

Relevance of Best Human Resource Practices for the Armed Forces

Gurdeep Singh Narang*

Amity Lucknow Campus, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

Tough service conditions with high risk, relatively poor salaries, limited promotional avenues, frequent transfers and disruption in family life could be some of the reasons due to which the Indian Armed Forces are facing a severe manpower crunch in their officer's cadre. Setting up of pay commissions on regular basis to review pay structure, up gradation of some of the ranks and appointment have also not been able to create a sense of wellbeing. Effective recruitment, competitive compensation, efficient training and development to retain the manpower available, has therefore become a greater challenge to the military leaders. This research was undertaken to analyse relevance of best human resource practices prevalent in the corporate sector and their application in Indian Armed forces to assist them in attracting and retaining the best talent. This paper concludes with the recommendations suggesting methodology and timelines to implement the findings to improve human resource management in the Armed forces.

Keywords: Optimizing performance; Socio-economic changes; Attrition; Retention of talent; Motivation; Morale

JEL Classification: M 12

Introduction

The Indian Armed Forces, the second largest force in the world, are known for their professionalism, bravery and valor. They are vital strategic resource of the nation and enforce national diplomacy through show of strength. Stronger the force, strong is the nation. Managing 1.4 billion strong Armed forces which is manpower intensive is therefore, a complex and dynamic process. For last two decades, the Indian Armed forces are facing huge shortages in the young officers who can be called the cutting edge and are in forefront in leading their men into the battle. Army alone is deficient of 7,764 officers among Lieutenant Colonels, Majors, Captains and Lieutenants. The shortfall of Lieutenant Commanders and below in the Navy stands at 1,499, while it is 357 in the ranks of Wing Commanders and below in Indian Air Force [1]. The Standing Committee on Defence in its latest report tabled in Indian Parliament has also expressed concern at the shortage of personnel in the Armed Forces.

Tough working conditions, disruption in family life and stress and strain due to prolonged deployment in difficult areas are the other contributing factors in making the Armed Forces 'an unattractive career' and ever increasing requests for premature retirements. Pay Commissions constituted from time to time have helped in improving the salaries but they can still not be compared with the pay packages and perks being offered by the corporate sector, Glitzy advertising campaigns to attract youngsters to become 'officers and gentlemen' are obviously not doing the trick' [1]. While all efforts are being made to attract and get the best people to join Armed forces and improve their career prospects, there is a need to initiate suitable measures with a view to enhance retention and utilization of this limited manpower particularly in the officer's cadre.

In the present competitive world, the companies/organisations in the Corporate Sector are also facing skill shortage, talent crunch and attrition which are reaching historically height ever. As such every company is trying to devise innovative HR practices to attract the best talent and retain them by providing conducive environment to work. These practices help to make sure that the employees feel good about the organisation they work for and add value to the organization.

Literature Review

A company's value includes three types of assets that are critical for the company to provide goods and services: financial assets (cash and securities), physical assets (property, plant, equipment), and intangible assets. Intangible assets include human capital, customer capital, social capital, and intellectual capital. Intangible assets are equally or even more valuable than financial and physical assets but they are difficult to duplicate or imitate. The source of value in a company is in intangible assets and even more human intangible assets have been shown to be responsible for a company's competitive advantage. Employees in some companies are happy to stick with the company while others look for a change. The reason is that some companies know how to take good care of their employees and provide a working environment that helps them retain their identity, while proving themselves and growing along with the company. Researchers have consistently supported that the adoption of a coherent system of new work practices, including work teams, flexible job assignments, employment security, training in multiple jobs, and extensive reliance on incentive pay, produces substantially higher levels of productivity than do more 'traditional' approaches involving narrow job definitions, strict work rules, and hourly pay with close supervision. In contrast, adopting individual work practice innovations in isolation has no effect on productivity. This interpretation supports recent theoretical models which stress the importance of complementarities among a firm's work practices. A review of literature has been carried out to understand Human Resource (HR) practices and their impact on performance and growth of the organisations.

Human resource practices

According to Lado et al. [2], human resource practices are a set

*Corresponding author: Gurdeep Singh Narang, Amity Lucknow Campus, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, Tel: 0522 652 5676; E-mail: gurdeepsingh.narang@gmail.com

Received March 21, 2016; Accepted April 22, 2016; Published April 29, 2016

Citation: Narang GS (2016) Relevance of Best Human Resource Practices for the Armed Forces. Arabian J Bus Manag Review 6: 232.

Copyright: © 2016 Narang GS. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

of distinct but interrelated activities, functions, and processes that are directed at attracting, developing, and maintaining (or disposing of) a firm's human resources. Rupali Mishra [3] in her research paper 'A comparative study of HR practices in selected Tyre Companies' has identified some of the best HR practices like Open Management, Performance incentives and rewards, Performance feedback, Employee evaluation, Sharing of knowledge and Publicizing good performances which have helped in the creation of a highly satisfied and motivated work force. Such healthy HR practices encourage the growth of the organization as employees after all play a major role in the well-being of a company. Making an employee feel like a million dollars pays in the form of the success of an organization.

Impact of HR practices on growth and performance of firms: various studies

Huselid [4] has identified the link between *HRM practices and turnover, productivity and financial performance*. Huselid et al. [5] have also contended that HRM practices, particularly selection and training, are associated with perceived firm performance in profit and nonprofit organisations. Similar results are reported by Gooderham et al. [6] who found a positive impact of HRM practices on firm performance. In a study in Greece, Katou et al. [7] found that HRM practices of staffing, training and promotion, involvement of employees, incentives, and safety and health have positive relationship with firm's performance. Researchers [8] have established that HRM practices of extensive recruitment and selection, training and development, and compensation systems have positive association with firm's performance. In another study Singh [9] found that strategic use of HRM practices positively affect performance of organizations in India. It has also been confirmed that selective staffing, training, compensation and incentive, have positive influence on performance of organization, Delaney and Huselid [5].

HR practices and productivity

In a study in Taiwanese high technology firms, Chang et al. [10] established that HRM practices of workforce planning, training and development, benefits, teamwork and performance appraisal significantly affected productivity. Lee et al. [11] established that workforce planning, teamwork, training & development, compensation and incentives, performance appraisal, and employees' security are important HRM dimensions that affect productivity, product quality, and business performance.

It has also been established by some researchers that HRM practices enhance employees' competency and motivation which in turn affect organizational performance. Harel et al. [12] contended that HRM practices based on quality hiring, development, and retention boosts firms' capability. Lam et al. [13] established that effective recruitment, efficient training and development and competitive compensation have relationship with financial dimensions of performance Green et al. [14] concluded that integrated approach to HR practices exhibited satisfied and committed employees who demonstrated remarkable individual and team performance.

Competitive advantage by adopting HR practices

An organization requires the utilization of a complex array of resources to grow, survive and achieve the ultimate mission or objectives for its existence. The mobilization and deployment of the resources such as human, financial and material in the right resource-mix, gives the organization leverage toward the desired end. Of these resources, the human resource is the most potent and central, contributing significantly to corporate bottom line and competitiveness. The

organization therefore gains sustained competitive advantage through people, the organization workforce. To be effective a competitive advantage must be difficult to mimic, applicable to multiple situations, unique, sustainable and superior to the competition.

Relationship between HR practices and competitive performance

Good HR practices significantly reduces turnover, which in turn increases overall market performance assessment. Its effectiveness can be understood in terms of building human resource complexities through innovations such as team based job designs, flexible workforces, and employee empowerment. Using a sample of banks in California and Kentucky, these researchers found that HR Practices effectiveness as moderated by capital intensity (the amount of investment in physical assets) affected firm productivity and return on equity. Relationship between HRM practices and operations management across countries and industries. This study provides an empirical validation of an ideal HRM system for manufacturing plants and provides overall support for Pfeffer's seven preferred HRM practices. HRM practices that distinguish top-performing firms from others regarding management of people in mergers and acquisitions using the CRANET data. They noted that for economic synergies to be realized, human synergies must be achieved first and HRM has a vital role to play in the process. The researchers found that successful companies had increased HR involvement in strategic decisions, formalized HR practices, built organizational capability through training and development activities, devolved HR activities to line managers, and emphasized internal labor market opportunities.

Relationship of high performance work systems (HPWS) practices with performance superiority

High performance work systems are defined as those which include comprehensive employee recruitment & selection procedures, incentive compensation and performance management systems, and extensive employee involvement and training. These organizations use a distinctive managerial approach that enables high performance through people. Although different HRM authors have emphasized slightly different features and management practices in describing HPWS, the essential characteristics are the seven key dimensions identified.

There are many empirical studies that have investigated whether firms utilizing a particular HPWS managerial practices achieve a higher level of performance than traditionally managed firms. However, comparatively few studies have focused on a group of HPWS practices and have examined in a rigorous fashion the extent to which these are associated with higher operating and financial performance.

Key HRM Practices in Indian Organisations: Observable Features

Some of the more pronounced HR practices in Indian organisations are as follows Chatterjee, [15]:

- ❖ **Job Description:** Percentage of employees with formally defined work roles is very high in the public sector.
- ❖ **Recruitment:** Strong dependence on formal labour market. Direct recruitment from institutions of higher learning is very common amongst management, engineering and similar professional cadres. Amongst other vehicles, placement

agencies, internet and print media are the most popular medium for recruitment.

- ❖ **Compensation:** Strong emphasis on security and lifetime employment in public sector including a range of facilities like, healthcare, housing and schooling for children.
- ❖ **Training and Development:** Poorly institutionalised in Indian organisations. Popularity of training programmes and their effect in skill and value development undeveloped.
- ❖ **Performance Appraisal:** A very low coverage of employees under formal performance appraisal and rewards or organisational goals.
- ❖ **Promotion and Reward:** Moderately variable across industries. Seniority systems still dominate the public sector enterprises. Use of merit and performance limited mostly to globally orientated industries.
- ❖ **Career Planning:** Limited in scope. The seniority based escalator system in the public sector provides stability and progression in career. Widespread use of voluntary retirement scheme in public sector by high performing staff. Cross functional career paths uncommon.
- ❖ **Gender Equity:** Driven by proactive court rulings, ILO guidelines and legislature provisions. Lack of strategic and inclusion vision spread.
- ❖ **Reservation System:** The central government has fixed 15 percent reservations for scheduled castes, 7.5 percent for scheduled tribes and 27 percent for backward communities. States vary in their reservation systems.

Ms Rupali Mishra [3] in her research paper “A comparative study of HR practices in selected Tyre Companies” has identified some of the best HR practices that have helped in the creation of a highly satisfied and motivated work force. These are as follows:-

- ❖ **Work Environment:** A safe and happy workplace makes the employees feel good about being there. Each one is given importance and provided the security that gives them the motivation and incentive to stay.
- ❖ **Open Management:** Employees don't like the feeling of being kept in the dark about what is happening in the company. They feel motivated and develop enthusiasm only when the management opens up to them and discusses the company policies, sales, clients, contracts, goals and objectives. This encourages participative management. Asking them for ideas on how to improve will get their creative juices flowing. Being open about everything related to the company will help in building trust and motivating the employees.
- ❖ **Performance Incentives:** Every good performance is appreciated in the form of a pat on the back, bonuses or giving some other compensation for a job well done. Organizations that struggle to keep up with the attrition rate are mostly those that think employees are “just” doing their job. Even if it is the employee's job, completion in an appreciable manner calls for an incentive, and this goes a long way in boosting the staff morale. These incentives can be implemented at the individual as well as the team level and it has been seen that this works wonders in getting the best out of the employees.

- ❖ **Performance Feedback:** Organizations understand the importance of collecting performance feedback from several quarters. The opinion of everyone matters, especially for someone who is in a leadership role at any level. Each person in the team is responsible for giving constructive feedback. This kind of system helps in identifying people who can perform well as leaders at higher levels in the organization.
- ❖ **Employee Evaluation:** A good system links individual performance to the goals and priorities of the organization. A fair review of each employee achievements.
- ❖ **Sharing of Knowledge:** Knowledge sharing is a wonderful strategy that helps in the betterment of the employees and their work.
- ❖ **Publicize Good Performances:** Every company has some employees who outperform others. Such performances should be highlighted and displayed where other employees can look at them; such as on the display boards and intranet etc. This will encourage others to give their best.
- ❖ **Discussions:** Successful organizations nurture ideas and they understand that employees who are actually working and know the business can provide the best ideas. The management should have discussions with employees to get these ideas out of them. There can also be suggestion boxes to capture these ideas. Through this system, managers can find talented employees and develop them.
- ❖ **Rewards:** While recognition of talent is highly important, this recognition has to be made public through holding ceremonies and announcing to the whole world (the employees), the achievements of a fellow employee.
- ❖ **The Surprise Factor:** Surprise deserving employees – when they are least expecting it. It could be a gift certificate or a small reward of some sort. This surprise does not have to be limited to the best performers, but it can be randomly given to others as a motivating factor too. Anyone can be given this surprise reward.

Such healthy HR practices encourage the growth of the organization as employees after all play a major role in the well-being of a company.

Research Gap

People are the key to superior performance and it is this resource, which makes the difference. With its 1.4 million strong human resources, the Indian Armed forces are a virtual treasure trove of HR issues, challenges and best practices. As stated earlier, the Indian Armed Forces are facing a severe manpower crunch due to their falling intake, rising premature retirements and short service officers even after being offered permanent commission in the Armed forces, opting for other better avenues. Perspectives do change and these definitely have changed for HR in the armed forces too. On careful observation, one can clearly see the shift that is occurring in the way HR is perceived and is expected to function. The Armed Forces are rapidly breaking out of their insular past. Interaction between the Services and the National environment is increasing which would lead to situations with which the defence officers, however, may not be very familiar. The rapid changes in the socio-economic aspect of national life will have their impact on the services too, especially on the personnel. Traditional views about military management and methods followed to solve various management problems may be inadequate and perhaps,

illogical to meet the challenges in the modern times which may inhibit or slow down the process of change in management attitudes and approaches. Age old tested management techniques are also becoming irrelevant and somewhat ineffective. It is, therefore, important to study the modern HR management practices prevalent in corporate sector to ascertain their relevance and application in the Armed forces. Today's challenges require informed decisions on force structure requirements, recruiting and retention programs, well-being programs and personnel readiness from both individual and unit perspectives. There is a need to examine the effects on core values consequent to changes in socio-economic conditions and enhanced aspirations at all levels and highlight the importance of stress management in combat, field, peace and Low intensity conflict situations. There is also a need to arrive at commensurate concepts to evolve a pragmatic approach to the management of human resource in the Indian Armed Forces by creating awareness regarding the complexity of HRM and man management in the changed environment. A study of salient HR issues and challenges in the Indian Armed Forces would be both interesting and instructive.

Likely Impact of Proposed Research in Academics/ Armed Forces

Management has taken a lot of its learning from the Armed forces. Even HR has borrowed a lot from the soldiers. The structure, strategies, appraisals and many other things are very similar in both Armed forces and the corporate sector. Many a times, case studies in the business schools discuss HR cases using Armed forces examples. Similarly with the change in socio-economic awareness of the soldiers, some of the HR practices prevalent in the Armed forces which have been refined over a period of time by the corporate sector may become very relevant. These are namely good safe and hygienic working conditions, sharing of goals and objectives to be achieved, Knowing and calling everyone by name, rewards and recognitions etc. There may be a need to introduce some of the new HR practices of the corporate sector in the Armed forces to maintain the motivation and morale of soldiers.

The study can prove to be of immense importance as it is likely to boost the intake and retention ratio in the Armed forces. The recommendations of the research can be applied to three services of Indian Armed forces at different management levels to get the best out of their men in both combat and peace time activities. It would revitalize the old and somewhat out dated HR policies and practices and decrease the stress on leadership. The study may also be useful in the following sectors:

- ❖ **Academics:** The results of the research study can become a suitable reference material for students undertaking research on human behavior and Motivation & Morale profile of Indian Armed Forces.
- ❖ **Industry/Corporate Sector:** Although the results and the recommendations of the research study have been evolved by taking into account the data concerned with the Indian Armed forces but these may also be of equal importance of managing HR of public sector enterprises and private sector undertakings.

Conceptual Framework

HRM in the Armed Forces involves a variety of activities, which include preparing human resource forecasts, recruitment, screening of prospective employees, the study of training needs, the development of compensation systems, Performance Appraisal and Rewards

and recognition. The Armed forces have reorganised their thought process on human resource management and periodically updated in consonance with the changing socio-economic scenario without compromising its core values and fundamental interests. However, in the last six decades, certain changes at rapid paces have evolved into major challenges, which are critically affecting the recruitment to forces, especially in officer's cadre. Major changes affecting HR in Armed forces are denudation of recruitment base, Early retirement ages, limited avenues for promotion, lack of motivation due to early supersession, changing morals and ethics, increasing level of stress and a large number of Short Service officers not opting for permanent commission.

A number of contemporary and good HR practices in the corporate sector have resulted in effectively managing human resources, attrition problems and keeping the employees happy. HR practices in Corporate Sector both in India and abroad have been grouped under following four dimensions of Human Resource management:

- (a) **Working Condition and Environment:** Open Book Management Style, Clearly Defined KRAs, Job Rotation, Flexitime, Staff management, Stress Relieving Measures, Professional Counseling Services, and Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace.
- (b) **Training and Development:** Cross-Functional Training, Employee Assistance Programmes, Knowledge Sharing Sessions, I-4 Teams, Code Camp Workshop, Cross Functional Teams and Competency Mapping.
- (c) **Rewards and Recognition:** Performance Linked Bonus, Highlight Performers, Delight Employees with the Unexpected, Idea Acceptance Reward, Employee of the Month, Calling Everyone by Name, Leisure and Entertainment.
- (d) **Performance Appraisal:** Fair Evaluation System, 360 Degree Performance Management Feedback System, Mentoring, Open House Discussion and Feedback Mechanism and Coffee with Boss.

Research Problem

The complexities in terms of socio-economic changes and technological developments have caused immense changes in society from which the soldiers are drawn. The working environment of the combatants too has undergone major changes in the recent past. Stress due to prolonged deployment in counter insurgency operations, changes in the working environment, employment scenarios, the ever-increasing accountability and ever-reducing tolerance to mistakes, take their toll. This changing environment has a profound impact on the soldier, the vital human resource, and has to be factored in, while approach to management of the personnel in uniform is decided.

Several measures have been undertaken by the Armed forces to attract the talented youth towards the forces. Since India's Independence, seven pay commissions have been set up on a regular basis to review and make recommendations on the working conditions and pay structure of all central government employees of India. Implementation of the AV Singh Committee that looked into lowering the age profile of commanding officers in the Army after the Kargil war, also created a sense of wellbeing, albeit, only for a short period. These measures have not had the desired results in overcoming the shortages in the officer's cadre. As reported in the press in March 2007, increasing number of officers of the Armed forces especially from the Army and the Indian Air Force, have been requesting for premature retirement for better and attractive avenues in the corporate sector. It is therefore

a felt need to retain at least these well trained personnel and keep them motivated too. Could the HR practices in vogue in corporate sector be relevant and adopted in the Indian Armed forces to overcome their HR related problems of attrition, retention and motivation and thereby enhance their effectiveness in meeting the National Security objectives? This has been taken on as the Research challenge.

Objectives of the Study

- (a) To study various HR practices being followed in the corporate sector for effective management of their human resources.
- (b) To seek and analyse responses from HR executive officers in three services of Indian Armed Forces, i.e., Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force for establishing the relevance and applicability of the good corporate HR practices for the management in Indian Armed forces.

Hypotheses

- (a) $H_{0.1}$. Many of the HR practices in use in Corporate Sector are also relevant to Indian Armed Forces.
- (b) $H_{0.2}$. Views expressed by three services of Indian Armed Forces, are independent of service interests and have a definite correlation amongst them.

Limitations of Study

- (a) No formal studies/literature on Best HR practices in the Indian Armed forces were available.
- (b) Most of the companies were reluctant to provide the written material on stated HR Policies and practices in vogue in their organisations.

Research Methodology

- (a) **Data Collection:** The primary data on Human resource practices in corporate sector has been collected from 35 companies and organisations in Banking (Axis, SBI, OBC, Andhra Bank), IT (Info Sys Technologies Limited, Wipro and TCS), Power (Bharat Electricals Ltd and Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd), Communication (Bharti Airtel, Motorola), Manufacturing (Maruti Udyog, Crompton Greaves, Essar Group, Steel Authority of India and LG Electronics India Pvt Ltd) and Exploration (Oil India Ltd, Shipping Corporation of India Ltd and Coal India Ltd) sectors through personal interaction and interviews. Use of e-questionnaire and interaction with Armed forces officers through seminars and interviews to get their views and preferences on relevance of HR practices in corporate sector was made. The secondary data was collected by referring and reviewing the reference books and articles on the subject, books, research work already done in this field and internet surfing etc.
- (b) **Sampling:** Convenient and simple random method of sampling was used to conduct the survey which comprised of 240 respondents consisting of HR executives in three services, at grass root level, middle level and senior level, both in age and service profile.
- (c) **Questionnaire Design.** The e-survey form containing 30 questions consisting both open and close ended questions on relevance of HR practices of corporate sector to Indian Armed Forces was used.

(d) **Measurement Scale:** Respondents were requested to grade their response to the questionnaire on the Likert rating scale: **5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree.**

(e) **Data Tabulation and Analysis:** The data collected through the e-questionnaire has been tabulated, and undergone a descriptive understanding. The data was classified and Quantitative Analysis was done using statistical software (SPSS). ABC classification analysis was carried out to gauge the preference of HR practices by services, One way Anova test to ascertain differences in preference of services, Spearman Rank Correlation, Coefficient of Pearson Correlation to establish co relation in responses and Chi Square test to test for independence between high, medium and low score values of the responses from the respondents have been conducted.

Analysis of Data

To illustrate, an example of one of the HR Practice “**Open Book management Style**” has been taken. It shows the question included in the e-questionnaire with a brief description of the HR Practice, tabulation of data and its analysis.

Open Book Management Style: The open book management style is sharing of business information, management objectives, organization’s policies and practices etc., which create a culture of participative management and thus motivates employees to perform better. Organisation share their information about contracts, sales, new clients, management objectives, company policies, employee personal data, etc. to ensure that their employees are as enthusiastic about the business of the organisation as the management.

Question: Adoption of the above style in the Indian Armed Forces will enhance motivation and facilitate better performance of their personnel.

The Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate 240 responses comprising of

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
IAF	0	0	3	12	45	60
Navy	8	12	1	10	29	60
Army	14	26	10	15	55	120
Total	22	38	14	37	129	240

Table 1: Responses to question on open book management style.

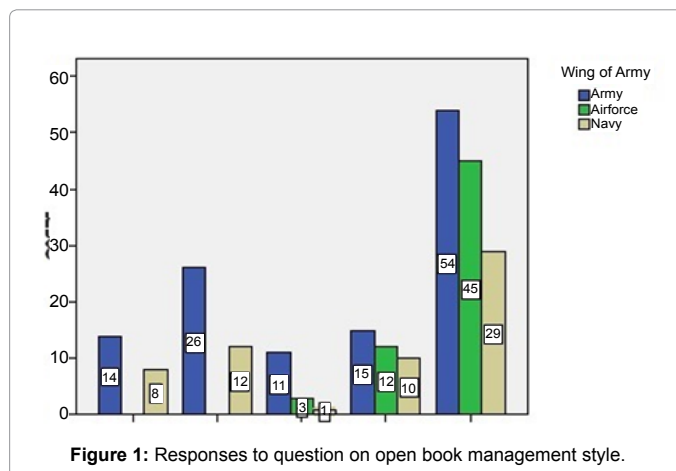


Figure 1: Responses to question on open book management style.

60 responses each from Indian Air Force and Navy and 120 responses of Army on ‘Open Book Management Style’ that were received and evaluated. The combined response of all services to adopt the said practice is 129 out of 240 (53.75%).

Out of the 60 Responses of IAF, 45 responses indicated strong preferences for Open Book Style of Management, 12 responses indicated that they preferred this practice and only 3 responses were neutral. We can infer that 75% of the IAF have shown strong preference and 20% have shown favourable preference. In case of Navy, 29 out of 60 (48.3%), have strongly recommended the adoption of the practice, but 20 (08 strongly disagreeing and 12 disagreeing) have not found favour (34%). 55 out of 120 (45%) army respondents have recommended adopting this practice. With 10 persons being neutral and 40 disagreeing (approximately 42%), the opinion seems to be divided.

This response could be attributed to the fact that men and manager ratio in Army and Navy as compared to Air Force is much higher and flexibility in execution of a task in Army and Navy cannot be delegated to that an extent. From the analysis, it was deduced that the practice of ‘Open Book Management Style’ may not be recommended for adoption in the services.

The same process was repeated for the remaining 29 HR practices. The tables and graphs thereafter were drawn for service specific responses and combined response.

Figures in the Table 2 are based on the values from 240 respondents in the column “Total Scores”. The first 120 figures relate to Army, next 60 to Navy, and the last 60 relate to Air Force (Tables 2 and 3).

It can be seen from the Table 3 and Figure 2 that services have accorded priority to HR practices as per working environment and services ethos in the respective services. For example, HR Practice of “Fair and Impartial Evaluation” was placed at No 1 by Army and Air Force and at No 2 by Navy. Similarly, “Safe, Healthy and Happy Work place” has been placed at No 2 in the overall ranking but Army has put it at No 4, Navy at No 1 and Air force at No 6. There is, however, convergence of views on 13-15 HR practices of all three services for their relevance to the Armed Forces. Where ever, there was an overwhelming response for relevance of a particular practice in a service, it has been recommended that this practice be adapted in that service. The same inference was also drawn from ABC classification.

Co-relation between the Preferences

To establish Co–relation between the preferences for HR practices, Pearson’s as well as Spearman’s Rank Correlations on the basis of Absolute Values as well as Ranked Values has been used (Table 4 and Figure 3).

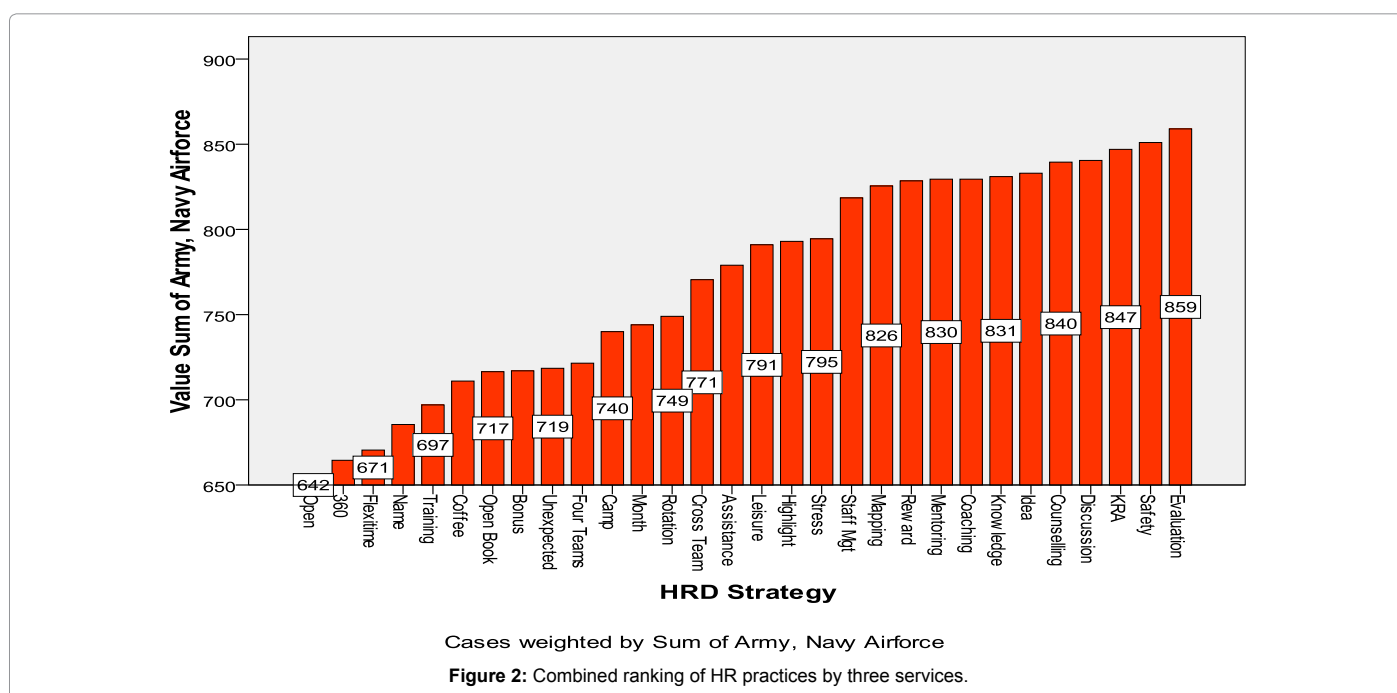
It is seen that correlation is significant in all the cases. Correlation between Navy and Army is found to be quite high and statistically significant as well. There is, however, moderate correlation between Air Force and Navy, and Air Force and Army. It is inferred from the above correlations and consequent scatter graph that Army and Navy see more in consonance with regard to relevance and adaption of HR Practices as compared to Air Force. This appears quite logical as both Army and Navy have more men behind the machines and stay together for longer duration to accomplish a mission as compared to Air Force.

S. No.	Name of HR Practice	Air Force	Navy	Army	Combined
1	Open Book Management Style	282	220	429	931
2	Clearly Defined and Measurable KRAs	281	282	566	1129
3	Job Rotation	229	260	507	996
4	Flexitime	285	175	425	885
5	Staff Management	265	275	547	1087
6	Stress Relieving Measures	268	260	534	1062
7	Professional Counseling Services	273	285	563	1121
8	Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace	282	288	570	1140
9	Coaching and Mentoring	278	271	559	1108
10	Cross-Functional Training	199	247	501	947
11	Employee Assistance Programs	262	260	503	1035
12	Knowledge Sharing Sessions	280	279	533	1092
13	I4 Teams – Ingenious, Idea, Incubation and Implementation	266	224	469	959
14	Code Camp Workshop	245	251	488	984
15	Cross Functional Teams	235	264	527	1026
16	Competency Mapping	272	276	555	1103
17	Performance linked Bonus/Incentives	266	245	412	923
18	Highlight Performers	261	267	527	1055
19	Delight Employees with the Unexpected	268	229	463	960
20	Rewards and Recognition	274	280	549	1103
21	Leisure and Entertainment Activities	280	270	533	1083
22	Idea Acceptance Reward	285	271	554	1110
23	Employee of the Month	239	258	478	975
24	Calling Everyone by Name	215	221	499	935
25	Fair Evaluation System	287	286	572	1145
26	360 Degree Performance Management Feedback System	232	217	436	885
27	Open Door Policy	251	281	376	830
28	Open House Discussions	276	203	569	1125
29	Coffee with Boss	257	242	424	923
30	Mentoring	272	280	555	1107

Table 2: Response to HR practices.

S. No.	Combined Rank	Army	Navy	Air Force
1	Fair Evaluation	Fair Evaluation	Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace	Fair Evaluation
2	Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace	Open House Discussion	Fair Evaluation	Idea Acceptance Reward
3	Clearly Defined and Measurable KRA	Clearly Defined and Measurable KRA	Professional Counseling Services	Knowledge Sharing Sessions
4	Open House Discussion	Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace	Clearly Defined and Measurable KRA	Flexitime
5	Professional Counseling Services	Professional Counseling Services	Mentoring	Open Book Management Style
6	Idea Acceptance Reward	Coaching and Mentoring	Open House Discussion	Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace
7	Knowledge Sharing Sessions	Mentoring	Rewards & Recognition	Staff Management
8	Mentoring	Competency Mapping	Knowledge Sharing Sessions	Clearly Defined and Measurable KRA
9	Coaching & Mentoring	Idea Acceptance Reward	Competency Mapping	Coaching and Mentoring
10	Rewards & Recognition	Rewards & Recognition	Coaching & Mentoring	Leisure and Entertainment
11	Competency Mapping	Staff Management	Idea Acceptance Reward	Open House Discussion
12	Staff Management	Cross Function Teams	Leisure & Entertainment	Rewards and Recognition
13	Stress Relieving Measures	Knowledge Sharing Sessions	Highlight Performers	Professional Counseling Services
14	Highlight Performers	Stress Relieving Measures	Employee of the Month	Mentoring
15	Leisure & Entertainment	Highlight Performers	Cross Function Teams	Competency Mapping
16	Employee Assistance Programs	Employee Assistance Programs	Staff Management	Stress Relieving Measures
17	Cross Function Teams	Job Rotation	Employee Assistance Programs	Performance Linked Bonus
18	Job Rotation	Cross Functional Training	Stress Relieving Measures	I4 Teams
19	Employee of the Month	Calling Everyone by Name	Job Rotation	Employee Assistance Programs
20	Code Camp Workshop	Leisure and Entertainment	Code Camp Workshop	Delight Employees with Unexpected
21	I4 Teams	Code Camp Workshop	Cross Functional Training	Highlight Performers
22	Delight Employees with Unexpected	Employee of the Month	Performance Linked Bonus	Coffee with Boss
23	Performance Linked Bonus	I4 Teams	Coffee with Boss	Open Door Policy
24	Open Book Management Style	Delight Employees with Unexpected	Delight Employees with Unexpected	Code Camp Workshop
25	Coffee with Boss	360 Degree Performance Management Feedback	I4 Teams	Employee of the Month
26	Cross Functional Training	Open Book Management Style	Calling Everyone by Name	Job Rotation
27	Calling Everyone by Name	Coffee with Boss	Open Book Management Style	Cross Function Teams
28	Flexi time	Flexi time	360 Degree Performance Management Feedback	360 Degree Performance Management Feedback
29	360 Degree Performance Management Feedback	Performance Linked Bonus	Open Door Policy	Calling Everyone by Name
30	Open Door Policy	Open Door Policy	Flexi time	Cross Functional Training

Table 3: Ranking of HR practices.



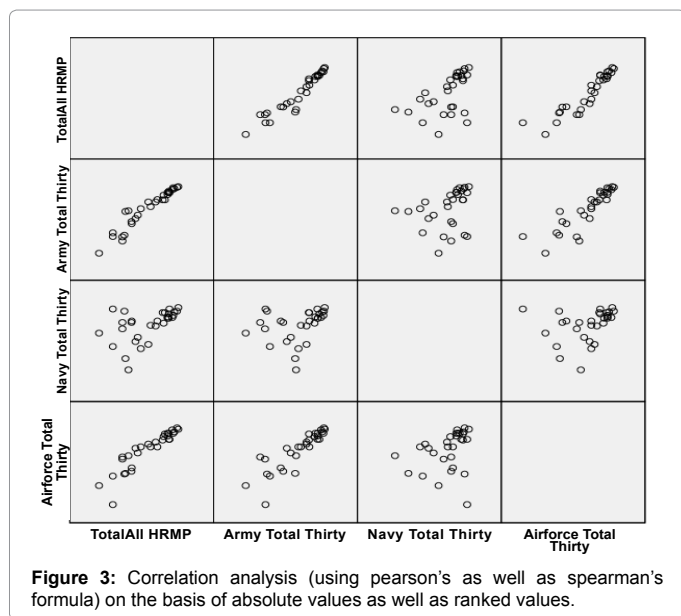
Correlations based upon Absolute Data : Pearson					
		Total All HRMP	Army Total Thirty	Navy Total Thirty	Air force Total Thirty
Total All HRMP	Pearson Correlation	1	0.958**	0.525**	0.917**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.003	0.000
Army Total Thirty	Pearson Correlation	0.958**	1	0.306	0.872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.100	0.000
Navy Total Thirty	Pearson Correlation	0.525**	0.306	1	0.297
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.100		0.111
Airforce Total Thirty	Pearson Correlation	0.917**	0.872**	0.297	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.111	

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

Correlations Based upon Absolute Data : Spearman						
		Total All HRMP	Army Total Thirty	Navy Total Thirty	Air force Total Thirty	
Spearman's rho	Total All HRMP	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.977**	0.574**	0.961**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.001	0.000
		N	30	30	30	30
Army Total Thirty	Army Total Thirty	Correlation Coefficient	0.977**	1.000	0.502**	0.938**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.005	0.000
		N	30	30	30	30
Navy Total Thirty	Navy Total Thirty	Correlation Coefficient	0.574**	0.502**	1.000	0.486**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.005		0.007
		N	30	30	30	30
Air force Total Thirty	Air force Total Thirty	Correlation Coefficient	0.961**	0.938**	0.486**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.007	
		N	30	30	30	30

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

Table 4: Correlation analysis (using pearson's as well as spearman's formula) on the basis of absolute values as well as ranked values.



Findings

HR Practices found to be relevant

Out of the 30 HR practices studied, following 15 practices which got the combined as well as service specific response '5-Strongly Agree' from more than 50% of the respondents, have been selected as relevant for adopting in the Indian Armed forces.

1. **Clearly Defined and Measurable KRAs:** In the Armed forces the annual targets for achieving training standards, keeping the war fighting equipment operational worthy and financial

propriety are discussed and defined at the beginning of a new training year. It at times also changes of modified with the perceptions of the decision maker at the top of the ladder. These KRAs are however known to the senior executives only. These are translated into smaller and achievable objectives for the junior persons. Almost 70% of respondents have felt the need of specifying clearly defined targets to be achieved and their periodical measurement. This practice therefore needs to be formally adopted in the Armed Forces.

2. **Safe, Healthy and Happy Workplace:** It is not always possible to achieve this especially for the Army and the Navy. Army deployed in the most inhospitable places in High altitude areas, like Siachen Glacier/Kargil or in the interiors of Nagaland, Mizoram and Navy operating from the cramped spaces of a submarine or other Naval ships cannot have the ideal working place. Armed forces have taken action to make the living conditions as comfortable as possible and also provided monetary benefits to compensate for the hardships. But when the personnel are stationed in a peace station, their quality of life should be best, as is evident by a majority response recommending in adapting this practice.
3. **Stress Relieving Measures:** Under prolonged stress, individuals tend to behave illogically and irrationally. Depending upon their personality and the nature of immediate provocation/situation, reactions have ranged from apathy, inaction, excessive violence, senseless dare-devilry, running amok and suicide. The occupational stress is propelling the soldiers toward deadly steps and simultaneously tarnishing the image of the Armed forces. The suicidal figures of the last few years reveal alarming level of stress among the Indian soldiers. In such a situation, a well administered, happy, motivated and

responsive combat outfit can act as a much needed support system to mitigate stress levels. Stress busters are actually need of the hour in all organisations. 221 respondents out of 240 (88%) have recommended the formalized adoption of stress relieving measures.

4. **Professional Counseling Services (for personal issues only):** Counseling is the process of assisting and guiding, especially by a trained person on a professional basis, to resolve personal, social or psychological problems and difficulties. Due to long separations from the family and deployment in field areas or at sea, the stress level tends to go high both for the serving personnel and their families. At the moment, Religious Teacher or Second in Command in the unit are entrusted with the duties of counseling the personnel. Armed Forces Wives Welfare Associations the peace station take on the task of counseling the families. 97% of the respondents have felt the need of hiring professional services for counseling.
5. **Staff Management:** It is a concept which helps the staff to have a single point of contact in the organisation to manage all issues impacting or influencing them. Introducing Staff Management concept in the Armed forces will provide timely information and faster resolution of grievances of defence personnel. At the moment in case of Forces, the issues are managed by respective Record Offices which keeps updated records of all personnel based upon the inputs received from the unit/subunit where the person is posted or serving. Pay and allowances and promotions are regulated by the Record offices. In the units the Administrative branch deals with all the documentation. Approximately 65% respondents have recommended further streamlining and adoption of this practice.
6. **Knowledge Sharing Sessions:** Conducting knowledge sharing sessions/meetings enhances the role clarity, identifies with the objectives of the organisation and updates knowledge about latest trends thus improving effectiveness of the personnel. This is being undertaken in all the services depending upon the literacy level and "Need to know basis". Latest doctrines and thought process is also shared through various in house magazines and tri services Journals and in Seminars which are periodically organized. 65% of respondents have strongly agreed that this practice is very relevant to Armed Forces as knowledge empowers the personnel and increase the feeling of belongingness.
7. **Coaching and Mentoring:** Coaching and mentoring of junior officers and soldiers/sailors/airmen through training in Armed forces will facilitate their performance level and faster adaptation to the organization's environment. At present though the required coaching is being given but the mentoring has not been given its due importance. This would require to train the mentors to understand the mechanism and effectively implement it. This practice has been ranked at 7 in the combined ranking of services whereas Army has placed it at 6 and Navy at 11.
8. **Competency Mapping:** It is a process of identifying key competencies for a particular position in an organisation and then using it for job-evaluation, recruitment, training and development, performance management, and succession planning. Competency mapping will help the Indian Armed forces in getting competent men to accomplish a task and thus enhance their performance and effectiveness of Armed Forces. 80 out of 120 (67%) Army respondents have strongly recommended whereas the response of Navy and Air Force is approximately 61%.
9. **Fair Evaluation System:** It links the individual's performance to the goals of the organisation wherein each employee has well-defined performance reporting relationships. Performance evaluation is based on the records of periodic counseling and achievements of the employee tracked over the year. All the three services are following different 'partially open' appraisal system. Due to pyramidal structure of the Armed Forces, appraisal reports play a major role in the promotions of all ranks. There are at times feelings in the mind of persons who have been overlooked for the promotion that the organisation has not been very fair to them. Adopting a fair, transparent and objective oriented evaluation system in the Armed forces will motivate the personnel to perform even better.
10. **Mentoring:** Mentoring is essentially grooming of team members for bigger roles in the organisation. In this process, senior members play a central role by taking up effective mentoring roles. In fact, mentoring is an integral part of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) set for the senior managers. Many companies have developed formal programme designed to promote mentoring relationships as part of their human resource development strategy. Lt General Ata Hasnain [16] says, 'How exactly will mentoring help the Indian Army's officer cadre? In the absence of sufficient 8-12 year seniority officers in units, young officers are being robbed off the opportunity of educated growth'. There is no formal mentoring programme, as such being followed. 70.8% respondents have found this practice highly relevant to the Armed Forces and in service specific response with 75% of Air Force respondents endorsing the practice.
11. **Open House Discussions and Feedback Mechanism:** In the Armed forces a concept of a Sainik/Sailor/ Airmen Sammelan is followed. This is invariably a monthly event conducted by the Commanding Officer attended by all ranks including civilian employees of the establishment. Information relating to welfare scheme, new orders and policies are disseminated. A feedback is also obtained on training and administration. This is followed by a cup of tea with all ranks where the commanding officer moves around meeting everyone. These interactions at times do not take place due to various commitments. This practice needs to be formalized and implemented.
12. **Idea Acceptance Reward:** Idea acceptance reward encourages generation of fresh ideas to accomplish a task and lead to development of proficiency of the personnel. Ideas, however, big or small should be encouraged and suitably awarded. Service specific response for relevance of this practice shows that 95% from the Army, 96.6% from the Air Force and 96% from the Navy have endorsed this HR practice. At the moment this practice has not been formalized in the Armed Forces but it should find its place in the times to come.
13. **Rewards and Recognition:** A shift in the culture of any organization is effective only if employees change their behaviour to support the change. For this to happen, rewards must be designed to reinforce desirable behavior. Employees must be able to see a clear connection between their everyday

work and rewards. Good work and achievements being re-colonized and appreciated in public also go a long way in motivating people to excel. Rewards and recognition here should not be confused with the compensation which is due to an employee for performing tasks and duties. This practice is already in vogue in the Armed Forces where awards for both gallantry and distinguished services are given to all ranks in glittering functions. Some of these awards also carry monetary benefits.

14. Highlighting Performers: It is creating profiles of the top performers and making them visible through organization intranet, display boards, etc. Adopting of this practice will encourage other personnel to put in their best, thereby creating a competitive environment within the organisation. In the Armed Forces the High performers get recognized by promotions, awards conferred upon them or the postings to important and high valued appointments. There is no formal procedure being followed to officially highlight the achievement of the High performers. 235 respondents (98%) have agreed to the relevance of the practice.

15. Leisure and Entertainment Activities: Many organisations organize yoga, meditation, de-stressing classes like 'Art of Living' for their staff members at the end of the day, to relax and recoup from the day's hard work. In the Armed forces, excellent facilities for both indoor and outdoor sports in the peace stations exist. There are clubs/institutes for officers, junior commissioned officers and soldiers where they along with their families can socialize. Most of the big cantonments also have in house Conference/Seminar halls where movies are also screened. Almost all respondents have endorsed the relevance of this practice.

Service preference for some of the HR practices

It was seen that Service response to some of the HR Practices has been more favourable than the overall combined preference. These practices have not been shortlisted in recommended 15 HR Practices. These however, in case desired after study and deliberations can be adopted in that specific service only. These are as under:-

(a) Air Force

(i) **Flexi time:** Unlike Army and Navy, Air Force personnel are not required to man their station for fixed timings. The requirement of Air Crew is more contingent to the mission to be accomplished. 45 out of 60 (75%) of Air Force respondent have opted for Flexible working hours. This practice therefore could be considered for adoption with some changes in Air Force, especially at the Air force bases located in big peace stations.

(ii) **Open Book Management Style:** Out of the 60 responses of IAF, 45 responses indicated strong preferences for Open Book Style of Management, 12 responses indicated that they preferred this practice and only 3 responses were neutral. It can be inferred that 75% of the IAF have shown strong preference and 20% have shown favourable preference.

(iii) **Highlighting Performers:** This has been ranked 15 in the combined ranking but the Air Force respondents have put it at serial 21 in the order of preference. Only 38% of respondents have strongly agreed to the relevance of this practice in the Air Force. This could be discussed and adapted in Air force only if desired.

(b) **Navy, Preference for Practice of Job Rotation:** In the combined ranking by services this practice has been ranked at serial 18 whereas Navy has preferred this practice by placing it at 16 ahead of 18 of Army and 28 of Air Force.

Correlation in responses

Correlation Analysis using Pearson's as well as Spearman's Rank Correlations on the basis of Absolute Values as well as Ranked Values have revealed that the correlation is stronger between Army and Air Force, Army and Total, Air Force and Total. But, these correlations are not that strong between Army and Navy, Air Force and Navy.

Recommendations

In order to implement the shortlisted HR practices in the Indian Armed forces, it is suggested that the recommended practices, suitably modified be adapted progressively in a phased manner. A board of HR experts drawn from three services is constituted to carry out study of the recommended HR practices and suitably modify them as per the specific service requirement. They should suggest suitable policy guidelines and procedure to implement these practices across the board.

These HR practices should also be included in the training curricula for officers of all levels and taught during Professional training courses, Staff Course, Higher Command Course, HDMC and SDMC etc. Various Colleges of Instructions in the Armed Forces should make concerted efforts to prepare teaching material to teach the best HR practices through HDMC, SDMC and other capsule courses. Further, the status of the implementation of the HR practices in the defence units should be audited/verified during their annual inspection. To encourage better implementation, suitable citation/award/trophy should be instituted for the best unit following the HR practices effectively.

Areas of Further Study

The result of this research paper are preliminary/exploratory in nature but are able to provide some insights that may be considered as vital elements to further enhance the organisational effectiveness of Indian Armed Forces. Further studies can be undertaken on the ways and means of implementing the above HR practices in the Indian Armed Forces, and further impact of these on the effectiveness of the defence management in the long run. Similar studies are also recommended to be conducted with respect to each service.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this study are that Best HR Practices in vogue in the Corporate Sector are equally relevant to The Indian Armed forces and adoption of the recommended HR practices will surely enhance the effectiveness of the forces. Hence, the hypothesis stands proved. Further studies can be undertaken on the ways and means of implementing the above HR practices in the Indian Armed forces, to increase the impact of these on the effectiveness of defence management in the long run.

References

1. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Forces-battle-shortage-of-fighting-rank-officers/articleshow/45329628.cms>
2. Lado AA, Wilson MC (1994) Human resource systems and sustained competitive advantage: a competency-based perspective. *Academy of Management Journal* 19: 699-727.
3. <http://shodh.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/1985/1/synopsis.pdf>

4. Becker BE, Huselid MA (1998) High performance work systems and firm performance: a synthesis of research and managerial implications. *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management* 16: 53-101.
5. Huselid MA, Delaney JT (1996) The impact of human resource management on perceptions of organizational performance. *Academy of Management Journal* 39: 949-969.
6. Gooderham P, Ringdal K, Parry E (2006) The impact of human resource management practices on the performance of european firms. Retrieved from Paper presented at Copenhagen Business School.
7. Katou A, Budhwar P (2006) The effect of human resource management systems on organizational performance: test of a mediating model.
8. Chiu RK, Luk VWM, Tang TL (2002) Retaining and motivating employees: compensation preferences in Hong Kong and China. *Personnel Review* 31: 402-431.
9. Singh K (2003) Strategic HR orientation and firm performance in India. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 14: 530-543.
10. Chang PL, Chen WL (2002) The effect of human resource management practices on firm performance: empirical evidence from high-tech firms in Taiwan. *International Journal of Management* 19: 622-638.
11. Lee FH, Lee TZ (2007) The relationships between HRM practices, leadership style, competitive strategy and business performance in Taiwanese steel industry, pp: 953-971.
12. Harel GH, Tzafirir SS (1999) The effects of human resource management practices on the perceptions of organizational and market performance of the firm. *Human Resource Management* 38: 185-199.
13. Lam LW, White LP (1998) Human resource orientation and corporate performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 9: 351-364.
14. Green WK, Wu C, Whitten D, Medlin B (2006) The Impact of strategic human resource management on firm performance and HR professionals work attitude and work performance. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 8: 263-276.
15. Chatterjee SR (2007) Human resource management in India: where from and where to? *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management* 15: 92-103.
16. Hasnain A (2014) Mentoring: a solution to many social problems of the Indian army. *South Asia Defense and Strategic Review*.