



## ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

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### **Abstract**

*Organizations invest in human resource practices looking for betterment in relationship with the employees expecting employee loyalty and employee commitment. Although researches show that human resource practices influence psychological contracts (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Martin et al., 1998; Sims, 1994), it is crucial to synthesis the links between specific human resource practices and psychological contracts systematically to check the relationship. The employer-employee relationship should not be looked at simply in economic terms. Organisations which want to become a sustainable organization should look at the changing range of business activities, which are mostly measured by the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) which creates the impact of your company's operations on the environment, society and the economy. The TBL is comprised of certain specific indicators, which also includes the societies outlook on the ways in which the employees are treated and their impact of companies on local communities. TBL has enormous importance practically in every industry, helping to shape the companies public reputations and their future business prospects. Though HR department often made to feel outsized impact on sustainability, the fact is that most HR departments are expected to generate a number of specific deliverables which are significant in measuring the organizations TBL which includes: compensations and competitive benefit, workforce diversity, healthy and productive employees, Career development, hygienic and tress free working conditions etc. All these traditional variables are elements of sustainability. Relationships among human resource management practices, organizational citizenship behavior, and organization commitment have been found by different researchers but the specific set of HR practices on career development is modeled together particularly in the context of psychological contract of employees in automobile sector.*

**Key Words:** Career Development, Employee care, Organizational Commitment, Psychological contract, HR practices, Sustainability.

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## Introduction:

Organizations invest in human resource practices looking for betterment in relationship with the employees expecting employee loyalty and employee commitment. The employer-employee relationship should not be looked at simply in economic terms. It is a significant human relationship of mutual dependency that has great impact on the people involved and both the employer and the employee have moral obligations arising from this relationship. An ethical employer does not think of employees only as a means to an end. Employees must be treated as a major stakeholder group. Ethical employers consciously and consistently protect the well-being of employees as an important business obligation and objective. The TBL is comprised of certain specific indicators, which also includes the societies outlook on the ways in which the employees are treated and their impact of companies on local communities. TBL has enormous importance practically in every industry, helping to shape the companies public reputations and their future business prospects. Though HR department often made to feel outsized impact on sustainability, the fact is that most HR departments are expected to generate a number of specific deliverables which are significant in measuring the organizations TBL which includes: compensations and competitive benefit, workforce diversity, healthy and productive employees, Career development, hygienic and stress free working conditions etc. All these traditional variables are elements of sustainability. Organisation who nurture employees through their best HR practices performs effectively developing employee loyalty and employee commitment. Numerous studies emphasizes the importance of psychological contracts between employer and employee (Freese & Schalk, 2008; Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni, 1994; Wcke & Sutherland, 2008). Therefore, the researcher has gathered descriptive data on the relationship between Human Resource Practices and Psychological Contract. The Human Resource Practice included in this study is Employee Career Development, related practices implemented in selected Automobile Companies in Chennai. The intention of this research was to check whether specific HR practices have a positive impact on Employee Commitment and Employee Loyalty through the measures of Psychological contract.





## **Theoretical Back Ground**

### **Psychological Contract**

The psychological contract is found as a concept in the psychological literature almost fifty years ago, as a footnote in understanding Organizational Behavior (Argyris, 1960). Primarily, the Psychological Contract refers to the relationship between an employer and its employees, and specifically concerns mutual expectations of inputs and outcomes. The Psychological Contract is usually seen from the standpoint or feelings of employees, although a full appreciation requires it to be understood from both sides. Simply, in an employment context, the Psychological Contract is the fairness or balance (typically as perceived by the employee) between: how the employee is treated by the employer, and what the employee puts into the job. 'The Psychological Contract' is an increasingly relevant aspect of workplace relationships and wider human behavior. In management and organizational theory many employee attitudes such as trust, faith, commitment, enthusiasm, and satisfaction depend heavily on a fair and balanced Psychological Contract. Where the Contract is regarded by employees to be broken or unfair, these vital yet largely intangible ingredients of good organizational performance can evaporate very quickly. Where the Psychological Contract is regarded by employees to be right and fair, these positive attitudes can thrive.

### **Relevance on Hr Practices:**

Any practice that is devised to increase the competence, commitment and improve the culture building can be termed as HR practice, and this can be in the form of a norm, rule, system, or some practices. Human resources functions are significantly different from HR practices. Functions are comprised of transactional activities that can be handled in-house or easily outsourced. Practices are part conceptual, part implementation of an HR strategy, comprised of systems that follow the normal or customary way of doing business.

### **Literature survey has shown that focus of early research is confined only to :**

Recruitment & Selection

Training & Development

Induction

Compensation & Reward System

Performance Appraisal

Health & Safety and the like

### **Contemporary research studies focus on :**

- Improving the flow of communication,
- Special programmes for maintaining procedural justice processes,



- Empowerment process, and
- Helping employees grow and develop within organizations

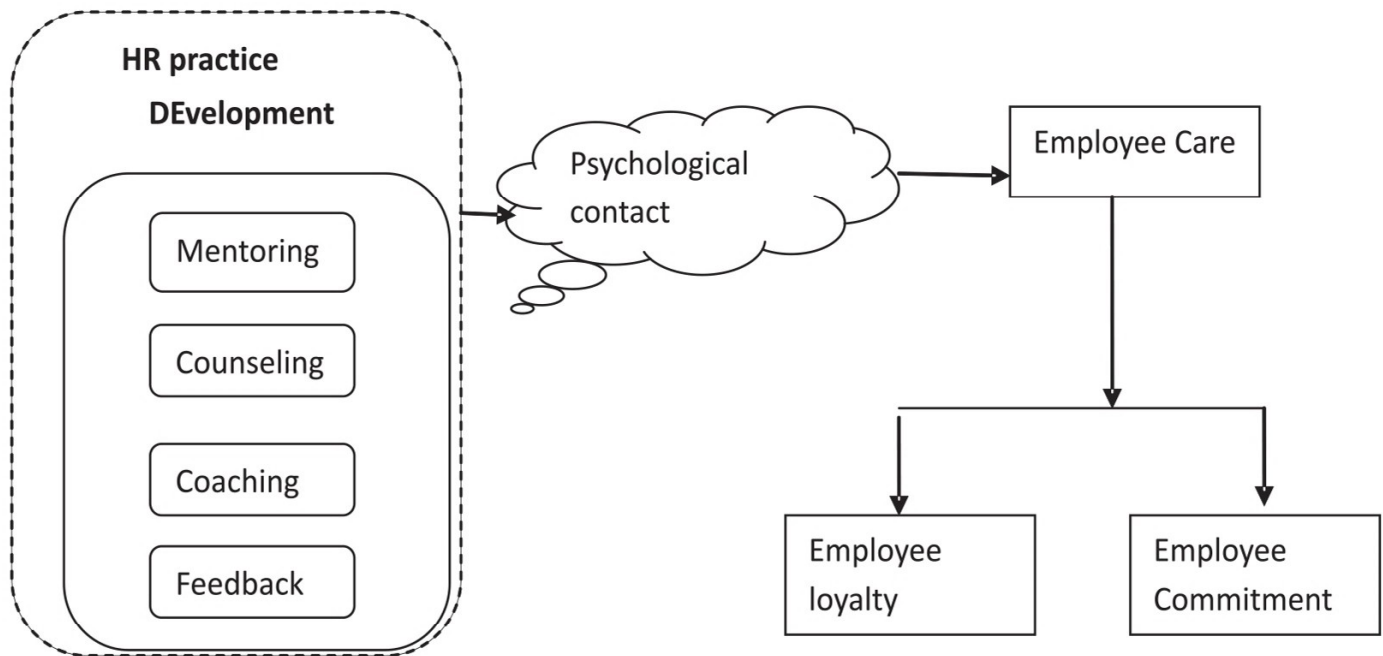
Human resource practices send strong messages about what organisations expect and what employees can anticipate in return (Guest, 1998; Rousseau & Greller, 1994). They are major mechanisms employees use to understand the terms of their employment (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni, 1994). Furthermore, human resource practices create contractual and future intentions through hiring practices, reward practices and developmental activities. Organisations even use them as communication tools (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Lucero & Allen, 1994; Rousseau & Greller, 1994; Sims, 1994).

### **1 Career Development:**

The definition of career has evolved over time, taking on multiple meanings. Super and Hall (1978) stated that a career is the sequence of positions that an individual undertakes throughout the life cycle. Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989) defined a career as “the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time”. Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) defined Career management as a dynamic process in which individuals gather information on their own likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and on the world of work; develop obtainable goals; develop and implement strategies to achieve these goals; and obtain feedback to promote decision making. This definition assumes that the individual is responsible for managing his or her own decisions and development. Werther & Davis (1992) has identified that career development will enhance organizational loyalty among employees, result in higher levels of job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and fewer employee complaints.

The desired outcome of a Career Development Program is to match the needs of the employee with those of the organization. Employees must have the opportunity to identify career needs and the organization should assist them in achieving these needs within organizational realities. A Career Development Program does not require elaborate procedures. The essential components are mentoring, counselling, coaching, feedback and training. **Career counselling** provides an avenue for the employee to assess their career needs. The **training** component assists employees in growth and development by enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities in their present job assignments or prepares them for future Career opportunities.. It may also strengthen the psychological contract between employer and employee. The career development is can be understood well by 4 important concepts with relevance to the concept, which are mentoring, counselling, coaching, feedback:





Mentoring typically has been defined as a relationship between an experienced person & a less experienced person in which the mentor, provides guidance, advice, support and feedback to the mentee. The old model of informal relationships which provided ambitious employees ways to achieve their career goals has given way to a diversity of learning-focused, mentoring program that are helping build the next generation of leaders. Mentoring has also expanded opportunities for those who traditionally have faced societal and organizational barriers to career growth. The benefits of mentoring have begun to extend beyond the workplace to expand cultural awareness and enhance the potential for meaningful lives. The relationship in mentoring is intended to have a strategic focus on the employees' development and can continue regardless of new positions the employee may later move in to. Mentors are also advised to spend time talking about the mentor's background and experience to ensure a good match. Though we understand that many has reaped the rewards through mentoring we hear that most business owners look at mentoring programs as a wasted expense. The main challenges involved to make mentoring successful lies on the time for the mentor to meet the employee. Can this be imposed or will the mentor get time amongst their busy schedule? Is this a best practice or a practice which is said so and not effective? But many successful organisations have commented that mentoring is an inexpensive and effective knowledge sharing. Mentoring should take its new scope of development not only amongst high performers but also in any areas that need to change or improve.



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## **Counselling**

One of the most logical and important aspects of the career development process involves career counselling. It is a key component or the foundation of the employee development process and can produce big dividends for both the employees and organization. An effective Career Counselling Program not only assists an organization in identifying employees with high performance potential but also assists employees in mapping out realistic career opportunities. It allows employees the opportunity to recognize, define, and redline their goals during the course of their careers. Conversely, it will afford management the opportunity to further assess employee needs to achieve a balance with those of the organization. Career counselling has evolved because many organizations now realize that most employees cannot begin to manage their own growth and development without first having information on how their own needs match those of the organization. According to Myers (1985), employees who derive satisfaction from knowing that expectations can be met inside the organization will most likely become a highly productive employee. Unfortunately, the term counselling can cause resistance because it signifies psychotherapy and is reserved for those with "problems". As a result, some employees may resist the organization's efforts. A possible solution could be to use the term career discussions instead of career counselling.

## **Coaching**

Coaching is "a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus to improve performance. To be a successful coach one requires a knowledge and understanding of process as well as a variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place". Career coaching is a strategic service that people can use and employers can rely on when work performance, career transition, personal conduct in the workplace and/or culture fit becomes an issue. It encourages people to seek career assistance early to prevent small problems from getting out of hand and creating greater barriers to success. It's also a way to help a diverse group of people reach higher career aspirations so that they continue to build on their interests and skills and add significant value to their company. Many organizations believe they have developed an internal system to help employees achieve their goals. Unfortunately, people inside an organization acting as "career managers or mentors" have had minimal training in skills





specific to career coaching. Many organizations assign career development to the Human Resource Department or Managers and believe they have no use for an external career coach. The best managed companies with the highest satisfaction rates use both internal and external career coaches.

## Feedback

Feedback is a very essential concept which helps every meagre process to be more effective. Any process in existence keeps progressing with the mantra 'feedback' given during frequent intervals till its completion. 'Employee feedback' is a process of giving clear and constructive ideas in order to build good relationship with the employees and motivate them towards peak performance. This employee's feedback once was an informal action which took place based on situational needs and to develop successor among star performers. Today, as organizations concentrate on developing every single individual, to contribute towards the strategic needs to achieve competitive edge, employee feedback turns to be an essential process and happens in various dimensions. Feedback is part of the overall dialogue or interaction between two individuals here employees, not a one-way communication. If feedback is not given the employee may think that everything is right and that there are no areas for improvement. A vibrant person values feedback, especially when it is given by someone credible who they respect as a role model or for their knowledge, attitudes or performance competence. Failing to give feedback sends a non-verbal communication in itself and can lead to mixed messages and false assessment by the employees of their own abilities, as well as a lack of trust in the superior

## Methodology

**Sample:** With an aim to ascertain the connectivity between the employee and employer this study is focused on Career Development practice offered at the automobile giants at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The researcher has selected large automobile companies in Chennai using stratified random sampling. 750 questionnaires were collected and were used for the analysis.

**Measures:** The questionnaire used in the study consists of three parts. Section 1 required the respondents to rate a total of 9 items on the four components of Career development,



namely mentoring, counseling, coaching and feedback. On the other hand, section 2 contained 20 items of questions pertaining to employee care, employee commitment and employee loyalty. The respondents were asked to describe on a 5 – point Likert Scale with : 5- Strongly agree, 4- Agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 2- disagree, 1 – strongly disagree. In addition, personal and demographic data relating to gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, department, designation, category, income per annum, years of experience, were also collected.

#### **4. Findings**

Table 1 contains items regarding the demographic of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, department, designation, category, income per annum, years of experience, etc. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the 750 respondents in the survey. It shows higher concentration of the male as the automobile manufacturing sector is male dominant. The respondents taken for the study has been spread out to all the age groups and the study gives the opinion of respondents from youngsters to aged employees above 50 years. Maximum representation is from the married employees and so the study gives meaningful expressions and opinions as they will be facing challenges in the home and work interface and will have goals towards career development. All the respondents have a basic level of educational background and 9.90% of the respondents are professionally qualified. The respondents considered for the study are fairly distributed among the departments and on the positions held by them in the company. Maximum (49.1%) of the respondents have an annual income of 2 to 5 lakhs. The maximum (41.5%) respondent taken for the study are below 5 years of experience. There is a fair distribution based on the number of years of experience in the present company.





Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	514	68.5
	Female	236	31.5
Age	21-30	311	41.5
	31-40	212	28.3
	41-50	116	15.5
	Above 50	111	14.8
Marital Status	Unmarried	269	35.9
	Married	481	64.1
Educational Qualification	Upto HSc	274	36.5
	Diploma	111	14.8
	UG	172	22.9
	PG	119	15.9
	Professional	74	9.9
Department	Marketing and sales	44	5.9
	Human Resource	205	27.3
	Finance	49	6.5
	Administration	239	31.9
	Production	181	24.1
	Others	32	4.3
Designation	Lower level	116	15.5
	Middle level	469	62.5
	Upper level	165	22.0
Annual Income in lakhs	Below 2	79	10.5
	2-5	368	49.1
	5-8	161	21.5
	Above 8	142	18.9
Total Experience in years	Below 5	311	41.5
	5-10	257	34.3
	10-15	81	10.8
	Above 15	101	13.5
Experience (in years)in present company	Below 1	297	39.6
	1-3	165	22.0
	3-5	116	15.5
	5-10	67	8.9
	Above 10	105	14.0

Table 2 shows that the factors of **Career Development** like 'Well defined Career development policy' has a highest mean of 4.48 with a standard deviation of 0.76 and 'Regular feedback of Employees on performance' has a lowest mean of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.76 compared to the other factors, like “ Employee Career planning and development, preference given for internal employees when vacancies arise, encouragement to participate in improving and redesigning jobs, effective mentoring system, effectiveness of employee coaching and counseling system, effective employee assessment system and good attitude of work place”. Also it is understood that the lowest mean and the highest mean value has the same standard deviation. Effective mentoring



system and encouragement to participate in improving and redesigning jobs have an equal mean and standard deviation.

**Table 2: Mean and SD of Items on Career Development**

Items on Career Development	Mean	SD
Career development policy is well defined	4.48	0.76
Employee career planning and development is a regular HR function	4.42	0.80
Internal employee is preferred when a vacancy arises	4.44	0.84
Employees are encouraged to participate in improving and redesigning job	4.38	0.77
Employee mentoring system is effective	4.38	0.77
Employee coaching and counseling systems function effectively	4.28	0.80
Employees are regularly provided feedback on performance	4.21	0.76
Employee assessment is effectively carried out	4.27	0.71
Work place attitude is good	4.35	0.68

Table 3 shows the Cronbach's coefficient alphas for HR factors ranged from .78 to .82 respectively, which is acceptable. Generally the values indicated good internal consistency estimate of reliability of the grouped items.

**Table 4: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha – Reliability test**

Variables	Alpha
Employee career development	.786586
Employee care	.799455
Employee loyalty	.801245
Employee commitment	.825141

## HYPOTHESIS

There is no association between the opinion of employees on the level of career development and level of Employee loyalty in Automobile industry.

There is no association between the opinion of employees on the level of career development and level of employee care in Automobile industry.





There is no association between the opinion of employees on level of career development and level of employee commitment in Automobile industry.

**TABLE 5: Chi-square test for association between the opinion of employees on the level of Career Development and level of Employee loyalty in Automobile industry**

Level of Career Development	Level of Employee Loyalty			Total	Chi-square value	P value
	Low	Moderate	High			
Low	95 (42.6%) [58.3%]	104 (46.6%) [31.5%]	24 (10.8%) [9.3%]	223 (100.0%) [29.7%]	126.052	<0.001**
Moderate	51 (14.7%) [31.3%]	159 (46.0%) [48.2%]	136 (39.3%) [52.9%]	346 (100.0%) [46.1%]		
High	17 (9.4%) [10.4%]	67 (37.0%) [20.3%]	97 (53.6%) [37.7%]	181 (100.0%) [24.1%]		
Total	163 (21.7%) [100.0%]	330 (44.0%) [100.0%]	257 (34.3%) [100.0%]	750 (100.0%) [100.0%]		

Note: 1. The value within ( ) refers to Row Percentage

2. The value within [ ] refers to Column Percentage

3. \*\* Denotes significant at 1% level

**ABLE 6: Chi-square test for association between the opinion of employees on the level of Career development and level of employee care in automobile industry**

Level of Career Development	Level of Employee Care			Total	Chi-square value	P value
	Low	Moderate	High			
Low	93 (41.7%) [58.5%]	106 (47.5%) [27.5%]	24 (10.8%) [11.7%]	223 (100.0%) [29.7%]	107.444	<0.001**
Moderate	58 (16.8%) [36.5%]	177 (51.2%) [46.0%]	111 (32.1%) [53.9%]	346 (100.0%) [46.1%]		
High	8 (4.4%) [5.0%]	102 (56.4%) [26.5%]	71 (39.2%) [34.5%]	181 (100.0%) [24.1%]		
Total	159 (21.2%) [100.0%]	385 (51.3%) [100.0%]	206 (27.5%) [100.0%]	750 (100.0%) [100.0%]		

Note: 1. The value within ( ) refers to Row Percentage

2. The value within [ ] refers to Column Percentage

3. \*\* Denotes significant at 1% level



**Table 7: Chi-square test for association between the opinion of employees on level of Career development and level of Employee commitment in Automobile industry.**

Level of Career Development	Level of Employee Commitment			Total	Chi-square value	P value
	Low	Moderate	High			
Low	112 (50.2%) [67.5%]	86 (38.6%) [23.8%]	25 (11.2%) [11.2%]	223 (100.0%) [29.7%]	162.618	<0.001**
Moderate	47 (13.6%) [28.3%]	176 (50.9%) [48.8%]	123 (35.5%) [55.2%]	346 (100.0%) [46.1%]		
High	7 (3.9%) [4.2%]	99 (54.7%) [27.4%]	75 (41.4%) [33.6%]	181 (100.0%) [24.1%]		
Total	166 (22.1%) [100.0%]	361 (48.1%) [100.0%]	223 (29.7%) [100.0%]	750 (100.0%) [100.0%]		

Note: 1. The value within ( ) refers to Row Percentage

2. The value within [ ] refers to Column Percentage

3. \*\* Denotes significant at 1% level

Career development practices leads to employee care, employee commitment and employee loyalty. Higher the Career development practices in the organization then higher is the employee care, higher is the employee commitment and higher is the employee loyalty. Employee care leads to employee commitment and employee loyalty. The factors related to **Employee feedback** under **Employee Career development** has a high mean of 21.71 and a standard deviation of 2.94 compared to factors related to mentoring, counselling & coaching. Overall **Employee career development** has a highest mean of 39.20 and a standard deviation of 5.46 compared to the other HR Practices taken for the study. Also **Employee care** has a highest mean of 37.93 and a standard deviation of 4.97 compared to **Employee Commitment** and **Employee loyalty**. Employee commitment leads to employee loyalty, Career Development (2.09) is the most influencing HR practice that influences Psychological contract of employees, which is followed by Health and Hygiene (2.03) and Stress Management (1.88). (through the mean ranks). The major surprise was on the mean level of employees opinion with respect to HR practices influencing Psychological Contract wherein the female employees were better than male employees. And also there was significant difference between opinion of male and female employees with respect to overall HR practices influencing Psychological contract among employees, and also towards employee care, employee commitment and employee loyalty being influenced by psychological contract. It is interesting to note that employees with below 1 year of experience in the present company have high psychological contract compared to the well experienced employees. And employees with an overall 5 years experience also have strong and significant relationship with employee commitment and





employee loyalty. This shows that employees in automobile companies join with high self motivation and their commitment and loyalty are higher compared to the well experienced employees. Considering the fact that the long term relationships will be stronger it is found that the opinion employees with more than 10 year of experience have no significant difference with the opinion of employees with 1-3, 3-5, 5-10 years of experience in the present company with respect to employee care that influences Psychological contract. With respect to the different levels of the employees it is found that Employee care, Employee Commitment and Employee loyalty that influences psychological contract differs with respect to the levels of employees. The opinion of employees who belong to upper level have significantly higher level of psychological contract than the employees who belong to the other levels, with respect to factors of Employee Care. Also the opinion of employees who belong to middle level have significantly higher level of psychological contract than the employees who belong to the other levels with respect to factors of Employee Commitment. But the opinion of employees who belong to lower level have significantly higher level of psychological contract than the employees who belong to the other levels with respect to factors of Employee Loyalty. This shows the varied importance given by different levels of employees.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper attempts to analyse the impact of Career development HR practices by focusing on the relationship between the psychological contract of employees towards employee loyalty and commitment with the presence of employee care as moderator. HR practices are considered as a bridge between employee behavior and organizational effectiveness. And it is understood that employees actively manage the exchange relationship by the psychological contract which is important and is being acknowledged by them. The relationship between the HR practices and employee loyalty and employee commitment is established beyond doubts through Psychological contract. Loyal employees protect the organisation's image, than maintaining confidentiality of work related matters. Committed employees feel that they are given importance in the company and they are not much bothered about their clarity in career path. Employees feel that they are cared when if they are provided with good physical working condition and rewards given for good deeds are not considered as a factor for employee care. Employee career development practices contribute more towards the employee commitment and employee loyalty. As mentioned above TBI has enormous importance practically in every industry.





The conclusion on the psychological contract and its relationship on the career development practices and employee commitment and loyalty will help companies to build public reputation and impacts on the sustainability with the measures resulted out of the analysis. The career development variables considered are already in practice with the organizations and can be handled more effectively for a sustainable future with focus on the business prospects through the employee care variable.

## **6. Limitations and Future Research**

The study had a good fortune to focus on Career Development practices which are well known. By validating their importance and its contributions leading to the psychological contract it has proved the importance to develop employee commitment and employee loyalty. While this study makes a number of contributions, it also has a number of limitations. The major limitations of this study revolve around sampling issues as the small sample size reported here may have affected the current results. Even though the findings might have indicated certain results, these findings cannot be construed as an independent model to ensure relationship of the HR practices with that of the psychological contract. Nonetheless, this model has provided insight into possible reasons for their connectivity to employee commitment and employee loyalty. In addition to that, the study focused on opinion of the employees on the psychological contract and HR practices as reported by the employees. Hence, it is subject to common source and common method bias. Future research should include other workplace dimensions such as talent acquisition/management and managerial practices which can contribute to employee commitment and employee loyalty. Furthermore, the research has not included other moderator effect of contextual variables such as the relationship between other HR practices. Comparative studies across professions, cultures, and industries are needed in order to truly understand the many constructs included in this study. A final direction for future research is to consider various other HR practices in the context of the psychological contract. A different model with various other HR practices and its implication can be tested and such a model may give a different relationship with the HR practice descriptions written or used.

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