a comparison of the four management concepts in terms of agency by identifying the managerial agent in each case.

Exhibit 5. A Comparison of the Four Terms as per Agency

Type of Management	Agency (Who Manages?)
Self-Management	The person manages himself or herself.
Personal Management	The person manages his or her own life affairs.
Individual Management	A manager manages one specific employee.
Personnel Management	An organization (HR/Personnel Department and top managers) manages all its employees.

The fourth base of differentiating is scope. Scope refers to the extent or breadth of managerial control or influence. It helps answer the question: “What areas or domains are being managed?” Each of the four management types differs in its focus areas, boundaries, and scale by ranging from managing narrow individual behavior to broad organizational systems. Refer to Exhibit 6 for a comparison of the four terms in terms of scope.

Exhibit 6. A Comparison of the Four Terms in Terms of Scope

Type of Management	Scope
Self-Management	The person’s own day-to-day thoughts, emotions & moods, behavior, time, and tasks
Personal Management	The person’s entire life affairs, including goals, values, personal character, family, career, and health
Individual Management	The specific job-related performance and development of one subordinate
Personnel Management	The total workforce or employee base of the organization

The fifth base of differentiating is level of formalization. This base refers to the degree to which policies, procedures, rules, documentation, or official systems are used to guide, control, and structure behavior or management practices. This base answers the question: “To what extent is the management activity governed by formal policies, procedures, rules, or institutional systems?” Exhibit 7 provides a comparison of the four terms in terms of level of formalization.

Exhibit 7. A Comparison of the Four Terms in Terms of Level of Formalization

Type of Management	Level of Formalization
Self-Management	Informal and internalized; guided by personal will, habits, ethics, and self-discipline
Personal Management	Largely informal, though may involve structured tools like planners, life goals, or personal codes
Individual Management	Moderately formalized; embedded in job roles, performance reviews, task delegation, coaching structures
Personnel Management	Highly formalized; governed by HR policies, formal procedures, formal rules, legal frameworks, and organizational systems

The seventh base of differentiating is control mechanism. Control mechanism refers to the means or systems used to direct behavior, enforce discipline, guide decisions, or ensure goal achievement. This includes both internal mechanisms (like self-discipline or conscience) and external ones (like supervision or policy enforcement). This base answers the question: “How is control exercised in the process of management?” A comparison of the four terms in terms of control mechanism is given in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8. A Comparison of the Four Terms in Terms of Control Mechanism

Type of Management	Control Mechanism
Self-Management	<u>Intrinsic mechanisms</u> : self-discipline, internal motivation, emotional regulation, personal virtues
Personal Management	<u>Structured personal systems</u> : personal planning systems, goal-setting techniques, ethical decision-making frameworks, work-family balance methods, time management techniques, career management techniques, stress management strategies etc
Individual Management	<u>External control</u> : direct supervision, managerial guidance, performance feedback, appraisal systems
Personnel Management	<u>Institutional mechanisms which are often standardized, policy, procedure, & rule-bound, and legally binding</u> : formal HR systems, strategies, policies, rules and regulations, organizational hierarchy, labor laws

The eight base which is the final one in this paper is outcome orientation which refers to the primary results or achievements that each type of management is designed to realize. It answers the question: “What is the main goal or expected outcome of the management effort?” This base or aspect brings clarity to the value, direction, and practical purpose behind each management concept. Refer to Exhibit 9 that shows how the four concepts or terms differ in terms of outcome orientation.

Exhibit 9. A Comparison of the Four Terms in Terms of Outcome Orientation

Type of Management	Outcome Orientation
Self-Management	Achieving task efficiency, emotional balance, personal control, and self-directed performance
Personal Management	Attaining a meaningful, balanced, and successful life aligned with personal values and long-term life goals
Individual Management	Enhancing one subordinate’s work output, quality of work, knowledge, skill & attitude development, job satisfaction, and alignment with targets
Personnel Management	Achieving employee productivity, employee retention, organizational productivity, workforce alignment, and institutional success

Concluding Remarks

This foundational paper was guided by three key research questions. In response, it defined and examined the four terms which are: Self-Management, Personal Management, Individual Management, and Personnel Management through both nominal definitions and working definitions. A clear distinction between nominal and working definitions was established, thereby offering a methodological contribution to the HRM literature. The dual-definition approach enhances conceptual clarity and helps readers accurately grasp each term’s intended meaning, particularly in the context of a model-building or conceptual inquiry.

Furthermore, the logical differentiation of the four types of management was carried out by using eight conceptual bases, leading to a structured understanding of each term as a standalone yet interrelated construct. Grasping the distinctions among these four types of management is expected to contribute to greater personal effectiveness, enhanced supervisory practices, and more human-centered HRM systems. It hopefully encourages a research agenda to find innovative general and specific solutions and a set of practicing initiatives to perform in organizations to aim at achieving personal effectiveness in SM, life fulfilment in PM, job performance in IM, and organizational excellence in PMgt.

The need of formulating and implementing appropriate HRM systems as solutions to issues such as management of employee grievances, employee stress management, employee career management, and employee performance management in many cases in Sri Lanka exists. Even some of the authors' empirical and theoretical studies (Opatha, 1994; Opatha, & Ismail, 2001; Akuratiyagamage, & Opatha, 2004; Opatha, & Perera, 2017; Opatha, 2019; Opatha, 2025) reiterate this need. Adoption of the differentiation of the four types of management and their independent application are contributory to manage these issues effectively.

This paper is also intended to support the quality and depth of HRM education, particularly within local academic settings. It serves as a starting point for future theoretical refinement, empirical validation, and model development in respect of the four types of management, and it is hoped that it will inspire further scholarly dialogue and investigation in the field.

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