

# A STUDY OF HUMAN PROCESS RESEARCH PRACTICES EMPLOYED BY CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

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## ABSTRACT

*The main objective of this study is to explore the practices employed by construction organisations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for analysis of data pertaining to exit interviews, absenteeism, leave, and other related human resource processes. Another objective is to identify a relationship (if any) between such practices and the size of the organisation.*

*For this study, primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire survey in which 100 professionals working in construction organisations (Contractors, Consultants and Developers) were selected by a method of random sampling. The data collected has been analysed through the application of percentages and the one-way ANOVA technique using the statistical application.*

*The Study has revealed that only 38% of organisations surveyed are meeting the set expectations of analysing data collected during exit interviews, absenteeism and leave as a part of human process research for understanding human process and problems in the UAE. There is a high take-up of practices in medium-sized construction organisations with 400-9,500 employees as compared to small-sized construction organisations (upto 400 employees) and large-sized construction organisations (more than 9,500 employees)*

**Keywords:** Exit Interview, Human Turnover, Retention, Human Process Research,HRD

## INTRODUCTION

Human process research has become an important aspect while mapping the HRD practice profile of organisations. It typically includes conducting surveys of the learning environment and HRD Climate in the organizations, analysing exit interviews, absenteeism, leave, and other related data, studying leadership styles and conducting stress audits. All these actions lead to the building of a sound understanding of human processes and problems faced by human resources functions. This paper suggest that after conducting surveys and gathering

data through HR processes, HRD practitioners need to analyse the information gathered so that meaningful conclusions can be drawn and challenges can be correctly addressed. This proactive approach is critically important for uplifting the 'performance measure index' of an organisation or a benchmark standard advised by an Integrated Systems Management approach to HRD (T. V.Rao 2006).

### **LITERATURE STUDY**

The scientific study conducted by E. Abraham (1989) who surveyed HRD practices of 68 Indian organisations indicated that HRD Culture is a powerful intervening variable in translating HRD practices into profit (T. V.Rao 2006). The evidence is sufficient to indicate that good HRD practices do matter. Adopting practices falling under the human process research component certainly acts as a catalyst for enabling a good HRD climate within the organisation. In this context, conducting and analysing exit interviews and other such data has become increasingly important in the solving of problems related to human resources. In fact exit interviews have become a retention strategy tool in high performing companies (Muller 2012). Analysing information has a great intrinsic value so that the Human Resources department can realign its efforts to engage a more competent workforce for a longer period.

The data generated also presents an opportunity to understand the expectations of key stakeholders and to control the cost of employee turnover. Such information is more likely to talk about the true issues that organisation is facing. Research shows that the average response rate for paper and pencil exit interviews is approximately 30-35 per cent (Carvin 2012), [humanresources.about.com](http://humanresources.about.com)). Based on this information, the author identified the important need to study the extent to which organisations are adopting the practice of analysing data arising out of such important processes.

Measuring participation in the exit interview is first step to improving the process. The next step is to analyse the data, provide feedback in order to limit turnover, and for the management to take proactive steps to increase employee retention.

The value of the exit interview process will increase significantly if the practice of analysing information is also implemented with equal sincerity and zeal. With the backdrop of present economic downturn in the region, the analysis of information is even more critical, given the thousands of construction workers that have left the UAE since the year 2009 (Hartley 2009) - Internet article 8/2/2009 Joanne Hartley).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The investigation methodology included a questionnaire study that was administered to over 100 construction professionals in the UAE.

Based on a random sampling, over 100 respondents were selected from various construction organisations in UAE. Responses were collected personally by contacting respondents and scheduling meetings with individuals. The questionnaire was rated on the six point Likert scale (Likert 1931) and the participants were asked to rate the level of performance of practice under the study. To augment the response rate an online survey tool was also used to ease the work for respondents. The respondents were given a choice to rate the performance level of practice under study from either their current position or from previous experience.

In this process, completed questionnaires received from the organisations which were not involved directly in the construction process like utilities, logistics, suppliers were not considered for the analysis, and the total number of questionnaires eventually analysed totalled 100.

The questionnaire respondents included were senior team leaders, line and functional managers, and senior professionals employed in construction establishments in the UAE.

The study attempted to identify the extent to which the practices of analysing the data arising out of exit interviews, absenteeism, leave, etc, is prevalent in the country's construction organisations. The construction organisations were grouped into three categories, namely medium-sized construction organisations with 400- 9,500 employees as compared to small-sized construction organisations (up to 400 employees) and large-sized construction organisations (more than 9,500 employees).

After this, further investigations were also made to analyse whether practice performance level (scores) were related to the size of the organisations.

Data was analysed with the help of Microsoft Excel, Minitab tools and by using standard statistical techniques including One Way ANOVA and Correlation.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

There is no association between the performance level of a practice and the size of construction organisations in the UAE.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Based on the respondent's demographic data, the following tabulation was done:

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of respondents

| <b>Sr. No</b> | <b>Variable</b>  | <b>No.</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1             | <b>Gender</b>    |            |                   |
|               | Male             | 87         | 87.0%             |
|               | Female           | 13         | 13.0%             |
| 2             | <b>Age</b>       |            |                   |
|               | 20-30            | 16         | 16.0%             |
|               | 31-40            | 44         | 44.0%             |
|               | 41-50            | 26         | 26.0%             |
|               | 51-Above         | 2          | 2.0%              |
|               | Undisclosed      | 12         | 12.0%             |
| 3             | <b>Education</b> |            |                   |
|               | Diploma/other    | 1          | 1.0%              |
|               | Graduates        | 71         | 71.0%             |
|               | Masters          | 26         | 26.0%             |
|               | Doctoral         | 0          | 0.0%              |
|               | Undisclosed      | 2          | 2.0%              |

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of respondents (Contd...)

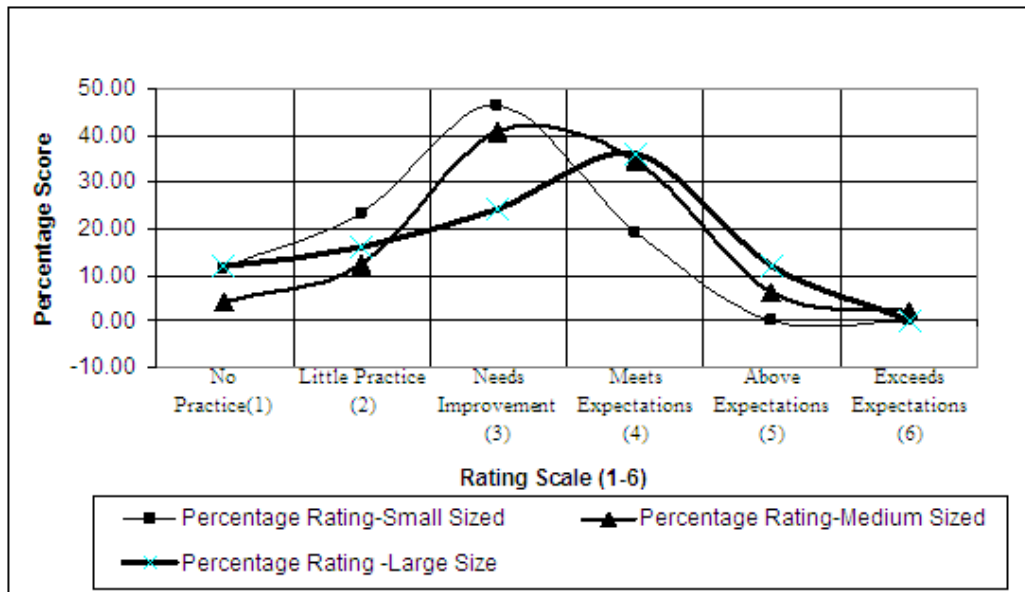
|   |                         | <b>Years of Experience</b>      |       |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | 1-5                     | 7                               | 7.0%  |
|   | 6-10                    | 24                              | 24.0% |
|   | 11-15                   | 17                              | 17.0% |
|   | 16-20                   | 20                              | 20.0% |
|   | 21-Above                | 17                              | 17.0% |
|   | Undisclosed             | 15                              | 15.0% |
|   |                         | <b>Size of the organisation</b> |       |
| 5 | 10-400 (Small size)     | 26                              | 25.0% |
|   | 401-9500 (Medium size)  | 49                              | 50.0% |
|   | 9500-Above (Large size) | 25                              | 25.0% |

**Percentage Analysis:**

This has been carried out to understand the distribution of respondents based on the demographic information. The study has revealed that out of 100 respondents, 87% were men and 13% were women. 60% of respondents were under 40 years of age, but the number of respondents in the age group of 'above 41 years' was 40%. One percent of the respondents had completed their Diploma in civil engineering, while 71% had completed a Bachelor Degree and 26% had completed a Masters degree. 55% of respondents had more than 10 years of experience. About 25% of the respondents belonged to small-sized construction organisations (10-400 employees) and 50% respondents were from medium-sized construction organisations. 25% of respondents were from large-sizes construction organisations (employing over 9,300 employees). Groups were drawn for calculating the rating percentages for each type of organisation (small, medium, large) and for investigating the data distribution.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics: Total, Size

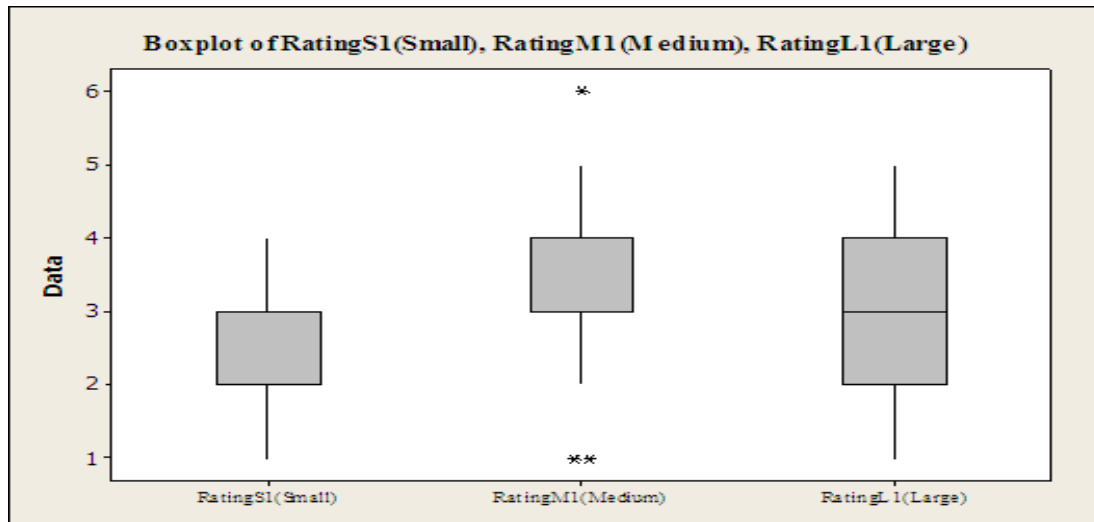
| Variable | N       | N* | Mean | SE Mean | St Dev | Minimum | Q1  | Median | Q3   |
|----------|---------|----|------|---------|--------|---------|-----|--------|------|
| Total    | 100     | 0  | 3.14 | 0.105   | 1.054  | 1       | 3   | 3      | 4    |
| Size     | 100     | 0  | 8895 | 1639    | 16390  | 35      | 400 | 2000   | 9500 |
| Variable | Maximum |    |      |         |        |         |     |        |      |
| Total    | 6       |    |      |         |        |         |     |        |      |
| Size     | 72000   |    |      |         |        |         |     |        |      |



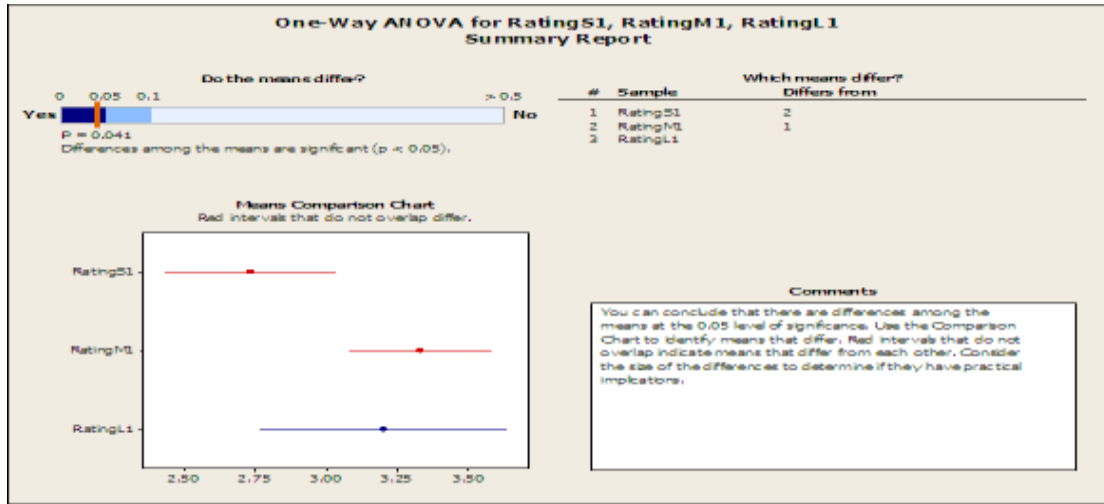
**Chart No-1** Percentage Scores (All Organisations)

**Box Plot & ANOVA Technique**

To have more insights into the responses, multiple box plots were drawn to study the skewed ness and distribution of data. All the respondents were grouped into three major categories based on the size of the construction organizations.



**Chart No-2** Box Plots (All Organisations)



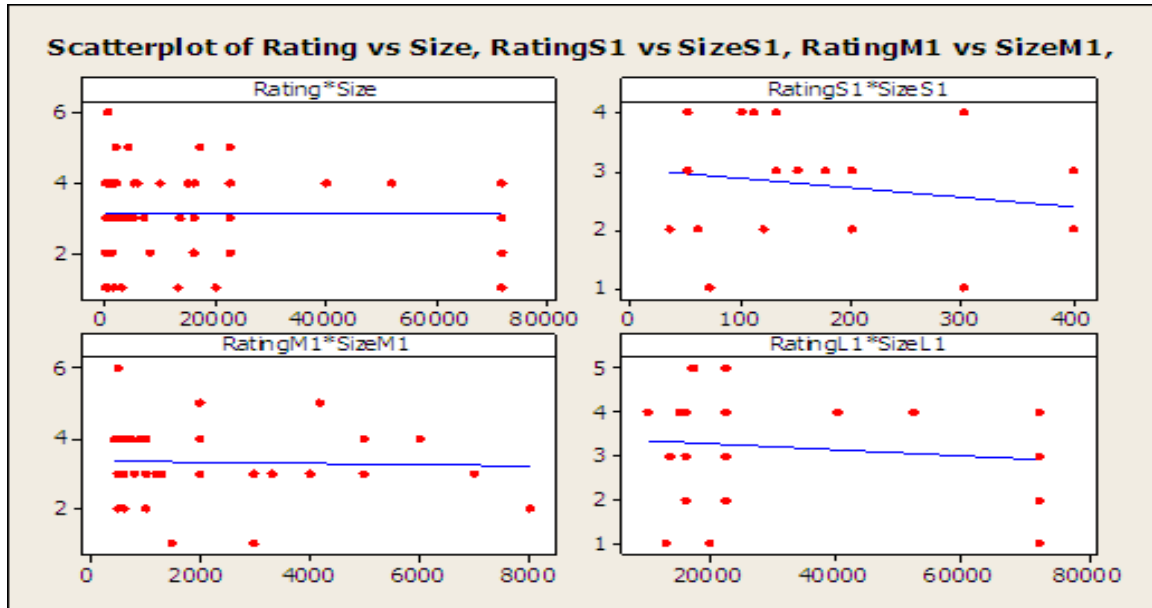
**Chart No-3** One-Way ANOVA Report (All Organisations)

**Correlation**

The technique has been used to investigate the association and to calculate the coefficients and P- Values that denote the extent to which the dimensions of practice scores are correlated to the size of organisations, and also to determine if significant relationships exist.

**Table 3.** Correlation Analysis

|   |       |  |
|---|-------|--|
| <b>Correlations:</b> Total Rating, Size (N=100)                       |       |  |
| Pearson correlation of Rating and Size = -0.006                       |       |  |
| <b>P-Value</b>  | 0.950 |  |
| <b>Correlations Small Size Organisations:</b> RatingS1, SizeS1 (N=26) |       |  |
| Pearson correlation of RatingS1 and SizeS1 = -0.209                   |       |  |
| P-Value = 0.305   |       |  |
| <b>Correlations Middle Size:</b> RatingM1, SizeM1 (N=49)              |       |  |
| Pearson correlation of RatingS1 and SizeS1 = -0.043                   |       |  |
| P-Value = 0.770   |       |  |
| <b>Correlations Large Size:</b> RatingL1, SizeL1 (N=25)               |       |  |
| Pearson correlation of RatingS1 and SizeS1 = -0.116                   |       |  |
| P-Value = 0.580   |       |  |



**Chart No-4** Scatter plots (All Categories)

**FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study has revealed that the percentage of practice performance level of meeting /exceeding criteria is 38%. The extent of non-practice / little is reported by 24 % respondents. The score for scope of improvement is indicated by 38% of the respondents.

Based on the classification done on employee size respondents have reported following practice scores

**Table 4.** Practice Scores based on the Classification

| Organisation Size | Employee Strength                 | Scores | Remarks |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Large             | More than 9,500                   | 44.00  |         |
| Medium            | More than 400 but less than 9,500 | 46.33  | Highest |
| Small             | Less than 400                     | 34.62  |         |

Among the three categories of organisations, medium-sized organisations have scored the highest, revealing a better practice existence than the small and large organisations. It reveals that medium-sized organisations are performing better by adopting the practice of analysing exit interviews and such data than the other two categories. This also reveals that there is a high uptake of practices in medium sized organisations. Overall there is lot of scope for improvement for all the organisations to reach to the benchmarked standard of reaching to the excellence level of 70-75% practice scores (ACR Industry Report 2004),& (T. V. Rao 2006).

The ANOVA technique has proved that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of small and medium-sized organisations. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of small and large-sized organisations as well as medium and large-sized organisations. However, correlation technique coefficients are observed to be negative and P

values observed are positive, highlighting that no relationship exists between two variables i.e. between practice scores of organisations and the size of the organisation. Thus the hypothesis is proved and is acceptable.

It is recommended that small & middle sized organisations need to start implementing this practice where 10% organisations have completely neglected it. There are 46% respondents who have expressed the urgency of improvement in small sized organisations. It is suggested to aim for a target of satisfactory level of 60 % for all the organisations so as to increase the performance of this practice. Having done the analysis of available data researcher comes to conjecture that either small size organisations could be neglecting the practice analysis due to lack of importance of the process .Where as for larger size organisation it could be due to lack of management commitment. The situation surrounding this inference needs further investigation; hence researcher intends to undertake similar survey in Indian context.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus it can be concluded that there exists a high scope of or improvement for small and large-sized construction organisations in the human resource field. The study also reveals that the size of the workforce is no barrier in implementing such best practices for understanding problems through human process research approach.

The management of these organisations can adopt this as a strategic action by increasing the efforts of HRD practitioners within the organisations. This will certainly enhance the practice scores, so as to reach to the top quartile of the ‘best- practice performance measure’ category of organisations, as advocated by T.V.Rao and other benchmark studies relating in the industry.

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