TOPIC: PREVALENT PROBLEMS OF HR PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR SOLUTION: PAKISTANI CONTEXT

Muhammad Hanif
Haneef_888@yahoo.com
School of Business and Economics, University of Management and Technology, Lahore Pakistan
Mahwish Imran
Mahwish.Mahwish@hotmail.com
Govt. College University Lahore Pakistan

ABSTRACT: *The present study was conducted on 42 managers of different national and multinational companies. The main goal was to draw out major issues and challenges faced by them in Human Resource Management. As human beings are the pivotal asset for any company's productivity and growth, thus it was also inquired from managers about the remedies for resolving related issues. Study followed qualitative orientation, semi-structured interview was an instrument. The findings of indicated three major areas of disturbance in HRM, one is recruitment and selection, second is retention and the third is training and development. Managers suggested some remedial actions which they have been using in their organizations to deal with the issues they face; moreover, on these three areas that could be beneficial for personnel as well as policy makers of any organization for coping upcoming issues and challenges.*

1. INTRODUCTION

At this age of change and dynamism, Human Resource Management has become more important, specifically for its role and part in establishing an environment of competition and challenges. Human resource practices with regard to human empowerment constitute a vivid ability towards sustainable competition among various challenges and issues [57]. They also discussed the human pooling and empowerment in the arena of skillful, qualified and experienced members within any organization [58]. Due to speedy progress and developments in world's economy, the significance of human aspect of success within an organization had identified and accepted from both practitioners and academicians. According to [23] human resources are the present intellects and synergies of human beings working in an organization as positive drivers in the apprehension of organizational strategy.

HRM practices are popular and becoming ever more popular and inevitable. Theoretical exchanges between the concepts of human resource managements and economical aspects had ever since prominently growing from the past few decades [9]. This theoretical background can be traced back in two dimensional phenomena describing meta and middle level advancements; Meta theories referred about the purposes of human resource management and its relationship between economic achievements, whereas the middle level theories stated about the various dimensions, factors and aspects of the relationship between the two i.e. HRM and economy [59]. The importance of human resources can be understood from the fact that these are the means of attaining all sort of financial, economic and developmental advantages in the environment of strict competition and challenges, this is due to its ability to transform various other forms of resources like money, methods and materials into products, outcomes, benefits and services [55]. Many researchers and practitioners had identified the importance of human resources; according to them human beings are such creations of God that can be modeled and according to the adaptability opportunities of any organization due to their natural flexibility they have in them [30]. It is human beings in terms of managers and administrators and not the material factors of an organization

that makes it on how it responds in an environment of competition [49]. And thus various scholars indicated the importance and difficulty in managing human as a resource than technological resources [34].

Human resources can only be settled when human resource management systems are run and managed properly. Human Resource Management is an idiosyncratic approach for managing employees in order to get competitive success and benefits from utilization of that kind of workforce that are best much in usage of techniques and technologies for achieving goals. Human resource management can establish a sound organizational behavior in various components of organizational culture like staff devotion, competency, commitment and adaptability, which can produce positive and enhanced performances among staff members [32]. In order for any organization to have a strong human resource system, it requires an effective an efficient practices of human resource management.

1.1.   Rationale and Purpose of the Study

Practices or functions of Human Resource Management are defined or directed towards all the activities functioning within an organization for operating and managing the team of people or human resources for ascertaining the best fit induction of resources for te attainment of organizational objectives, benchmarks and goals [60]. One of the main goals of HRM is to hunt for a best fit among the management systems of an organization and staff members as well as the whole deliberated trend and direction of the organization. Many failures, conflicts, barriers and issues can be existed in order to develop a best fit environment for human resources in any profession. These failures are observed by many authors, researchers and scholars over the duration of many past studies, these observations are mainly related to employees' aspects of HRM. The factors that were indicated regarding barriers and challenges influencing Human Resource Managements by many researchers created a space to inquire more about meaningful trends regarding current and future expected practices of HRM [38]. Some of the indicated issues by these scholars are as under:

Top managers usually do not pay heed to the fact that employees might be having or creating issues in their HRM systems. They are of the opinion that these issues are different for different professions [6], thus indicating that they are not well aware about universal issues in their area. There have been found a lack of confidence among HRM practitioners and professionals when they are presented in the meeting room [38]. Human resource professionals have low level of communication and motivation when transmitting and applying the strategies of HRM to their sub-ordinates at its whole [14]. Literature also identified that in HRM low content knowledge and skills related to effective and efficient implementation of human resource management practices at all levels within an organization is also an important issue [35].

HRM systems and functions may be different and in variety organization to organization, and the barriers, issues and challenges for smooth running of these operations may also vary. The paper in hand is aimed to identify those issues, challenges and barriers faced by managers at all levels within an organization for smooth running of Human Resource Management systems.

The Harvard framework
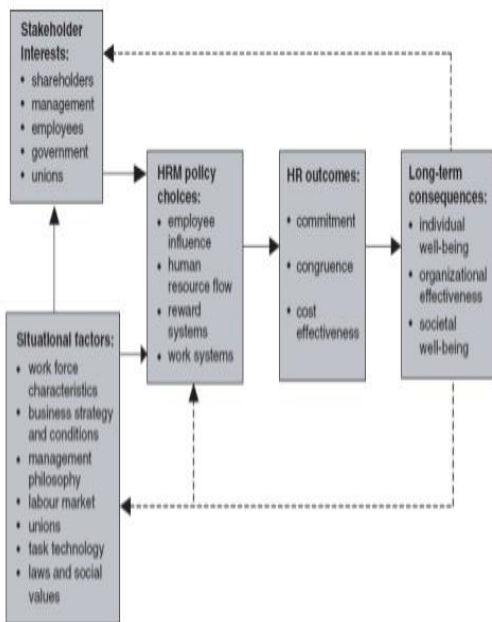
1.2. Research Questions
The predominant questions;
➢ What Human Resource Management issues do managers face within an organization?
➢ Moreover, what challenges with regard to Human Resource Management do managers encounter within an organization?

➢ What remedies, suggestions and recommendations do managers provide for the solution of HRM issues and challenges?

1.3. Significance of the Study
Due to the fact that human aspect of resources in an organization is pivotal to the smooth running of its operations, there is worldwide acknowledgment that human assets and their influences on HRM practices create critical situations in the way of organizational successes [22]. So in this aspect real situation within te Pakistani context needed to be researched. Present study provides a view of what issues and challenges implicitly and explicitly are faced regarding HRM in any firm. The findings of this study will be helpful for managers, practitioners and policy makers for establishing solutions for the related issues and challenges.

2. Theoretical Background & Literature
Two dimensions are characterized, i.e. HRM is also a scholastic theory and an industry practice while both of the perspectives give details about the theoretical and practical implications on managing personnel [1].

2.1.   HRM as a Theory
According to Harvard framework of HRM, one of the significant stakeholders within an organization is an employee. Employees are adorned with their own needs, demands, expectations and concern with the organization as well as with their colleagues and other shareholders and customers.

The theory constituted four main areas of policy those are:
Influence of employee: Devolved level of authority, responsibility and power.
Flow of Human Resource: stages of HRM like, recruitment, selection, appraisal, termination etc.
Incentive Systems: Monetary incentives, rewards, awards, certifications, etc.
Work Systems: work design and alignment of personnel
These underpinnings provide a ground stage of an HR policy made on commitment, congruence, competence, and cost effectiveness. These 4Cs would be beneficial for both cost and human resources. This policy evaluation can be done at all three levels of organizational function i.e. individual, organizational and societal.

2.2. Work of Paauwe:
The justifications of the findings presented in the light of issues and challenges faced by HR personnel are found in the work of [39]. He discussed the need of a reform in the form of reviewing the conceptualization and measurement strategies of performances and successes [40]. In all of his recommendations, he distinguished the influences of operations of Human Resources on the product and outcomes, he argued that these influences are more complicated as compared to mention in human resource literature and studies [41]. This is the reason there is a need of more empirical evidences of practical implications, issues and challenges of HRM in local and international organizational communities.

The assumptions underlying the modernistic and humanistic aspects of Human resource management theory have far more than literary attraction, even if studying Western arena of HRM frameworks, there found major mismatches among HRM practices and conventional theories [45]. The major

reason indicated behind this disconnection was that HRM usually took no notice about firm research on policies and practices as well as humanistic aspects within the framework that are always major components of decision making. Moreover, only those HRM practices and operations are in a trend to adopt for the reason that other competitors of that organization are using it [3].

Such practices show that such organizations are not acting upon one of the major goal of HRM i.e. to manage their "most important asset" (human) and thus contrasting with traditional definitions of HRM.

This field of management requires a theory about real human resource management, about performance and success, about the relationship between them, about the issues, barriers and challenges and about the actual practices of HRM in the field. [42] Provided a theory in the form of a linkage between a theory and actual performance [26]. He was in a favor to reject all such manuscripts of HRM that have theoretical underpinnings and assumptions without practical implications in actual field and all such manuscripts that contained practical implications without firm theoretical background. According to him, all real documents and manuscripts of HRM within an organization should be grounded and constituted with both the theory and practice regardless of the burden on the author for such comprehensive document [13].

2.3. Theoretical Implications on Functions of HRM

Majority of the literature found on HRM is established on any of the one or some functions than the whole of HRM processes. Present is an attempt to collect some research findings on each of the main components and functions of HRM from various academics and researches on various firms, organization, companies or only meant for study purposes. The attempt is done from drawing evidences from extended and unending discussions among academics, researchers and practitioners with regard to theory of HRM and its application to actual practices. Here, some barriers that are found in the theory and practice of HRM are discussed:

Planning—[5] indicated the imbalance between the demand and supply or equilibrium within the organizational frameworks. They discussed that it is easy and approachable to balance demand and supply in paper documents or computer screen but in the real life situation it is more than that, other ever changing conditions and challenges that any organization is facing including personnel behavior and attitude as well as technological barriers also make it impossible to keep equilibrium among all the processes of HRM.

Recruitment--New and rapid advancements in ICTs proved to make recruitment systems more complex and hectic in hiring best personnel. Many studies indicated that less formal ways of recruiting i.e. walk-in interviews or referrals provided longer job tenure of those personnel than more formal way like providing ads in newspapers or internet [43].

Selection--When there are a large number of applications on a specific vacancy, due its diversity of applicants and candidates the duration of selection process gets prolonged, in the meantime due to its delay the actual purpose and need of issuing that vacancy with time, thus the successful candidate that was selected on the previously mentioned job

description and specification could not perform well on current demands and requirements. This all process of selection need a strict validation at every step with regard to performance.

Performance Evaluation-- According to [8] the main issue in the field of performance appraisal is that organizations usually ignore getting all the support in implementing and managing a strict or favorable performance appraisal system.[27] claimed annual performance appraisal system too insufficient to judge the performance of any employee because of the fact that most raters only remember or take into account employees present or current performances than what he did from the first day of the year, this finding was in a match with that of [7].

[17] indicated organizational work environment as a main factor of positive work performance of employees due to the fact that such environment make workers more committed and willing towards their task ultimately providing better results. They also claimed that if the organizations' work on its work environment it will reduce their cost on selection and recruitment due to personnel retention and long work tenures.

[33] Suggested that organizations should make their training & development, career development and HRD stronger in order to reduce intentions of employee leaving a job or voluntary job leavings.

Training--   Simulations are always proved to be effective tool in training and development of new recruited or already inducted employees. But Bradford et al (2008) declared that even low level simulations put big costs on organization's budget, thus it should not be practiced in small firms or the organizations with a limited number of employees.

2.4. Evolution of HRM in Pakistan

Human Resource Management was introduced in Pakistan in the middle of 90's with the introduction of Multinational Corporations, this provision was mainly done by PIDC under the consent of hastening industrialization in Pakistan. In 1960, the country took a major step of giving its nation an institute for the training and development of human resources, the institute was named as Pakistan Institute of Management [25].

After that training and development departments were being established in many of the banking and private commercial firms, including State Bank of Pakistan becoming the pioneer in the field. Steadily but progressively, leading universities started to establish departments of Public Administration in order to spread professional knowledge of Human Resource Management among prospective, in-service or practitioner industrialists. This created a trend of setting up separated HR departments in almost every small and large organization. The main goal and intention of establishing HR departments was to provide an amiable working environment in an organization for improving commitment, involvement and devotion of employees towards work ultimately producing better results and their work performances.

After such HR interventions, no organization can claim that they are cent-percent free from problems and issues of HRM. The ills still persist in the form of lack of motivation among personnel, low commitment and high rate of turnovers. The departments become only the hallmarks of Human Resource

Developments without a conscious attempt of improvement in quality and productivity of human resources. HRM developments and systems with no conventional personnel management is yet an overlooked commotion. However, organizations like ISO 9000 certification; they are still using the systems of traditional, orthodox or so-called outdated personnel administration. As a trend in many old and famous organizations and companies all the personnel management departments had turned into HR departments, but with the view of managing the same old pool of employees having same old belief systems, thus representing a change in name of departments and nothing else. People who lack proper knowledge, skills and practical implications of HRM are useless and helpless in applying HRM principals in their firms. Other main cause also includes favoritism and nepotism in various programs like recruitment and selection, training and development etc.

Pakistan established National Commission for Human Development in the legislation and act of July 2002, for government's indication of taking HRM in a holistic level. As a result Human Resource Development Support Units (HDSU) is established by NCHD to devolve the districts and Literacy Support Units (LSU) among in a number of districts. Pakistan adopted HRM practices in order to overcome various challenges and organizational issues with reference to performance. But unfortunately the country is failing to do so. We can say that HRM in Pakistan is still immature and in its foundational state. Real implications in it is still not found or seemed in its actual stage.

3. OVERALL METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY
The study followed the qualitative approach using interviews as an instrument of data collection. The interviews were conducted from 42 Human Resource personnel from different national and multinational companies of Pakistan regardless of their types, i.e. these companies were from all fields of services from education, health and industry. After delimitation companies were selected conveniently from District Lahore.

The main interview questions asked were:

I1: What issues and challenges do you find with respect to HRM in your organization?

I2: What remedies or suggestions do you think best for resolving or overcoming those specified issues and challenges?

Each interview session lasted from 10-15 minutes. Corresponding Human Resource respondent was contacted earlier for setting up the time and availability for the interview. He/she was informed earlier about the purpose, focus and taking the consent of this study. Researcher tried his best not to put his own personal views about current practices and issues of HRM in order to ascertain the reliability of his results. The respondents were ensured of their personal and company's anonymity and confidentiality.

Interview transcription was made and analyzed right away after every interview session in order to identify themes that are emerged constantly and regularly. Inductive process is used to look into deep for continuous emerging themes from transcribed data while the deductive process can be utilized for ensuring no biasness from a researcher's point of view including misconceptions or misinterpretations. This type of

iterative approach was formerly used by many researchers within an interpretive analytical paradigm for drawing clusters, categories or themes out of the data in addition to maintaining the affluence of the data [21]. Furthermore, in this overall data collection and analysis process, the researcher adopted guidelines from the work of [53] which indicated about the non-verbal cues for conversation analysis in order to have a clue about unclear, unanticipated or unexpressed themes. Thus, researcher also took a deep notice on facial expressions, language, body postures or non-verbal cues for the purpose.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
4.1. Challenges of HR practices in organizations
Issues in Retention of Employees:

When hiring skillful, well trained and experienced professionals in a competitive organization or industry, retaining them is a hell of a greater task for HRD [10]. As for example, managers of the organizations who were interviewed deliberately about hiring and retaining staff members and experts, found to be complaining about those staff leaving their companies when training were provided to them. Organizations of Pakistan have the biggest HR issue is retention of employees; here are few responses of the organization that face problems in retaining employees.

"……it is almost impossible to get employees retain or to keep them stayed in our company when after they are given such a costly training…….the workers were skillful and experts, but we cannot stop them from going and availing better opportunities of job and living for them……."

"…. employee retention is one of the biggest problems in our organization"

"….We face frequently this major issue that people comes when they hire after two or three days they left when they seek better opportunity……"

"…….job skipping is a frequent picture…a tendency! This shouldn't be surprising. In my point of longest duration of any employees' job is from 3-5 years…"

4.2. Challenges in Recruitment
From the review of literature, it is evident that for any organization it is at its priority to hire skilled, qualified, knowledgeable and experienced employees, because of the fact that human beings are the pivotal asset of any organization [19]. In the same way the managers who are managing and training their human resources or human assets are also considered to be above equally qualified in terms of competence, knowledge and experience. But the situation among some studied organization is different. On one hand where proper qualified staff is not available due to cultural or new interventional barriers, on the other hand some of the skilled staff members are recruited but left due to availing more opportunities better than before. In this way they had to rotate the working tasks of the current personnel who are not trained for that specified work. As reported by some of the interviewed managers: In a health service organization; recruiting female employees become an issue sue to the cultural back lag and masculine mindset; as an organization has a problem there and stated:

"We had inaugurated a new hospital in another area we face difficulty there in hiring because of cultural issue there people dislike that female work in this field….."

One of the organizations find third party hiring unreliable and stated as:

"…….we uses our own system of recruitment as well as a third party also help us in recruiting employees, sometimes it happened that personnel selected from that source is not up to our expectations…."

A building and construction company stated about their issues in hiring, "……..we are working on the construction of dams and such big constructions, here the position we face is in recruiting and staffing, we want to find relevant staff but failed because of low education or irrelevant qualification as well as low or irrelevant experience…."

Training and Development:

An analysis made that managers took productions and outcomes upper hand than providing employees with specific and individual training according to their job or placement. Another issue is the lack of ability to transfer their learning from training and development into practice on their workplace. The issue arises when heads or higher officials do not support or promote the application of learning of their subordinates into practice.

"…….I went on training abroad, on returning I tried to apply those learning and knowledge in this company but my officials didn't like my efforts and its outcomes, so I felt disappointed……"

In some organization there is lack of training due to time as one of the organizations said that

"…….Regular trainings should be for employee development but unfortunately unable to arrange due to tight schedules."

Another issue is that after providing them trainings usually some of them leave after such trainings, or those skilled workers are attracted from other competitive organizations thus making a valid reason for leaving.

"Our employees are always attracted by our competitors in terms of better financial opportunity that is why we do not opt for giving high cost induction trainings to these newly recruited skilled workers……."

"……second issue I have faced that the training and development issue when we hired an employee we trained him or her and develop them but after this they will quit when they seek the better opportunity…"

Indiscipline:

Some of the firms that were either related to health sector or were non-profit organizations or had public-private ventures faced in-disciplinary situations like strikes, slogans, processions against company's policies and practices.

"…..we had faced in our health sector, due to governmental low pay scale, nurses and paramedical staff went on strikes every now and then, and when government accepted all their demands and increased the pays of this field, they left us for better opportunity…"

Capacity building of female staff in difficult regions:

Some of the organization faces difficulty in build capacities and giving equal opportunities ro female candidates. One of the organizations stated:

"……….. We have serious problems in Capacity building of female staff in difficult regions"

No incentives on regular basis:

Incentive keeps the employees motivated and helps them to stick to the organization. An organization with no proper incentive system might produce unhappy and non-motivated employees. An organization was of that view that; "Regular incentive is something to retain and motivate employee but due to financial issues major issue is to keep employee motivated; Due to financial crises no benefits given to employees".

Workplace discrimination:

Discrimination poses a threat to organization good will. Organizations have that as one of the organizations clearly stated that:

"….Discrimination is other thing which is major hurdle here"

Late salaries:

Timely salaries also keep the employees motivated and help them to stick to the organization. An organization with late salaries system might yield unhappy and non-motivated employees. One organization reported such problem:

"……….Late salaries due to financial crisis highly demotivate employee".

Talent hunting:

Companies find it difficult to find the apt talent for the right job as one reported,

"…Hunting/sourcing relevant resources is a problem for us"

Interviewing panel:

One organization stated that they find difficulties in finding the right interviewing panel for selection of the candidate; as they outsource it; and reported:

"Finding best suitable interviewing panel for technical assessment is grave problem for us".

5. Suggestions of Remedies from the Managers

Organizations are of the positive opinion that employees are their foremost assets.

Providing safety and security:

Some of them referred to the accidental death of workers when working in industries or sites, they took their security and safety measures at its peak. One of the managers reported accordingly:

"……Well you know those employees are our strategic assets a sudden assassination happen in an industrial estate some days before and there a lot of employee lost their life so by observing this incident we focus attention on our employee health and safety…."

Company's mandate, legislatures, policies, vision, mission and agendas. For dealing the problems and issues and lessening the barriers against HRM in organizations, managers are of the opinion to remain strict to company's mandate, legislatures, policies, vision, mission and agendas; Stating that,

"……we mostly try to stick to our company's policy in order to keep away from troubles and issues…"

Compensation and Incentives:

According to their views employee retention is an excellent harmonizing act among business traditions, compensation and incentives. The HR department should supply every worker with the perfect mixture of all these components for satiating the employee's need without ignoring the company's policy.

"…..We make sure to keep perfect employee records in the form of employee's portfolio and their achievements and performances within an organization so that our company can deliver their promised benefits to employees…."

They suggested that measuring those factor which may harm their HR systems a proper first aid system should be formed which include expert opinions and should keep up to date record of the employees with regard to their professional qualifications and memberships of trade bodies so it may be included in their performance appraisals and demand of trainings, as well as legalities among organizational policies.

Specific Training to Specific Department:
Whereas in the case of training and development, the most important identified factor was about the specific training to specific departments. It also seemed to be having responsibility at employees' end that they should also keep themselves updated according to new knowledge and technologies. Employees should pay heed to their professional memberships, registrations and certifications.

"…..However it is also a responsibility of employees to enhance his/her personal achievements in terms of registrations or certifications, because any company can rely on their follow up knowledge and achievements…."

"We offer training session of staff & make individual development plans"

Providing updated knowledge:
To work more effectively and efficiently, majorly in manufacturing sector companies are suggested to provide workers with updated knowledge and arrange timely training for them as one of the company suggested:

"… We try to arrange a knowledge sharing sessions for our employees and workers as soon as possible to maintain our competitive edge in the market".

Fines and penalties:
If employees do not counter over the training and developments provided by their company, they should be penalized or fined.

"……You can also alert the employee involved, schedule cover for absence during exams, and arrange payments to prevent lapses….."

Offering attractive salary packages:
Last but not least, attractive salary packages, and other life-long financial benefits should be given to employees at all levels of management or working boundaries, so as to retain employees for longer periods on job.

Integrated communication system:
To work effectively a company suggests
"……..we develop integrated communication system among depts."

Incentive plans:
The companies suggested that to retain good employees they make a revision in their incentive plan as one said
"… to retain good employee we offer him incentives"

Capacity building in female candidates:
One of the company suggested that they help the female to enter the organization and promote them;
"……….Identification of female staff for entry level positions in remote areas is a bigger challenge for us at the moment. To cater that challenge, we are maintaining a strong liaising with the local institutions at district level"

Developing a well written job description for apt talent. One company responded that to find the appropriate talent and potential candidate they design the right JD,

"……Whenever a job description is designed is designed on basis of skill set required to complete a job with in certain budget. So this is quite elusive matter where expertise/understanding of job nature is required".

Verbal discussions:
Verbal discussions are useful as they help the company to resolve an issue one stated:

"Meeting of HRM with employee to discuss a case in an informal way to resolve it through verbal discussion. For the health insurance claims we take time to process it and verify it"

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:
After reviewing all the transcriptions of the interviewed data, researchers suggested that 6Ms i.e. man, money, material, machine, methods and market have been shown with their usage in the today's interventions of HR planning and management. Firstly, make priority to reduce the issues and barriers for the development of HRM and to manage the human resources within any firm; it has its importance since the beginning of HRM [29]. Four main stages can be modeled for lowering negative aspects:

Interactive stage: At this stage interactions should be created between human resources and functioning managers, this would be done in order to maintain harmony and avoid disturbance in the form of strikes. There would be another benefit of this that organization could assure its growth and development in even severe situations of monopoly and competition.

Independent Stage: In this stage, when HR is retained and survived successfully, operations managers should be allowed partially to get involved in monitoring and corrections of the problems with regard to procedures and policy of organization, but to permit them to assist and guide personnel for their self-appraisal, self-assessment and self-efficacy in the workplace. In this way, an environment of trust and self-determination would be developed lessening other HR issues.

Supportive Stage: As per indicated by its name, it would help in putting efforts towards productivity, outcomes and results. Despite of selecting personnel who are more technology friendly, it had been observed that such personnel lack total business perspective or sense, companies should train their knowledgeable business experts in terms of new technologies so as to cut the cost as well as enjoying their dual nature of commitment.

Integrative Stage: This stage involves a paradigm or a role shift from facilitator to functional, here keeping in view the organizational objectives, personnel should be motivated for high productivity and in return should be awarded with incentives in order to keep their job satisfaction level high and optimistic.

Concluding Remarks:
In this millennium of change and dynamism, there is a strong need to reform Human Resource functions and management systems by reviewing challenges in the field. This should be done for keeping our pace with international and global

challenges and trends. As today's companies are mostly driven by global market trends, they follow the concept of open investment and share. In upcoming future HR challenges would be expected to be more complex because of the increased atmosphere of competition and globalization, use of ever increasing technologies, e-commerce and much more. Need of more knowledgeable and learned workers would arouse. Thus, such an intellectual human asset would demand and require more nutriment, facilities, initiatives, incentives and encouragement in order to keep them on track and record for attaining superior results.

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