Relevance of Human Resource Practices in the Indian Defence Management

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Abstract

Tough service conditions with high risk, relatively poor salaries, 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. Setting up of pay commissions on regular basis to review pay structure, by 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 Defence Organisation to assist Armed forces in attracting and retaining the best talent.

Index terms—

1 Introduction

he 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. (Times of India 01 December 2014, Indian Express, 20 March 2015), 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 Author: Major General. e-mail: gurdeepsingh.narang@gmail.com 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.' **??**Ravi Pandit, 2014). 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.

2 II.

3 Literature Review

According to Lado and Wilson (1994), human resource practices are a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions, and processes that are directed at attracting, developing, and maintaining (or disposing of) a firm's human resources. Drawing on the theoretical insights of the "resource based view" of organizational strategy and competitive advantage, it has been suggested (Conner, 1991;Wernerfelt, (1984) & Lado and Wilson (1994) that HRM practices 'can contribute to sustained competitive advantage through facilitating the development of competencies that are firm specific, produce complex social relationships and generate organizational knowledge'. Ms Rupali Mishra (2011) 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. **??**uselid (1995) has identified the link between HRM practices and turnover, productivity and financial performance. Huselid and Delaney (1996) contended HRM practices, particularly selection and training, are associated with perceived firm performance in profit and nonprofit organisations. Similar results are reported by Gooderham, Ringdal, and Parry (2006) who found a positive impact of HRM practices on firm performance. In a study in Greece, **??**atou and Bedhwar (2006) Studies have also established that HRM practices aimed at acquisition and development of employees is an essential investment that develops valuable and rare human assets, Becker & Huselid (1998). It has also been confirmed that selective staffing, training, compensation and incentive, have positive influence on performance of organization, Delaney and Huselid (1996).

4 III.

5 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 officers cadre. **??**ajor IV.

6 Research Methodology a) Research Problem & Questions

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 account-ability 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.

The aspirations and needs of all human beings working in different organisations are the same. Provision of daily needs items through Canteen stores Department & Sainik Suvidha Parisars, medical and recreational facilities to Armed Forces personnel are in line with other allied services and contribute towards better working conditions. Aspects related to Pay, promotions and early age of retirement can be changed only by the Government. It is a basic premise that Good HR practices can help in improving the working environment and motivational level of human resources. Research questions thus are:a) 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? b) Are these practices in some form or other being practiced in Armed Forces? c) Can these practices be applied universally to all services?

7 b) Research Gap

Review of literature has revealed that a number of studies have been undertaken both in India and abroad to understand Best HR practices and their linkage with growth of organisations, increase in productivity and profit, in attracting and retaining best talent and keeping them motivated to give their best. No such study has however been undertaken so far to establish relevance of best HR practices to Indian Armed forces.

It has also been experienced that although some of the HR practices are in use in the Armed forces but these have not been formally adopted and accepted.

The Best HR practices could be equally relevant to Armed forces, being the biggest employer of human resource in India. The aim of the research is to identify such practices and get them a formal and universal acceptance to fill the gap. V.

8 c) Objectives of the Study

9 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.

10 a) Research Design

In order to conceptualize, exploratory design of research was employed in which in-depth interviews were conducted with HR executives of a number of companies to understand the HR practices in use in their respective organisations. This qualitative research yielded 30 such HR practices. Descriptive design of the research was used to describe the HR practices and policies in use in Corporate Sector and Armed Forces as given in Chapter IV and V of the research. While getting the response of the HR executives from Armed forces, exploratory design of research has once again been adopted. Use of SPSS analytical software has been made to test the propositions. Interaction with Armed forces officers through seminars and interviews to get their views and preferences on relevance of HR practices in corporate sector as obtained above was made.

11 b) Methodology a) Data

A visit was also made to Police Academy Hyderabad to obtain information of their HR policies. Valuable inputs were also obtained by interacting with learned faculty members in HR department of Amity University Lucknow Campus, IIM Lucknow and XLRI Jamshedpur. Inputs collected by the researcher in an earlier study on" Role of Para Military Forces in India" the M Phil Dissertation was also made.

The secondary data was collected by referring and reviewing the reference books and articles on the subject, books, and research work already done in this domain. b) Research Instrument. The researcher used the concepts in the review of related literature as basis in designing the questionnaire. E-questionnaire was sent to all 557 HR executives out of which 295 replies were received. 45 responses were found to be invalid due to incomplete answers and other inaccuracies. Valid responses of 240 HR executives from all three services have accordingly been taken. (At 95% confidence level with confidence interval of 4, the required sample size is 228). f) Data Tabulation. The data collected through the e questionnaire has been tabulated and undergone a descriptive understanding. g) Normalcy of Data The tabulated data has been tested for normal distribution by using KS test. P values for Army, Air Force and Navy were found to be 0.045, 0.065, & 0.028. At 1% level of significance, the data in all cases was found to be normal. This was further verified from the shapes of "Histogram as well as from Q-Q Plots& "Box Plots" which exhibited a normal distribution of data.

VI.

12 Analysis of Data

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 gauze 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. To illustrate, an example of one of the HR Practice "Open Book management Style" has been taken. It shows the question included in the equestionnaire 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 graph 3 illustrate 240 responses comprising of60 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 & 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 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.

13 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. 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.

14 VII.

15 Findings a) 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. 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 & 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.

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17 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.

18 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.

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A 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 (2014) 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 & 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 behaviour. Employees must be able to see a clear connection between their everyday work and rewards. Good work and achievements being recolonized 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, destressing 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.

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Relevance of Human Resource Practices in the Indian Defence Management b) 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:-

21 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 be 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 consorted 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.

22 IX.

23 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. 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. [1] [2] [3]

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[2] Relevance of Human Resource Practices in the Indian Defence Management
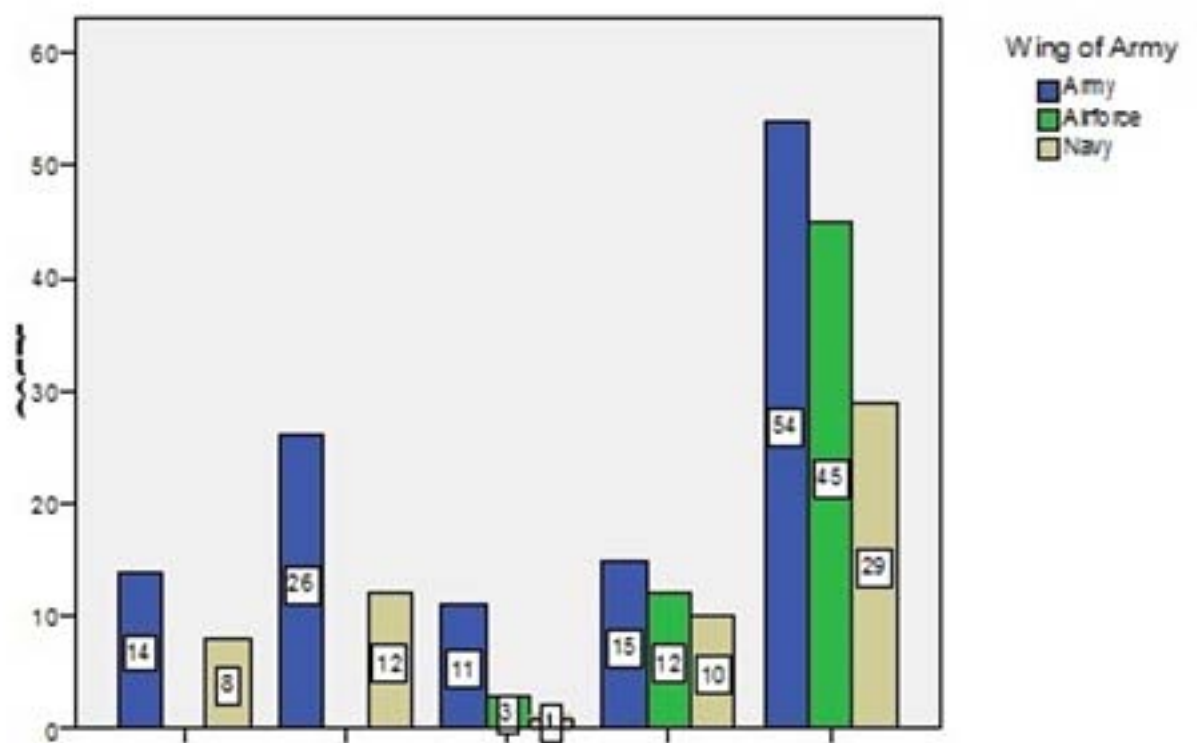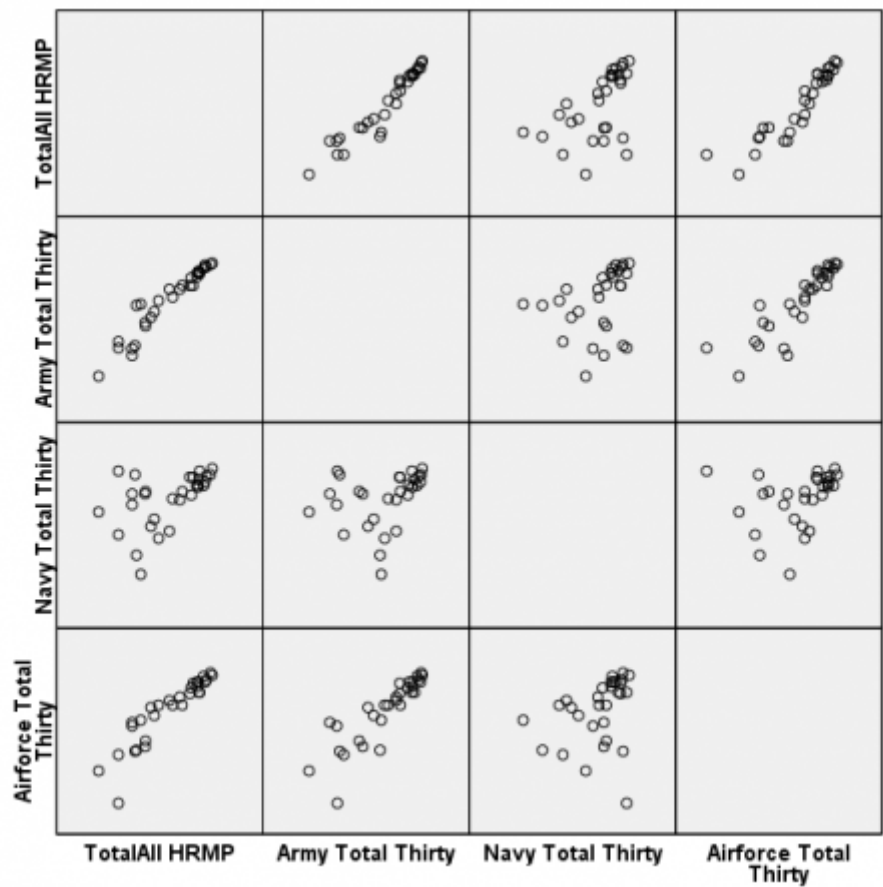
Figure 1:

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Figure 2: [1 /

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Figure 3: Table 1 :

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Figure 4: Table 1 &

		Disagree	Neutral	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

Figure 5: 2016

2

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	Flextime	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 & 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 & 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

Figure 6: Table 2 :

3

S. No.	Combined Rank	Army	Navy	Air Force
1	Fair Evaluation	Fair Evaluation	Workplace Safe, Healthy and Happy	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

[Note: AGraph 4 :]

Figure 7: Table 3 :

4

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Global Journal of Management and Business Research	Total HRMP Army Total Thirty Navy Total Thirty Airforce Total Thirty	All	Values as well as Ranked Values (Absolute Data) Correlations based upon Absolute Data : Pearson Total All HRMP Army Total Thirty Navy Total Thirty Pearson Correlation 1 .958 ** .525 ** Sig. (2-tailed) .000 .003 Pearson Correlation .958 ** 1 .306 Sig. (2-tailed) .000 .100 Pearson Correlation .525 ** .306 1 Sig. (2-tailed) .003 .100 Pearson Correlation .917 ** .872 ** .297 Sig. (2-tailed) .000 .000 .111	Air force Total Thirty .917 ** .000 .872 ** .000 .297 .111 1

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

*[Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).]*

Figure 8: Table 4 &

VIII.

Figure 9:

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