Journal of Public Administration Research
ISSN: 3049-8740
DOI: 10.32996/jpar
Journal Homepage: www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/jpar

Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Outcomes: Evidence from the Albanian Private Sector

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ABSTRACT

Human resource management (HRM) practices can shape employees' experiences and contribute to organizational effectiveness, particularly in transitional economies. This study examines the relationships between three HRM practices—recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewards and recognition—and employee-level outcomes in private-sector organizations in Albania. Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework, the study uses questionnaire data from 65 non-managerial employees working in private companies with more than 50 employees. Separate simple linear regression models were used to examine associations between individual HRM practice items and employee outcomes, including motivation, engagement, retention, and ability. The reported results indicate positive and statistically significant associations for several items across these outcomes. Rewards and recognition show particularly consistent associations, while recruitment and selection and training and development are also significantly associated with a number of outcomes. Because the study relies on a small, employee-level sample and does not directly measure organizational performance, the findings should be interpreted as evidence about perceived employee outcomes rather than as proof of effects on firm-level performance. The study adds context-specific evidence from the Albanian private sector and identifies areas for further research using larger samples and direct organizational performance measures.

KEYWORDS

HRM practices, employee outcomes, employee engagement, rewards and recognition, Albania, human resource management.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 14 October 2026 **PUBLISHED:** 14 November 2026 **DOI:** 10.32996/jpar.2026.3.1.2

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic economic and organizational landscape, Human Resource Management (HRM) has evolved from an administrative function into a critical driver of strategic competitiveness and organizational sustainability. This transformation is particularly vital in developing economies such as Albania, where private sector growth has intensified the need for effective human capital strategies [8]. The growing complexity of business operations, coupled with post-pandemic workforce shifts, has compelled organizations to reassess how HR practices can enhance performance through employee-centered outcomes such as motivation, engagement, retention, and organizational commitment [9]. Organizational performance is increasingly evaluated through a multidimensional lens, in which financial metrics are complemented by the capacity to attract, develop, and retain a skilled and motivated workforce. Within this paradigm, HRM emerges as a central mechanism for achieving sustainable competitive advantage—particularly when aligned with broader business strategy [6, 10]. Drawing on the resource-based view (RBV), this study adopts a strategic HRM perspective, positing that HR practices influence employee-level outcomes, which in turn serve as catalysts for organizational success [1]. Although global HRM scholarship has advanced significantly, empirical research in the Albanian context remains scarce, especially at the employee level. Existing studies in Albania [2, 8, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32] highlight a growing awareness of HRM's strategic role but also reveal a lack of structured, empirically validated frameworks. Similar gaps are noted across developing economies, where socio-cultural and institutional dynamics may mediate HR effectiveness [9, 11]. This study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of three key HRM practices—recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewards and recognition—on employee outcomes, namely motivation, ability, retention, engagement, and organizational behavior, and their subsequent contribution to organizational performance in Albanian private companies. The

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focus on employee-level perceptions responds to calls for more granular analysis of the HRM–performance linkage in emerging markets [10, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32]. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) research has long emphasized that sustainable performance gains arise when HR systems are internally consistent and strategically integrated. Guest [4] argues that high-quality HRM systems improve commitment, quality, and flexibility—attributes essential in turbulent markets. Delery and Doty [3] differentiate among universalistic, contingency, and configurational perspectives, each offering a distinct pathway by which HRM can contribute to performance. This study adopts contingency and configurational approaches, recognizing that the effectiveness of HR practices depends on their fit with organizational context and strategy. The RBV conceptualization by Wright and McMahan [6] frames human capital as a core intangible asset, while Boxall and Purcell [1] emphasize that HR systems must be contextually grounded to be effective. Katou's empirical research [5] reinforces the mediating role of HR outcomes—such as satisfaction, engagement, and retention—in the HRM–performance relationship. Paauwe and Boselie [7] similarly note that without strong intermediate outcomes, the effect of HRM on performance is likely to be weak or inconsistent. Recent empirical studies provide further support for this mediating pathway. Shahzad et al. [9] identify recruitment, training, and reward systems as pivotal to performance in volatile environments, while Mathushan [10] demonstrates that these practices significantly enhance innovation capacity in SMEs—a key driver of competitive advantage. Khan and Akhtar [11] emphasize the strategic value of employee engagement and retention as mechanisms for sustaining organizational performance in emerging markets. By integrating these insights, the present study conceptualizes HRM as an interrelated system of practices that, when effectively aligned with organizational strategy, foster desirable employee attitudes and behaviors, leading to improved performance outcomes. Applying this model to the underexplored Albanian private sector, and using employee-level data, the study seeks to provide contextually grounded evidence that both advances SHRM theory and offers actionable guidance for practitioners and policymakers.

1.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between selected Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and employee-level outcomes within private companies operating in Albania. Situated within the broader discourse on HRM in developing economies, it addresses a gap in the empirical literature by focusing on employee perceptions rather than managerial assessments, thereby contributing to the understanding of how HRM practices are experienced in this context [5, 7]. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employees in organizations with more than 50 staff members, predominantly located in the central regions of the country. The study focuses exclusively on non-managerial employees, enabling a direct assessment of how HRM practices are experienced at the operational level. The analysis examines three core HRM practices—recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewards and recognition—which have been identified as important elements of human capital development [3, 12]. The employee-level outcomes examined include ability, motivation, retention, engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), consistent with the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework [13]. Conducted as part of the author's doctoral research, this study offers theoretical and empirical contributions. It provides context-specific evidence on the associations between selected HRM practices and employee outcomes in Albania's private sector. The study does not directly measure organizational performance or empirically test the mediating role of employee outcomes; these relationships are therefore discussed as a theoretical context rather than as tested effects.

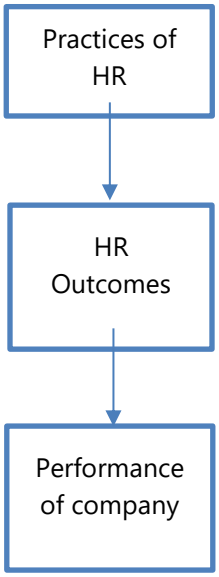


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking HRM practices, employee outcomes, and organizational performance

A sample of 65 employees was included in the study. Participants completed a structured questionnaire assessing their perceptions of HRM practices and employee outcomes. Age, gender, industry, and tenure were identified as potential control variables; however, the analyses reported below use separate simple linear regressions for each HRM practice item and employee outcome. Unless these variables were entered into the regression equations, they should not be described as statistically controlled. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The results are interpreted as associations, not causal effects. The equation for each simple regression is: $HR_Outcome = \beta0 + \beta1(HRM_Practice) + \varepsilon$, where HR_Outcome is the employee outcome, HRM_Practice is the predictor, β0 is the intercept, β1 is the estimated coefficient, and ε is the error term.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature exploring the relationship between human resource management (HRM) and organizational performance in the context of the Albanian private sector. By adopting an employee-centered perspective, it provides valuable empirical insights into how HRM practices—particularly those related to motivation, rewards, and retention—are perceived and how they shape organizational outcomes in transitional economies. The findings offer practical implications for HR professionals and decision-makers, highlighting the importance of prioritizing employee-focused HR interventions to sustain motivation and performance.

2.1 DATA ANALYSIS

2.2 Analysis

The simple linear regression analyses indicate positive associations between several HRM practice items and employee-level outcomes in the Albanian private sector. As reported in Table 1, the estimated regression coefficients are positive for the displayed models, and many are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The table presents the B coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, and p-values available for the analyses. Because the original statistical output containing model summary statistics is not available, R^2 values are not reported or interpreted here. Given the cross-sectional, self-reported data and the modest sample size, the findings indicate statistical associations and should not be interpreted as evidence of causation.

The HRM–performance literature often explains the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcomes through intermediate employee attitudes and behaviours. The present study is consistent with this process-oriented perspective in that it examines employee-level outcomes as potential pathways through which HRM practices may be relevant to organizational effectiveness. However, the current analyses do not estimate indirect effects or test mediation. Accordingly, the mediating role of motivation, engagement, retention, and ability remains a theoretical proposition for future research rather than an empirical finding of this study. Research on employees' attributions about HR practices also highlights the importance of how employees interpret those practices [18].

The results suggest that the associations between HRM practice items and employee outcomes vary across the measured outcomes. Rewards and recognition display positive, statistically significant coefficients across many of the reported models. Several individual items, including "Reward and Recognition 7", "Reward and Recognition 9", and "Reward and Recognition 11", have relatively large reported coefficients (B approximately 0.64–0.69 in selected models; $p < 0.001$). These findings support the importance of employee recognition, although the coefficients should be interpreted in light of the measurement scales and the use of separate bivariate models.

Recruitment and selection also demonstrate positive and statistically significant associations with motivation ($B = 0.55–0.75$, $p < 0.001$), engagement ($B = 0.49–0.59$, $p < 0.001$), retention ($B = 0.52–0.65$, $p < 0.002$), and the second engagement measure (Engagement 2; $B = 0.45–0.52$, $p < 0.004$). These findings are consistent with earlier research suggesting that well-aligned hiring processes are related to organizational fit, initial motivation, and engagement [22].

Training and development practices show positive and statistically significant associations with motivation, engagement, retention, ability, and the second engagement measure (Engagement 2) in several models ($B \approx 0.25–0.55$, $p < 0.05$). These results indicate that employees' perceptions of training and development are related to a range of employee outcomes in this sample. This pattern can be considered alongside prior research in emerging economies where training outcomes have varied [14, 19]; contextual factors, such as integration with career development and performance evaluation, may be relevant and warrant further investigation.

Although ability as an employee outcome exhibits generally lower coefficients than motivation or engagement, statistically significant associations are reported for "Reward and Recognition 11" ($B = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), "Reward and Recognition 7" ($B = 0.45$, $p = 0.001$), and "Recruitment and Selection 2" ($B = 0.46$, $p = 0.008$). These results suggest that employees' perceptions of recognition and recruitment practices are associated with perceived skill and capacity in this sample.

Beyond these core employee outcomes, the study also incorporates an organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) dimension related to community engagement. Results indicate that 69% of employees report that their organization actively supports the community, whereas 31% indicate no additional investment in such initiatives. This finding points to variation in employees' reports of community-support activities and may provide a basis for further research on community engagement, employer branding, and stakeholder trust [24, 25].

Taken together, the findings indicate that employee perceptions of rewards and recognition, recruitment and selection, and training and development are positively associated with several employee outcomes in this sample. The results are broadly

consistent with the view that HRM practices may contribute to organizational effectiveness through employee attitudes and behaviours. Nevertheless, because organizational performance was not directly measured and mediation was not tested, conclusions about firm-level performance or the mechanisms linking HRM to performance should remain cautious.

This study provides employee-level evidence on the relationships between selected HRM practices and employee outcomes in Albania's private sector. The results show a generally consistent pattern of positive associations for rewards and recognition, alongside significant associations for recruitment and selection and training and development across several outcomes. The findings are exploratory because the sample includes 65 employees and the analyses use separate simple linear regressions. Future studies should use larger and more representative samples, validate the measurement scales, account for the nested structure of employees within firms, and include direct measures of organizational performance.

Recruitment and selection demonstrated positive and statistically significant associations with motivation, engagement, retention, and the second engagement measure (Engagement 2; $B \approx 0.45–0.75$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with the view that effective selection processes are related to organizational fit and initial motivation [22]. However, the relationship with long-term retention may also depend on complementary HR systems, such as structured reward mechanisms and career development opportunities [5]. Training and development practices also showed positive and statistically significant associations with multiple outcomes—particularly engagement, retention, and ability ($B \approx 0.25–0.55$, $p < 0.05$)—although the strength and statistical significance of the associations vary across individual items and models.

The study further examined organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) related to community engagement. Results indicated that 69% of employees reported that their organization actively supports the community, while 31% stated that no additional investment is made in such initiatives. This suggests variation in reported organizational community-support activities and identifies an area for further investigation in relation to employer branding, organizational reputation, and stakeholder trust [24, 25].

Collectively, these findings can be discussed in relation to the Resource-Based View and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasize the strategic relevance of human capital and reciprocal employment relationships [26, 27]. In Albania's transitional economic environment, the results point to the potential value of transparent reward practices, employee recognition, effective recruitment, and employee development. These implications should be understood as evidence-informed recommendations rather than proof that the practices cause improvements in organizational or firm-level performance.

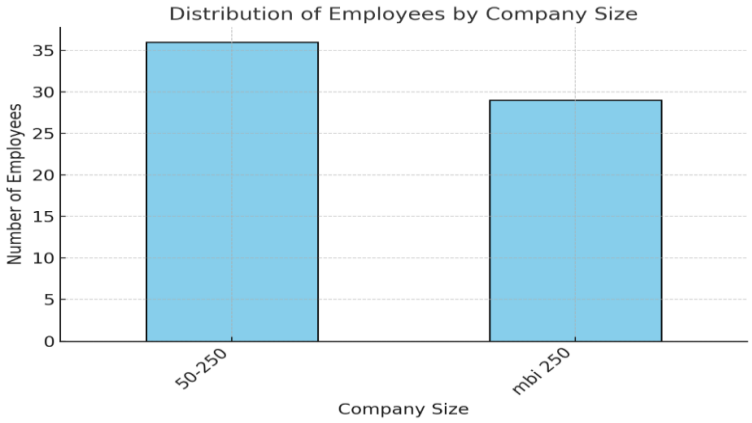


Figure 2. Distribution of employees by company size

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression Results – HRM Practices and Employee Outcomes (N = 65)

HR Result	HR Practice	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Motivation	Recruitment and selection	0.66271856	0.12686516	5.22380250	<0.001
Motivation	Recruitment and selection2	0.75088339	0.12313179	6.09820917	<0.001
Motivation	Recruitment and selection3	0.63715953	0.14160863	4.49944012	<0.001
Motivation	Recruitment and selection4	0.55530474	0.11643862	4.76907714	<0.001
Motivation	Training and development	0.52838790	0.11182962	4.72493709	<0.001
Motivation	Training and development5	0.47850208	0.12345176	3.87602477	<0.001

HR Result	HR Practice	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Motivation	Training and development6	0.36969567	0.12373821	2.98772450	0.00398180
Motivation	Reward and Recognition	0.45819257	0.11793431	3.88515084	<0.001
Motivation	Reward and Recognition7	0.65603514	0.09392918	6.98435895	<0.001
Motivation	Reward and Recognition8	0.59940945	0.10203391	5.87460993	<0.001
Motivation	Reward and Recognition9	0.73628489	0.10543761	6.98313301	<0.001
Motivation	Reward and Recognition10	0.54860443	0.12200425	4.49660083	<0.001
Motivation	Reward and Recognition11	0.66181337	0.08139554	8.13083080	<0.001
Engagement	Recruitment and selection	0.49294980	0.12081115	4.08033350	<0.001
Engagement	Recruitment and selection2	0.52326266	0.12217362	4.28294296	<0.001
Engagement	Recruitment and selection3	0.58884565	0.12541792	4.69506796	<0.001
Engagement	Recruitment and selection4	0.48871332	0.10483406	4.66178010	<0.001
Engagement	Training and development	0.54869457	0.09386100	5.84582092	<0.001
Engagement	Training and development5	0.38326399	0.11305228	3.39014826	0.00120087
Engagement	Training and development6	0.25246464	0.11393652	2.21583594	0.03026609
Engagement	Reward and Recognition	0.34902872	0.10893758	3.20393298	0.00211446
Engagement	Reward and Recognition7	0.49789916	0.09264093	5.37450540	<0.001
Engagement	Reward and Recognition8	0.29822835	0.10699835	2.78722380	0.00698976
Engagement	Reward and Recognition9	0.51058710	0.10779262	4.73675391	<0.001
Engagement	Reward and Recognition10	0.24470645	0.12147851	2.01440111	0.04817401
Engagement	Reward and Recognition11	0.54334878	0.07859850	6.91296614	<0.001
Motivation2	Recruitment and selection	0.37225042	0.14063633	2.64690086	0.01021397
Motivation2	Recruitment and selection2	0.37249706	0.14403109	2.58622680	0.01198858
Motivation2	Recruitment and selection3	0.34695201	0.15280759	2.27051549	0.02655066
Motivation2	Recruitment and selection4	0.40632054	0.12241433	3.31922375	0.00149288
Motivation2	Training and development	0.35640282	0.11890697	2.99732488	0.00387364
Motivation2	Training and development5	0.38603791	0.12513453	3.08498308	0.00300503
Motivation2	Training and development6	0.23789113	0.12566717	1.89302532	0.06287780

HR Result	HR Practice	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition	0.66934122	0.09710679	6.89283655	<0.001
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition7	0.44308633	0.10859775	4.08006895	<0.001
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition8	0.48228346	0.10808833	4.46193821	<0.001
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition9	0.59672762	0.11471321	5.20190852	<0.001
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition10	0.56544755	0.11716286	4.82616729	<0.001
Motivation2	Reward and Recognition11	0.56005956	0.08929331	6.27213330	<0.001
Retention	Recruitment and selection	0.64890017	0.14101573	4.60161535	<0.001
Retention	Recruitment and selection2	0.64310954	0.14550351	4.41989024	<0.001
Retention	Recruitment and selection3	0.52269780	0.16174139	3.23168845	0.00194577
Retention	Recruitment and selection4	0.61625282	0.12349017	4.99029846	<0.001
Retention	Training and development	0.42291753	0.12903789	3.27746789	0.00169487
Retention	Training and development5	0.63707813	0.12390022	5.14186431	<0.001
Retention	Training and development6	0.40955851	0.13225483	3.09673770	0.00290347
Retention	Reward and Recognition	0.60937500	0.11837578	5.14780114	<0.001
Retention	Reward and Recognition7	0.61573720	0.10953927	5.62115485	<0.001
Retention	Reward and Recognition8	0.52460630	0.11905039	4.40659036	<0.001
Retention	Reward and Recognition9	0.66626564	0.12507683	5.32685103	<0.001
Retention	Reward and Recognition10	0.52550529	0.13514944	3.88832758	<0.001
Retention	Reward and Recognition11	0.64741893	0.09474979	6.83293228	<0.001
Ability	Recruitment and selection	0.26959955	0.17012413	1.58472260	0.11795863
Ability	Recruitment and selection2	0.46054181	0.16760785	2.74773418	0.00778674
Ability	Recruitment and selection3	0.38488975	0.17963588	2.14261068	0.03595365
Ability	Recruitment and selection4	0.17155756	0.15367507	1.11636558	0.26843954
Ability	Training and development	0.40219644	0.13990286	2.87482634	0.00548235
Ability	Training and development5	0.27184466	0.15329718	1.77331812	0.08093384
Ability	Training and development6	0.07629661	0.15088811	0.50565029	0.61483933
Ability	Reward and Recognition	0.44151182	0.13955107	3.16380118	0.00238278

HR Result	HR Practice	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Ability	Reward and Recognition7	0.45053476	0.13114194	3.43547424	0.00104349
Ability	Reward and Recognition8	0.35433071	0.13796232	2.56831507	0.01256355
Ability	Reward and Recognition9	0.43407122	0.15072879	2.87981620	0.00540627
Ability	Reward and Recognition10	0.38715111	0.15271290	2.53515656	0.01369429
Ability	Reward and Recognition11	0.49768365	0.11737330	4.24017765	<0.001
Engagement2	Recruitment and selection	0.45516074	0.15036866	3.02696544	0.00355670
Engagement2	Recruitment and selection2	0.52149588	0.15079831	3.45823426	<0.001
Engagement2	Recruitment and selection3	0.50680934	0.16033264	3.16098670	0.00240274
Engagement2	Recruitment and selection4	0.48081264	0.13068167	3.67926616	<0.001
Engagement2	Training and development	0.45047659	0.12578319	3.58137364	<0.001
Engagement2	Training and development5	0.33610726	0.13936345	2.41173175	0.01875589
Engagement2	Training and development6	0.13801972	0.13908912	0.99231137	0.32478265
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition	0.57200169	0.11933488	4.79324820	<0.001
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition7	0.51107716	0.11586098	4.41112426	<0.001
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition8	0.63681102	0.10819515	5.88576336	<0.001
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition9	0.64148219	0.12499712	5.13197581	<0.001
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition10	0.68840231	0.12103432	5.68766219	<0.001
Engagement2	Reward and Recognition11	0.68944408	0.08796450	7.83775391	<0.001

Source: Author's calculations based on survey data.

Limitations and future research. The sample size (N = 65), cross-sectional self-reported design, and use of separate simple linear regressions limit the generalizability and causal interpretation of the findings. Organizational performance was not directly measured, and mediation was not tested. Future research should use larger samples, validated measures, appropriate multivariate or multilevel analyses, and direct firm-level performance indicators.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes context-specific evidence to HRM research by examining the associations between selected HRM practices and employee perceptions in Albania's private sector. Rewards and recognition show particularly consistent positive associations with motivation, engagement, retention, and ability in the reported models. Recruitment and selection and training and development are also positively associated with several employee outcomes. These results suggest that employees' experiences of HRM practices are relevant to understanding workforce attitudes and behaviours. However, the study does not directly measure organizational performance and does not establish causal relationships.

The findings can be discussed in relation to the Resource-Based View and Social Exchange Theory, which emphasize the strategic relevance of human capital and reciprocal employment relationships. In the Albanian private-sector context, the results point to the potential value of transparent reward practices, recognition, effective recruitment, and employee development. These implications should be understood as evidence-informed recommendations rather than proof that the practices cause improvements in organizational performance.

The study offers an employee-level perspective on HRM practices in an under-researched national context. Its principal limitations are the relatively small sample, the reliance on self-reported cross-sectional questionnaire data, the use of separate simple regression models, and the absence of a direct organizational-performance measure. The original model-summary output was not available for this revision; therefore, R^2 statistics could not be independently verified and have not been reported in the revised results narrative. The analyses also do not establish mediation or causality. Future research should address these limitations through larger multi-organization samples, validated multi-item measures, multivariate models with clearly specified controls, complete reporting of model-fit statistics, and objective or independently assessed organizational-performance indicators.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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