

# HRM Practices and Its Impact on Organisational Commitment: A Study of Construction Employees in India

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## ABSTRACT

The construction industry is one of the largest global employment sectors and accounts for a significant share of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). In India, it is the second largest sector after agriculture. A critical feature of this industry is a complex, dynamic and risky work environment. The construction projects rely on skilled workers supported by an efficient management framework. At the backdrop of increasing investments and growth in construction projects in India, the construction establishments are facing enormous challenges due to the massive gap between supply and demand of talented professionals. In such situations, an employee's commitment towards the organisation is highly essential for efficient performance. This study aims to examine whether the employee perceptions about common human resource management practices have an impact on the organisational commitment of construction employees in India. HRM practices which may have a considerable effect on the employee commitment, such as recruitment and selection, performance management, career management, training and development, workforce diversity management, management policies and grievance handling are examined. The study was conducted through a questionnaire survey including a combination of a standard model of organisational commitment and a few self-structured questions. The results show a highly significant and positive relationship between organisational commitment and employee perceptions of human resource management practices prevalent in the construction organisations. 'Performance Management', 'Training and Development' and 'Management Policies and Grievance Handling' were found to be the most significant factors affecting the organisational commitment of construction employees. The results of the study could be used as guidelines for improving HRM policies in construction organisations.

**Keywords:** HRM, construction industry, organisational commitment, employee perceptions, performance

**JEL Classification:** M-12, M-51, M-53, J-24, J-28

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## INTRODUCTION

The construction sector in India is snowballing in recent years. It is the second largest economic activity in India after agriculture, and the sector has accelerated quickly in the last 5 years, having generated 31.46

million jobs (2008–2009) with a potential to add another 2.5 million jobs in the coming years (*Doloi et al., 2012*). The construction sector has grown at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of about 11.1% due to massive infrastructure investment and rapid rise in housing demand. As pointed out by

Loosmore *et al.* (2003), for any successful business, the ability to attract, retain and develop talented employees is a crucial requirement, and this is primarily a very vital element of success in relatively low-tech, labour-intensive industry like construction. Proper human resource management has the potential to eliminate more construction risks than any other management approach (*Loosemore, 2000*). But the studies like those of Green and May (2003) or McGrath-Champ and Rosewarne (2009) state that the highly cyclical nature of the demand for construction projects has made the construction organisations maintain flexible labour force which can expand and contract to meet peaks and troughs in demand which is a crucial concern for HRM in construction as most firms recruit for troughs rather than peaks. In India, the fast growth of the industry and the increasingly complex nature of the construction projects have triggered the need for better human resource management practices as it still is a highly neglected area. Dolo *et al.* (2012) in their study highlight the fact that some of the significant factors related to delay in Indian construction projects are attributable to human factors like lack of commitment, lack of communication, improper human resource planning and coordination, inconsistent performance and lack of talented workforce, etc.

The biggest challenge or the most potential risk for large firms who have to invest heavily in the human capital resources is the fear of losing their valued employees to competitive firms (*Gellatly et al., 2009*). Organisational Commitment, as stated by Van Maanen (*cited in Savaneviciene and Stankeviciute, 2011*), is perceived to be important for an organisation as it is positively and significantly associated with improved performance. To reap the benefits of their investment in human capital, organisations should ensure the employees' commitment to them as it ultimately affects the growth of the organisations.

Positive HRM practices are the tool to enhance the organisational commitment. Still as asserted by Gardner *et al.* (2001), there is a need for reliable and valid assessment of practices to accurately assess the relationship between perceptions of HRM practices and actual performance. Not many research works seem to focus on this particular aspect, and more specifically, we don't find any such study focusing on the correlation of HRM and organisational commitment in construction companies in India. This paper attempts to fill this gap in the literature and tries to explore the impact of HRM practices on organisation commitment through a study of construction employees in India.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovative HRM practices are found to be pioneers of organisational commitment (Agarwala, 2003). Efficient HR practices help to enhance organisational effectiveness by creating motivating conditions for highly involved employees who always produce better results in the organisation (*Arthur, 1994 cited in Bhatnagar, 2007*). As per Ulrich (1997), HRM practices are the most effective tools to increase organisational commitment. For Ogilvie (1986), HRM practices act as concrete, tangible programmes designed to develop organisational commitment. Better Human Resource Management practices promote, reinforce and influence commitment through various core processes such as recruitment, selection, appropriate placement, employee development, rewards and retention (*Wimalasiri, 1995*).

As per Gardner *et al.* (2001), there is a need for reliable and valid assessment of existing HRM practices in the organisations, to precisely examine the relationship between perceptions of HRM practices and actual performance of the employees. In their study, they established a positive relationship between HRM

practices and organisational commitment. Guest (1997, 2002), has asserted that effective HRM practices give way to various positive employee attitudes. He proved that when proper HRM practices are implemented in any workplace, it indeed leads to the high commitment levels of the employees. According to him, the HRM policies and the resultant organisational commitment also enable employee retention and help the employees to cope up with changes in the work environment (Guest, 2002). Gooderham and Nordhaug (2011) have also asserted the importance of good HRM policies in organisational commitment and employee retention. Cho *et al.* (2006) have studied the correlation between 12 HRM practices and its effect on organisational performance which was measured by employee turnover ratio. The results indicated that HRM practices such as labour-management participation programme, incentive plans, and pre-employment tests are more likely to experience lower turnover rates for non-managerial employees.

Overall, it is evident from the research above works that there exists a direct association between positive employee attitudes and the existence of effective HRM practices (Meyer and Allen, 1997). It is also established by Marler and Fisher (2013) that factors contributing to HRM practices significantly affect the employees' perceptions of biases and impartiality at work. In a study conducted in the Indian context by Baskara and Jyothi (2012), it was found that HRM practices are strongly correlated with organisational commitment. They also found the highest correlation of organisational commitment was with management policies and grievance-handling procedures. Also, in a study by Saaty and Qureshi (2011), it was asserted that a sound grievance redressal mechanism to manage the grievances impartially was an important aspect of having organisational commitment.

HRM plays a key role in the strategic management of the organisations and provides a competitive advantage

to them (Wright, 2002). This leads us to the critical point that today's organisations should focus on better ways of establishing comprehensive and sound HRM practices rather than concentrating on only a few functions. Jacob and Jolly (2012), in their study, have cited Delmotte (2008) who has propounded that it is probably most important to encourage specific and effective HR practices about an organisation to remain competitive and practical in the global market. Good HRM practices focusing on employee's welfare ultimately result in a committed workforce (Delmotte, 2008). The employees are motivated to perform better and remain committed to the organisation if they observe and experience that their organisation's HRM practices are developed for their safety and well-being (Kossek and Block, 2000). The workers would evaluate HR practices in a more positive way depending upon the efficiency and control of these practices (Sanders *et al.*, 2008).

Though we can observe from the literature that HRM practices have an impact on the organisational commitment, there is a lot of uncertainty about how HRM practices precisely affect organisational outcomes, whether some practices have stronger effects than others, and whether complementarities or synergies among such practices can further enhance organisational performance (Baird and Meshoulam, 1988; Lado and Wilson, 1994). This study tries to answer these concerns.

The existing Indian literature on industry-specific HRM practices and policies is fragmented, and there are chances that HRM practices would vary sector-wise. HRM policies and practices in these service organisations would vary extensively from that of traditional organisations and thus would differently display organisational commitment. This study intends to view this difference in organisational perspective related to the construction sector. There are some studies available which correlate the HRM

practices with organisational performance in general or organisational commitment. But no such study is available specifically about the construction sector or construction sector in India. In construction, the migration of labour is high. Employees tend to often migrate to industries offering a good salary, working conditions, career opportunities and that are seen as being the most glamorous and attractive to work within. Apart from that, there is a deficit in the number of skilled employees. Given the shrinking labour market and image problems of the industry, it is clear that further economic growth is likely to lead to severe shortages in both traditional and new skills areas (*Agapiou et al., 1995*). Employee turnover, or 'wastage', is an extremely important issue for construction companies' strategic HR planning, yet a culture of mobility has emerged in the industry which has led to a workforce of corporate mercenaries that coldly drift from job to job with little sense of loyalty to their employers. Hence the study regarding the factors contributing to organisational commitment is highly needed in the context of the construction industry.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the study is to examine the employee perceptions related to HRM practices prevalent in the Indian construction sector and its relationship with the organisational commitment. To achieve this objective, a survey questionnaire was developed in which an organisational commitment model developed by Rusbult and Farrell (1983) was used. In this model, the commitment level was defined regarding connotative, affective and cognitive properties. Some self-structured questions were also included to understand the HRM practices in construction organisations. By the literature review of specific HRM practices and its impact on organisational performance as well as the specific human resource management issues related to the

construction sector, six main determinants of HRM practices were selected. After preparing the self-structured questionnaire, it was sent to construction industry professionals for review. Only after incorporating their suggestions, a final version of questionnaire survey including Rusbult and Farrell model and self-structured questions was prepared.

The study in this context tries to test the following primary hypothesis: 'There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employees' perceptions of HRM practices in construction organisations'. It intends to view this relationship in organisational perspective related to the construction sector and focuses on the following essential HR practices as primary determinants of the study: recruitment and selection, performance management, career management, training and development, workforce diversity management, management policies and grievance handling and measure its statistical relationship with organisational commitment.

A comprehensive questionnaire of 45 items was developed for data collection on the topic of the study. Part A of the instrument was focused on collecting demographic details whereas Part B mapped the perceptions of respondents regarding different HRM practices prevalent in the Indian construction sector and the organisational commitment of the employees. The questionnaire consisted of questions based on organisation commitment model (*Rusbult and Farrell, 1983*) composed of 15 items in the scale and measuring the three components of commitment: intent to persist (four items), attachment (six items) and long-term orientation (five items). This scale was used in an earlier study of commitment among blue-collar workers (*Rusbult and Farrell, 1983*). Rest of the self-designed questions included five items each on recruitment and selection practices, performance management practices, career management, workforce diversity management,

training and development practices and management policies and grievance-handling mechanism.

The questions were rated on a Likert scale of 5 points ranging from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level of response (strongly agree) and 1 being the lowest (strongly disagree). The questionnaire was sent for review by the experts and the inputs received were incorporated accordingly. Reliability of the self-constructed questionnaire was tested to be Cronbach's alpha 0.78. For further analysis of the responses received, Pearson's Correlation test and T-test were conducted through SPSS 15. The questionnaire survey was circulated to 150 respondents. Out of which, 102 valid responses were received. The data collected from these 102 respondents through a combination of standardised and self-structured questionnaire survey was analysed further. The respondents had a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 20 years of experience of working in construction companies. Also, it was ensured that the respondents selected had a judicious mix of lower, middle and higher-level employees. The data were primarily collected from four major construction companies in India.

## HYPOTHESES

Based on the above framework, this study tries to test the following main hypothesis: 'There is a significant relationship between organisational commitment and employees' perceptions of HRM practices in construction organisations'. Following hypotheses were tested in the context of the main hypothesis.

**H1:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of recruitment and selection practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

**H2:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of performance

management practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

**H3:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of career management practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

**H4:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of workforce diversity management practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

**H5:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of training and development practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

**H6:** There is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of management policies and grievance handling practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pearson's Correlation test was conducted in SPSS 15 to examine the relationship between organisational commitment and the employees' perceptions of the HRM practices prevalent in the construction organisations for various factors. The findings of the correlation test are presented in Tables 1–6.

It is evident from Table 1 that there exists a significant and positive correlation between the two variables, that is, organisational commitment and recruitment and selection practices of the organisation ( $r = 0.558$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It substantiates the point mentioned in the earlier studies that worker commitment can be

positively (and negatively) influenced by management practices (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Savaneviciene and Stankeviciute (2011) in their study have proved that the organisations where the commitment was found to be higher, they had effective recruitment policies and practices ensuring the availability of a large applicant pool and also the use of structured tools for selection. Therefore, hypothesis H1, that is, there is a significant and positive relationship between employees' perceptions of recruitment and selection practices prevalent in the organisation and organisational commitment among construction employees in India, is accepted.

Table 2 presents a positive and significantly high correlation of organisational commitment with the perceptions of performance management practices in

the organisation ( $r = 0.702, p < 0.01$ ). This finding is reasserting the literature review findings, where researchers have mentioned that an effective performance appraisal system contributes to enhancing productivity and employee commitment (Brown and Benson, 2003). In a recent study conducted by Jacob and Jolly (2012), the correlation between employee outlook concerning satisfaction and commitment and employees' perceptions of individual HR practices was found to be healthy and positive. Performance management practices, which include healthy performance appraisal systems as well as sound policies of rewards, recognition and training and development, are the need of the industry. The hypothesis H2 is accepted as there exists a strong correlation between the two variables.

**Table 1: Organisational Commitment and Recruitment and Selection Practices**

Correlations			
		Organizational Commitment	Recruitment and Selection
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Recruitment and Selection	Pearson Correlation	.558**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2: Organisational Commitment and Performance Management**

Correlations			
		Organizational Commitment	Performance Management
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Performance Management	Pearson Correlation	.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, the correlation was applied to evaluate the relationship between the perceptions of career management practices prevalent in the organisation and the organisational commitment level of the employees which is given in Table 3. The correlation was found to be positive and medium significant ( $r = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result is supported by the existing research works in this area. Career Planning and Management is a comprehensive approach to all activities and techniques facilitated by the organisation which is of concern with the career development of its employees. These include two main aspects—the planning (i.e., preparing for the future) and management (i.e., operating and activating those plans), as seen and performed from the organisation's point of view (Baruch, 1996). An employee's career management activities are always correlated to the organisational

goals. It is essential for the employees to perceive that the HRM practices have been prepared and practiced in the organisation to improve employee welfare. This perception would then result in organisational commitment and better output than in a traditional management system (Kossek and Block, 2000). As per the data analysis, the proposed hypothesis H3 is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that good HRM practices that emphasised enhancing workers' welfare and are committed to the betterment of workers result in a committed workforce.

Table 4 presents the relationship between organisational commitment and perceptions of the prevalence of workforce diversity management practices in the organisation ( $r = 0.455$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Construction is a project based industry where diversity exists at all

**Table 3: Organisational Commitment and Career Management Practices**

		Correlations	
		Organizational Commitment	Career Management
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Career Management	Pearson Correlation	.509**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4: Organisational Commitment and Workforce Diversity Management Practices**

		Correlations	
		Organizational Commitment	Workforce Diversity Management
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Workforce Diversity Management	Pearson Correlation	.455**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

levels. To attract and retain a talented workforce, construction organisations in the future will have to cater more and more to the diverse needs of employees about work–life balance. Apart from this, it is also proved that employees’ needs vary according to their gender, age and stage of family development (*Lingard and Francis, 2005*). It is essential that the construction organisations pay attention to the workforce diversity management practices in their organisation as these practices may impact the organisational commitment of employees positively or negatively. The correlation is medium but based on data analysis, the hypothesis H4 is accepted.

Table 5 presents the relationship between organisational commitment and perceptions of employees regarding the prevalence of training and development practices in the organisation ( $r = 0.566$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation is positive, and hence the

hypothesis H5 is accepted. The literature also validates this point. Guest (1997) has asserted that the availability of in-house training and career development opportunities, in the long run, result in better commitment to the job from employees. Agarwala (2008) in his study of manufacturing firms in India concluded that the implementation of training and development practices at work is positively correlated with employee commitment. Edgar and Geare (2009) in a similar type of research study conducted in New Zealand work settings have proved that the HRM practices, especially the training and development and career advancement opportunities have a significant impact on job satisfaction and organisational commitment of employees. It can be said that the formal and informal training strategies implemented by the organisations are using to develop committed and professional employees (*Mohyini et al., 2012*).

**Table 5: Organisational Commitment and Training and Development Practices**

		Correlations	
		Organizational Commitment	Training and Development
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Training and Development	Pearson Correlation	.566**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 6: Organisational Commitment and Management Policies and Grievance Handling**

		Correlations	
		Organizational Commitment	Management Policies and Grievance Handling
Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	102	102
Management Policies and Grievance Handling	Pearson Correlation	.607**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows a strong and positive relationship ( $r = 0.607$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the overall management policies and grievance handling mechanism and organisational commitment. The perceptions of the employees that the overall management policies are fair and there exists a precise grievance management mechanism to take care of all of their problems is very important to boost the organisational commitment. The review of the literature regarding this point also supports the view that there exists a strong relationship between the perceptions of grievance settlement measures and commitment (Kurland and Egan, 1999). In some related studies, it was established that employee commitment levels were high in the organisations where good HRM practices were implemented (Moorman et al., 1993) and in the organisations where HRM practices were perceived to be biased and unfair, diminished commitment levels were found (Janssen, 2004). Since the relationship between the two variables, that is, management policies and grievance handling mechanism, and organisational commitment is positive, hypothesis H6 is accepted.

One sample T-test was also conducted to check for any significant difference in perceptions of HRM

practices and organisational commitment. Table 7 presents the results of the test. The results of T-test data reveal that there exists a significant difference in the respondent's perceptions of the HRM practices prevalent in the organisation and the organisational commitment. The mean comparisons also reveal that out of the six important determinants of HRM practices studied here, 'Performance Management', 'Training and Development' and 'Management Policies and Grievance Handling' were found to be the most significant factors affecting the employee organisational commitment in construction companies. These three factors have a higher mean score, that is, 4.5196, 4.3627 and 4.5294, respectively. The Pearson's Correlation coefficient is also found to be stronger in these three factors than others. It is evident that employees in construction sector perceive proper Performance Management system, better training and development opportunities and fair management policies and grievance handling mechanism as their key concerns which might affect their commitment to the organisation positively or negatively. The research identifies the critical HR practices and establishes their relationship with the organisational commitment.

**Table 7: One Samples T-Test for Differences in Perceptions of Employees**

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Recruitment & selection	80.073	101	.000	4.0196	3.9200	4.1192
Performance management	74.950	101	.000	4.5196	4.4000	4.6392
Carrier management	67.316	101	.000	4.0294	3.9107	4.1482
Workforce diversity management	69.094	101	.000	4.1176	3.9994	4.2359
Training and development	67.079	101	.000	4.3627	4.2337	4.4918
Management policies & grievance handling	75.162	101	.000	4.5294	4.4099	4.6490
Intent to Persist (OC)	74.016	101	.000	4.4510	4.3317	4.5703
Attachment (OC)	74.016	101	.000	4.4510	4.3317	4.5703
Long-term orientation (OC)	75.162	101	.000	4.5294	4.4099	4.6490

## CONCLUSION

The study tried to explore two main aspects (1) whether employee perceptions related to specific HRM practices have an impact on their organisational commitment and (2) to investigate which are the key HRM practices that have a more significant impact on the commitment of construction industry employees in India. Through the empirical analysis and with the support of extant literature, this study establishes that there is a highly significant and positive relationship between organisational commitment and employee perceptions of individual human resource management practices prevalent in the construction organisations. Also, it was found that out of the six essential determinants of HRM practices studied here, 'Performance Management', 'Training and Development' and 'Management Policies and Grievance Handling' were found to be the most significant factors affecting the employee organisational commitment in construction companies. The study thus asserts that the HRM practices do have a major impact on the organisational commitment of employees in the construction sector and the employee support to the organisation depends to a great extent on their perceptions of the organisation's support to them regarding fair policies and practices.

The results also emphasise the fact that the construction sector must indulge in the planning of recruitment, selection and retention of the valuable human capital. This scenario of the industry is such that there is a considerable demand for the workforce at different levels, which is bound to increase in the future. It is also evident that the organisations must focus on

providing training and development opportunities to the employees through regular and innovative ways. Performance management practices should be employee-centric and help in career development. Also, effective management policies and grievance handling procedures should be implemented in totality and also gradually improvised to address the challenges of the Indian construction industry. The results of the survey of employee perceptions of the current HRM practices in the construction companies in India indicate that employees are moderately satisfied and in some cases unsatisfied with the current HRM practices. The results of the study could be used as guidelines for improving HRM policies in construction organisations. The findings suggest that the HRM professionals should undertake the added responsibility of systematically designing and implementing HRM practices which would generate positive organisational commitment and thus ultimately equip the line managers and project managers with an effective tool to create commitment and productivity. This study is important as not many empirical studies in this direction have been undertaken in Indian settings.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study was limited to the construction industry and considered HRM practices in Indian work settings. The further research in this area can be carried out taking other sectors and countries. A more comprehensive study of individual HRM practices and its impact on organisational commitment could also be conducted based on individual determinants of commitment.

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