

# **Influence of the Human Resources Practices on the Employees Attachment. Empirical Study within the Companies in the Processing Industry**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to show a series of results obtained during a research whose objective was the elaboration of an analysis and assessment model of human resources management practices in order to identify the factors that determine the performance of the management system for the purpose of perfecting it, within the organizations in the processing industry in Romania. The study aims to show the importance of the influence that the human resources practices have on the employees attachment towards the organizations they are a part of. The research has as base quantitative methods of analysis, therefore, as a tool for gathering data was used the survey based on questionnaire, composed of sets of simple questions, using a measurement scale of the agreement of Likert type, from 1 to 5 (1 = total disagreement - 5 = total agreement). The study is based on questioning a number of 463 employees within 27 companies in the processing industry in Romania. Among the main conclusions obtained, we mention that, the perception of the questioned employees on the human resources practices within the analyzed organizations is relatively good, respectively the attachment of the employees towards the organizations is also relatively good. We have identified that there is a strong and positive association between the human resources practices and the employees attachment, therefore, the organizations questioned need to make efforts in order to improve the human resources practices for consolidating the employees attachment.*

**KEYWORDS:** *employee attachment; human resources practices; motivation; reward.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *M10; M12.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

An issue preoccupying significantly the organizations nowadays is the competition on a global market, and the success of the global business strategies of a company is strongly related to the effectiveness of the human resources global strategies. The world becomes more and more interconnected, some practices and tendencies in human resources being convergent. However, the Human Resources Managers need a high level of sensibility and capacity to adapt and communicate politics in an effective and empathetic way (Daft, 2010).

Jiang et al. (2015:1) appreciates that over the past decades, numerous strategic human resource management (HRM) studies have substantiated the benefits of investing in human resource (HR) practices. Researchers have demonstrated that HR practices intended to

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improve employee competence, motivation, and opportunity to perform are positively related to organizational performance. A fundamental rationale of the performance effect of HR practices is that organizations can achieve strategic objectives by using HR practices to direct employee behaviors (Jiang et al., 2015:1).

Human Resources Management (HRM) is preoccupied by all the aspects related to the way in which people are hired, managed and developed within the organizations. These cover strategic activities of human resources management, human capital management, knowledge management, corporative social responsibility, organization development, resources (work force planning, recruitment and selection and talents management), learning and development, performance and reward management, respectively services supply to employees (Armstrong, 2011).

According to Armstrong (2016:53), the human resources management can be defined as a strategic, integrated and coherent approach of occupation, development, and wellbeing of the people working in organizations. The management of the human resources is supplied via the HR infrastructure of systems, structures, processes and practices referring to human resources. The human resources system is composed of interdependent human resources practices, which together allow the achievement of HRM objectives.

Na et al. (2017) believes that HR practices themselves are not a direct source of competitive advantage. Rather, advantage derives from the contributions made by people selected, trained and developed through such practices.

Jiang et al. (2015:2) mentions that even though there is a long-standing assumption that employee-related factors act to link HR practices to firm performance outcomes, surprisingly few studies have taken into account of the role of HR practices as experienced by individual employees. Understanding the variations in employees' perceptions of HR practices is also related to the concept of the strength of the HR system. Boon, et al. (2017:1) assert that researchers in the area of strategic HRM have been studying 'human capital' to understand how the management of people within organizations may relate to important organizational and individual outcomes. As well, Diaz-Fernandez et al. (2017:63) highlight differences between HRM practices and human capital orientations.

Jackson, et al. (2014:1), assert that the field of strategic human resource management has a long and rich tradition. HRM theory and research, paying particular attention to the value of HRM systems as management tools for influencing a wide variety of outcomes of concern to internal and external stakeholders.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The HRM system reunites the HR philosophies which describe the general values and the guiding principles adopted in people management and taking into consideration the internal and external context in which the company operates, develops human resources strategies which define the direction that HRM intends to approach. The human resources politics offer orientations which define the way in which these values, principles and strategies should be applied and implemented within the specific fields of the human resources management. The HR processes, which cover the formal procedures and methods used to apply the strategy plans and politics in human resources matter. Human resources programs allowing strategies, politics and human resources practices to be implemented according to plan (Armstrong, 2016:58).

The human resources practices are activities developed within the implementation of human resources politics and programs. These include resources, learning and development, performance and reward management, motivation, relationships with employees and human resources management (Armstrong, 2014).

The reward management is preoccupied by the formulation and application of strategies and politics aiming to reward people correctly, fairly and consistently, in accordance with their value for the organization. It carries out the projecting, implementation and maintenance of the reward processes and practices which aim to improve organizational performance, team and individual performance. The strategic objective of the rewards is the development and implementation of reward politics, processes and practices needed to support the achievement of the organization's objectives. The specific objectives to reward management are (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007:3):

- to reward people for the value they create;
- to align the reward practices both with the company's objectives, and the employees value;
- to facilitate the attracting and keeping of the qualified and competent people that the organization needs.

In order to achieve these objectives, the reward management needs to be strategic, meaning to approach long term matters, in regards to the way in which people need to be appreciated for what they do and obtain. The reward strategies and the processes needed to apply them need to result from the business strategy. They need to be integrated with other human resources management strategies, especially with those referring to human resources development, the reward management is an integrant part of the human resources management (Armstrong, 2006).

Motivation is the force that gives energy, guides and supports behaviour. A high performance is achieved by people well motivated which are prepared to make discretionary efforts, meaning to do independently more than they expect.

The well-motivated people engage into a positive discretionary behaviour – they decide to make an effort. Such people can be self-motivated and as long as this means that they are going on the correct direction to achieve the established objectives, then this is the best form of motivation. But the supplementary motivation offered by the work itself, the leadership quality and the various forms of acknowledgement and reward are based on self-motivation and helps people to use as best as possible their skills (Armstrong, 2014:169).

The attachment takes place when people get involved in their work and within the organization and they are motivated to reach high level of performance. The term „*attachment*” can be used in a specific way to describe what takes place when people are interested, positive and enthusiast in regards to their work places, they exercise the discretionary behaviour and they are motivated to reach high levels of performance. In order to improve attachment and the commitment of employees, we need to understand the factors affecting them (Armstrong, 2016:215):

- *Job challenges*: improve commitment, because it creates potential for performance and personal development.
- *Autonomy*: it refers to freedom, independence and discretion given to employees in planning their work and establishing the procedure of performing it. It gives a feeling of ownership and control on the results of the work.

- *Variety*: work places allowing individuals to perform more different activities or to use more different skills.
- *Feedback*: offering employees direct and clear information in regards to the effectiveness of their performance.
- *Development opportunities*: these make work to be significant, because they offer ways of development and employees fulfillment.
- *Reward and acknowledgement*: these represent both the direct return and the indirect return of the personal investment of time to act in a certain role.

The commitment of employees refers to attachment and loyalty. It is associated with the feelings of the individuals in regards to their organization. The characteristics of attachment are (Armstrong, 2014:186):

- the strong desire to stay a member of the organization;
- the strong belief and acceptance of the organization's values and objectives;
- availability to make considerable efforts for the organization.

HR activity is considered nowadays "a business issue" (Armstrong, 2014:2). The accent is on the alignment of the businesses and strategic adaptation. There are important requirements, but concentration on them may determine the professionals in the fields of human resources to give less attention to employees needs and motivation when they develop their human resources strategies.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to show a series of conclusions obtained within a more complex research, whose objective was the elaboration of an analysis and assessment model of human resources management practices in order to identify the factors that determine the performance of the management system for the purpose of perfecting it, within the organizations in the processing industry in Romania. The study aims to show the importance of the influence that the human resources practices have on the employees attachment towards the organizations they are a part of. In order to perform this research, quantitative methods of data analysis, based on statistical processing, were used. As an instrument for data gathering, was used the survey based on questionnaire, composed of 42 items describing the relevant dimensions for identification of the employees perception on human resources practices within the analyzed organizations, respectively to identify the consolidation level of the employees attachment towards the organizations. To measure these dimensions, a Likert type of scale has been used, from 1 to 5, where: *1 = total disagreement; 2 = disagreement; 3 = undecided; 4 = agreement; 5 = total agreement.*

The research sample, the statistic population analyzed, is composed of 27 companies in Romania carrying out their activity in the field above mentioned. In regards to the statistic units analyzed, the study is based on the questioning of a number of 463 employees within the sample companies.

As a method of data analysis, it was used the computer assisted analysis, using the IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 24.

The specific objectives of the research shown within this article are:

- the analysis of the human resources practices, as a predictive factor for the consolidation of employees attachment;
- the analysis of the consolidation level of the employees attachment;

- the analysis of the influence of the human resources practices on the consolidation level of the employees attachment.

The analysis of the data obtained was performed in two stages:

- 1) *Stage 1: Analysis of the human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees attachment:*

The human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees attachment were encoded in the following statistic variables:

- the "HR practices" variable, which synthesizes the human resources practices within the questioned organizations, it is an aggregated variable, being composed of two variables which, at their turn, total the scores of 11, respectively 13 items of the questionnaire. The first variable refers to the identification of the employees perception in regards to the way in which they are rewarded by the organization in relation to the effort made (the "reward" variable). On the other side, the second variable composing the "HR practices" aggregated variable, refers to the identification of the extent to which the questioned employees are determined to behave in a certain way in order to ensure their commitment within the organization (the "employees motivation" variable). Concretely, the "HR practices" aggregated variable, is composed of "reward" and "employees motivation" variables.
  - the "employee attachment" variable encodes the consolidation level of the employees attachment within the analyzed organizations, and totals the scores of 19 items which describe affection, sympathy, „when the employees are affectively connected" to their organizations. Our purpose is to identify through this variable, the level of employees attachment towards their organizations, in other words, we wish to identify the extent to which the employees questioned feel loyal, inspired, preoccupied and proud of their organizations.
- 2) *Stage 2: Analysis of the connection between the variables which describe the human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees attachment:*

The unidirectional hypothesis tested within the organizations analyzed, are:

- *H1:* There is a linear, positive and strong association between "HR practices" variable and "employee attachment" variable.
- *H2:* Variation of the "employee attachment" variable is explained to a large extent by variation of the "HR practices" variable.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 Stage 1: Analysis of the human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees attachment

In the first stage, there are analyzed the information which feature the studied variables. We will proceed further to analyse the two aggregated variables.

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of the variables which synthetize the human resources practices

The „reward" variable is composed of 11 items afferent to the questions of the questionnaire applied and refers to the identification of employees perception on the way in which they are rewarded by the organization, in relation with their effort (contributions brought, work carried out). In other words, our purpose is to investigate to what extent the employees questioned

consider that they are correctly rewarded and adequately in relation with their effort within the organizations.

Totaling the average of the 11 items, remained following the performance of the internal consistency analysis (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.878), we have created the „reward” variable, which registers an average of 3.79 (table 1), which represents a higher value exceeding the theoretical average of 3 (we mention here that we will use as reference for the interpretation of the average values of the variables, the theoretical average, of value 3) close to value 4 (agreement) in this respect, the average of the variable shows that the respondents consider that within their organization, there is a good degree of employees reward, but, obviously, the organizations questioned need to make considerable efforts to improve their reward practices. Also, we notice that the standard deviation in the case of this variable registers a value exceeding 0.804, which means that there isn't a strong grouping of responses, therefore, the opinions of the respondents are not very similar among themselves.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: the „reward” variable**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Reward	463	3.79	.804
Valid N (listwise)	463		

Source: Own research

In regards to the second variable composing the "HR practices" aggregated variable, named „employees motivation”, is composed of 13 items and refers to the identification of what extent the questioned employees are determined to behave in a certain way to ensure their adequate implication within the organization, in other words, we aim to identify how available (motivated) the questioned employees are to fulfill their tasks, respectively, if they are adequately and efficiently motivated to adhere to and stay within the organization.

Therefore, totaling the averages of the 13 items remained following the internal consistency analysis (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.931), we have created the „employees motivation” variable, which registers an average of 3.89 (table 2), representing an average value very close to value 4, indicating a good degree of employees motivation, but the questioned organizations need to really do efforts to increase the level of employees motivation, in order to reduce the difference between the average obtained and the maximum value.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics: the „employees motivation” variable**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Employees motivation	463	3.89	.704
Valid N (listwise)	463		

Source: Own research

Aggregating the two variables previously shown, we have composed the "HR practices" variable, which described the practices referring to employees rewarding and motivation, therefore, the average registered by the aggregated variable is 3.84, which indicates that the HR practices are well perceived by the employees, however, the management of the questioned organizations need to improve these practices and to develop adequate systems, transparent and effective for the appreciation of the individual performance which increase motivation and employees mobilization, to use their full potential in order to fulfill the general objectives of the organization, as well as those specifics.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics: the "HR practices" variable**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
HR practices	463	3.84	.720
Valid N (listwise)	463		

Source: Own research

#### 4.1.2. Analysis of the variable which synthesizes the consolidation level of the employees attachment

The variable which describes the consolidation level of the employees attachment is an aggregated variable, encoded "*employee attachment*", through which we understand affection, sympathy, how affectively "connected" the employees are to their organizations.

We have composed this variable from 19 items and we wish to identify through it the level of employees attachment in relation to their organizations, in other words, we wish to identify the extent to which the employees questioned feel loyal, inspired, preoccupied, proud of their organizations. Totalling the items remained after performing the internal consistency analysis (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.958), we have created the "*employee attachment*" variable.

This registers an average of 3.53, which is an average relatively close to value 4, which indicates a level relatively good of employees attachment, but the management of the organizations need to make considerable efforts to consolidate the employees attachment level.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics: the "employee attachment" variable**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee Attachment	463	3.53	.540
Valid N (listwise)	463		

Source: Own research

#### 4.2. Stage 2: Analysis of the relationship between the variables which describe the human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees' attachment

The reason for which we try to identify if there is or not a relationship between the human resources practices and the employees attachment, respectively, if the relationship exists, to identify the intensity and direction in which it manifests, as well as the extent to which the variation of the human resources practices explains the variation of the employees attachment, resides in the realities of the questioned organizations, which confront with difficulties in managing effectively the issues related to employees retention.

##### 4.2.1. Analysis of the correlation between the studied variables

We have analyzed the existence of correlations between the statistical variables studied, with the help of Pearson's correlation coefficient, whose registered values in the case of these two variables can be noticed in table 5. We mention that, Pearson's correlation coefficient measures the intensity of the association between two variables and takes values in the range [-1; +1].

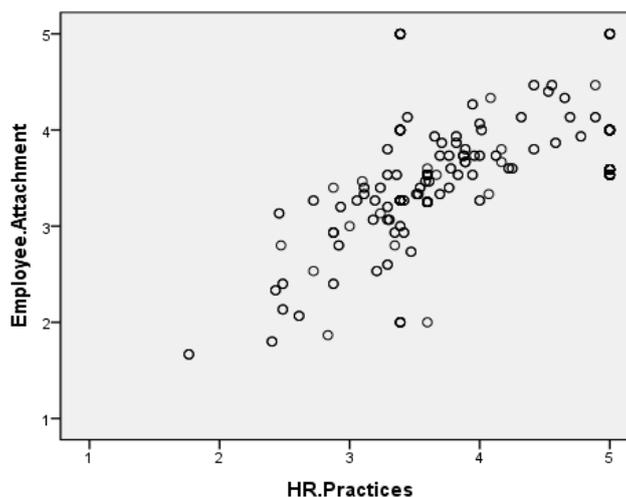
In order to interpret the Pearson's coefficient values, we need to check if the variables studied fulfill three conditions: (1) they are quantitative variables, (2) they are normally distributed,

(3) if the relation between the two variables is linear. Therefore, the first condition is checked, the variables studied are quantitative.

In regards to distribution's normality, we check this condition through Kolmogorov-Zmirnov (K-S) test for both variables analyzed, as follows:

- "HR practices" variable registers K-S  $z = 0.364$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .
- "Employee attachment" variable registers K-S  $z = 0.519$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

In regards to the third condition, it can be checked by observing figure 1, where we can see that, between the variables studied, there is a positive – linear relation.



**Figure 1. The relationship between the studied variables**  
 Source: Own research

Therefore, we can move further and interpret the values registered by Pearson correlation coefficient in table 5. In this respect, the first thing we need to notice in the correlations table is the value of Sig., which registers value Sig.= 0.000 < 0.005, indicating that, with a high level of thrust, the correlations between the variables are statistically significant and the hypothesis according to which there are no correlations between the studied variables, is rejected as null.

**Table 5. Correlations**

		Employee Attachment	HR practices
Employee Attachment	Pearson Correlation	1	.546**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	463	463
HR practices	Pearson Correlation	.546**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	463	463

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

Source: Own research

At this moment, the values of the correlations registered by Pearson coefficient can be interpreted. Therefore, between the variables synthetizing the human resources practices and the consolidation level of the employees attachment, there is a significant, strong and positive correlation:  $r_{\text{Pearson}} = 0.546$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . This means that if the values of the "HR practices" variable will increase, the values of the "employee attachment" variable will increase also. In

other words, this result indicates that, if the HR practices are improved, the employees attachment to the questioned organizations will also improve. This result is a valuable and anticipated one, because it confirms the hypothesis of the literature and allows us to recommend to the questioned organizations, and not only, to acknowledge the importance of improving the HR practices and to develop adequate systems, transparent and efficient to appreciate the individual performance which increase motivation, employees mobilization and fidelity, having impact on the improvement of the retention rate of the employees. Following this analysis, the results obtained allow us to state that the hypothesis *H1: there is a linear, positive and strong association between the "HR practices" variable and the "employee attachment" variable* is confirmed.

#### 4.2.2. Regression analysis between the variables studied

Up to this moment, we have identified the fact that, between the human resources practices and the employees attachment there is a strong connection, which means that if the HR practices are improved, the attachment of the employees to the questioned organizations will also get improved, but we do not know to what extent (with what percentage) would the employees attachment improve, if the HR practices will be improved (with one percent). In this respect, we will apply a linear regression model to identify: (1) what percentage of the variation of "employee attachment" variable is explained by the variation of the "HR practices" variable, respectively, (2) how much would the "employee attachment" variable get improved, if "HR practices" variable will be improved with one percent.

The regression model has generated three tables, which can be noticed below and which we will interpret successively.

In table 6 it is shown the summary of the model, where we can notice the value of the correlation coefficient  $R = 0.546$ , which we have already identified above and which indicates that the intensity of the association between these two variables is strong and positive.

The following two columns provide a series of very important information for our research, respectively *R Square* and *R Square adjusted* = 0.296, which, from statistical point of view, it will be read this way: variation of „employee attachment" variable is explained in percentage of 29.6% by the variation of the „HR practices" variable. This result indicates that the variation of the employees attachment is explained in a percentage of approximately 30% by the variation of the human resources practices.

**Table 6. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.546 <sup>a</sup>	.298	.296	.453

a. Predictors: (Constant), HR.practices

Source: Own research

**Table 7. ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40.112	1	40.112	195.682	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	94.499	461	.205		
	Total	134.612	462			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee.Attachment

b. Predictors: (Constant), HR.practices

Source: Own research

**Table 8. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.955	.114		17.102	.000
	HR.practices	.409	.029	.546	13.989	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee.Attachment

Source: Own research

We move further with the interpretation of the regression model, therefore, table 7 shows us the result of the ANOVA analysis, which indicates the result of the significance test for the regression coefficient, therefore, we notice that  $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ , and statistics F registers a higher positive value,  $F = 195.682$ , which indicates that the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, between "HR.practices" and "employee attachment" variables existing a significant relationship, therefore, the model is statistically relevant.

We can therefore interpret the table with the coefficients of the model (table 8), which contains the estimation of the model with a constant for which  $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ , which demonstrates that this constant is relevant for the model.

In regards to the predictions generated by the model, we notice that the estimation of the non-standardized coefficient B is statistically significant, because  $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$  therefore, we can read and interpret the value of the non-standardized coefficient  $B = 0.409$  which indicates: (1) due to its positive sign, a direct correlation between the two variables, respectively, (2) the general form of predictive equation:

$$y = a + bx \quad (1)$$

(where (Waller, 2008):  $y$  – the estimated value of dependency;  $x$  – the value of the independency;  $a$  – the free term of the regression right expressing the value of the dependency when the independency equals zero;  $b$  – the regression coefficient indicates the extent to which the dependency changes in case that the independency is changed by one percent), which is transposed in the prediction specific equation of the following form:

$$y = 1.955 + 0.409 * x \quad (2)$$

Therefore, this predictive equation means that, at an increase with one point of the „HR practices” variable, the „employee attachment” variable is changed with 0.409 points, in other words, if the human resources practices are improved within the questioned organizations with one point, the employees attachment will be improved with 0.409 points.

In regards to the standardized coefficient Beta, this is statistically significant ( $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ ) therefore, the standardized coefficient Beta registers a value of 0.546, which means that at an increase with a standard deviation of the "HR practices" variable, the „employee attachment” variable changes with 0.546 standard deviations.

These results allow us to conclude that the hypothesis *H2: Variation of the "employee attachment" variable is explained to a large extent by the variation of "HR practices" variable*, is confirmed.

The results obtained entitle us to state that the HR practices are strongly dependent of and influence the level of the employees attachment, therefore, we recommend to the management of the organizations to give attention to the way in which they commit and to make efforts in order to improve the processes and the appreciation systems of the individual performance and the general human resources, to consolidate the level of their employees attachment.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to show a series of conclusions obtained within a more complex research, whose objective was the elaboration of an analysis and assessment model of human resources management practices in order to identify the factors that determine the performance of the management system for the purpose of perfecting it, within the organizations in the processing industry of the metal constructions and products in Romania.

The study aims to show the importance of the influence that the human resources practices have on the employees attachment towards the organizations they are a part of. In order to perform this research, quantitative methods of data analysis, based on statistical processing, were used. As an instrument for data gathering, was used the survey based on questionnaire, composed of 42 items describing the relevant dimensions for identification of the employees perception on human resources practices within the analyzed organizations, respectively to identify the consolidation level of the employees attachment towards the organizations.

The specific objectives of the research shown within this article are:

- the analysis of the human resources practices, as a predictive factor for the consolidation of employees attachment;
- the analysis of the consolidation level of the employees attachment;
- the analysis of the influence of the human resources practices on the consolidation level of the employees attachment.

The unidirectional hypothesis tested within the organizations analyzed and shown within this study were:

- *H1*: There is a linear, positive and strong association between "HR practices" variable and "employee attachment" variable.
- *H2*: Variation of the "employee attachment" variable is explained to a large extent by variation of the "HR practices" variable.

Among the main results shown within this study we mention that, the variable which describes the level of consolidation of the employees attachment indicates a relatively good level of the employees attachment, but the management of the questioned organizations needs to make considerable efforts to consolidate the level of the employees attachment.

The variable which describes the HR practices referring to employees reward and motivation indicates that the HR practices are perceived by the questioned employees as being good, but certainly, the management of the questioned organizations needs to improve these practices and to develop adequate, transparent, and efficient systems for the appreciation of the individual performance, which will increase the motivation and the mobilization of the employees, so that they can use their full potential in order to fulfill the general objectives of the organizations.

Between the variables which synthetizes the human resources practices and the level of consolidation of the employees attachment, there is a connection, a significant and positive correlation. This result indicates that, if the HR practices are improved, the employees attachment in relation to their organizations will be improved.

A linear regression model has been applied, following which the results obtained entitle us to state that the *HR practices* are in a strong dependency of and influence the level of the employees attachment, therefore, we recommend to the management of the questioned organizations to give attention to the way in which they commit and to make efforts in order to improve the process and the systems of appreciation of the individual performance and the general human resources practices, to consolidate the level of employees attachment.

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