

Mapping Leadership Gaps in Indian HR Management: A Conceptual Review with Emphasis on Delhi/NCR

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Abstract

This research paper explores the current state of Human Resource (HR) management in India, focusing particularly on the challenges and potential strategies for developing HR leadership within organizations situated in metropolitan business hubs such as Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR). The research is grounded in an in-depth examination of secondary sources, which encompass government reports, industry white papers, published academic literature, and case studies from prominent Indian companies. It emphasizes the fact that, even though there has been an increasing level of awareness about the strategic significance of human resource (HR) operations, many businesses in India still do not have a codified framework in place to cultivate leaders in the field of human resources.

There are a number of important sections into which the paper is separated. The conceptual framework for human resources (HR) leadership is presented in the introduction, and the significance of the subject is explained within the context of the quickly changing corporate landscape in India. The literature study compiles and analyzes the conclusions that have already been reached about human resource practices, management development frameworks, and leadership gaps in both India and other countries. The study is in accordance with pre-existing theories of leadership development and organizational behavior because of the theoretical framework.

The parts that follow assess the existing gaps in leadership pipelines, the hurdles posed by organizational culture, and the geographical differences that impede the growth of human resources leadership in Indian companies. This talk provides an overview of how these problems impact the performance of an organization, the morale of its employees, the planning for future leadership, and the capacity to maintain operations over a long period of time. The necessity of making structural reforms and enhancing collaboration between academia, government, and the industry is acknowledged in the conclusion.

The last section of the study offers concrete suggestions for creating HR development academies that are tailored to specific regions in Delhi/NCR, as well as advancing legislative support and developing leadership models that are based on competency.

Keywords: HR leadership development, Indian organizations, metropolitan business hubs, Delhi/NCR, organizational effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Human resource (HR) management in today's knowledge-based economy has evolved from an administrative role into an essential component of strategic leadership inside organizations. The long-term success of a company is increasingly dependent on HR executives' abilities in people acquisition, development, and retention, in addition to policy compliance and execution. The capacity of human resources professionals to successfully manage teams and shape the culture of their organizations is crucial to this change. But there are huge voids in HR-related leadership development in India's business landscape, especially in the fast-paced Delhi/NCR area.

A lack of competence models for future-oriented leadership, excessive turnover in human resources positions, and insufficient succession planning are all aspects of the leadership gap. Despite HR professionals' pivotal role in people management and organizational transformation, Indian firms often fail to provide them with organized leadership development. In areas like Delhi/NCR, where the workforce is constantly changing due to fast urbanization, economic dynamism, and other factors, the lack of visionary and adaptable HR executives is even more apparent. A lack of strong internal leadership pipelines in human resources leads to HR strategies that are disjointed and a misalignment between company goals and the demands of the workforce.

Changing demographics in the workforce and an increasing number of young people in India are making this requirement even more pressing. Gen Z and millennials have changed the way we think about leadership, meaning in the workplace, and how engaged we should be as a generation. The demands placed on leaders have increased due to digital disruption, hybrid work arrangements, and the restructuring of the workforce following the pandemic. Human resources must thus not just address operational issues, but also spearhead strategic transformation, a responsibility that calls for organized programs to cultivate leaders.

Indian companies seem unprepared for the growing importance of human resources as a strategic partner. Over 70% of Indian organizations' HR departments indicated leadership skill shortfalls, while just 18% of enterprises had formal leadership development programs for HR professionals, according to the 2023 KPMG India HR Outlook. There are skill shortages in emotional intelligence, digital fluency, and succession planning capabilities, according to a Deloitte India research (2022), which further highlights the fragmented structure of HR leadership across Indian organizations. Companies are always under pressure to grow,

innovate, and hold on to talented employees in highly competitive talent hotspots like Delhi/NCR.

Significant leadership gaps have been established, impeding succession planning, strategy alignment, and long-term organizational sustainability, due to the lack of formal leadership development programs in HR management throughout Indian organizations, especially in the Delhi/NCR area.

The purpose of this article is to examine the kind and degree of leadership voids in human resource management within Indian companies by undertaking a conceptual assessment of relevant literature and secondary data sources. We will focus on the Delhi/NCR area in particular to identify problems unique to that area and to provide HR leadership development strategies that are both locally relevant and influenced by global best practices.

Using only secondary sources of information, this article has used a qualitative, review-based approach. Books, peer-reviewed magazines, HR industry reports, and official government documents were all part of the extensive literature research. Patterns and frameworks for leadership development were examined via case studies of human resource strategies in Indian organizations. Furthermore, a comparison was made thematically between HR leadership methods in India and throughout the world. We did not do any interviews, surveys, or statistical tests to gather primary data.

IDENTIFYING THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF LEADERSHIP GAPS IN INDIAN HR MANAGEMENT

The Human Resource (HR) Over the course of the last several decades, the role of the function in India has seen a substantial transformation. It has progressed from being mostly administrative and compliance-oriented to being a crucial strategic pillar inside businesses. Despite this progression, a significant portion of Indian corporate human resources departments continue to prioritize transactional matters, which restricts their capacity to provide leadership (Empxtrack Blog, n.d.). Human resources (HR) has had a history that is anchored in the maintenance of records and the welfare of employees. However, the transition of HR into leadership and strategy has been inconsistent across many areas and industries.

The organizational structure of HR departments in Indian corporations is a major cause of this impasse. Human resources is still seen by many companies as an afterthought, rather than an essential component of their company strategy. Researchers from the National HRD Network

and the Center for Creative Leadership found that just 20% of India's HR departments believe they are strategically ready to steer their companies into the future (2017). This is indicative of the larger problem, which is that HR leadership is frequently left out of corporate leadership pipelines and is never involved in fundamental decision-making processes.

Human resources also receives less attention from Indian companies when it comes to leadership development, in contrast to other departments like marketing, operations, and finance. People Matters (2025) reports that as a result of this deprioritization, there is little succession planning for HR positions, little funding, and no exposure to cross-functional leadership experiences. Consequently, human resources experts are frequently stuck in operational jobs that don't allow them to have a significant strategic effect.

One of the most competitive business locations in India, Delhi/NCR, highlights this disparity even further. Leadership continuity within HR departments is very precarious due to high talent mobility, which is driven by job switching, quick growth startups, and the presence of multiple multinationals. Companies frequently fail to hold on to mid-level human resources experts who may be positioned for promotions to more senior leadership positions. The internal mentorship systems and leadership pipelines are both disrupted by this continual turnover (JustHR, 2025).

Most human resources departments severely lack mentoring programs, mapped out competence frameworks, and clarity around career paths. Without clear career trajectories to follow, human resources experts have little direction in acquiring the strategic thinking abilities necessary for executive positions. Leadership development in human resources is typically unstructured and informal due to role uncertainty and variable evaluation standards. Organizations run the danger of long-term workforce management instability in the absence of structured succession planning, as stated in the CCL-NHRDN study (2017), which shows that the gap between conventionally operated HR teams and high-maturity HR functions is growing.

For these reasons—along with a lack of institutional development architecture, systematic neglect, and structural marginalization—the leadership gap in Indian HR management has persisted. Because of the hectic nature of the business climate in the Delhi/National Capital Region, these problems are more noticeable there, making the area a hotspot for research into and solutions to HR leadership gaps.

DELHI/NCR AS A LEADERSHIP PRESSURE ZONE – REGIONAL INSIGHTS

Because of its distinct demographic and workforce dynamics, the Delhi/National Capital Region (NCR) stands out as an important location to study leadership gaps in human resource management. High worker mobility, frequent job hopping, and fierce rivalry for talent characterize the region's workforce, which receives one of India's greatest inflows of qualified professionals. The HR department is under increased pressure to manage personnel acquisition and retention, as well as to take the lead strategically, foster continuity, and develop future leaders from within. Grooming HR professionals into leadership roles is especially challenging in metro locations like Delhi/NCR due to the significant mobility and short duration of workforce segments (Kalia, 2024).

Gurgaon, Noida, and South Delhi-based IT, manufacturing, and service companies have unique difficulties inside HR-specific settings. High attrition rates, project-based employment, frequent team rearrangement, and rapid business expansion are all typical. As an example, a research on employee attrition in the Delhi/NCR service industry found that there is a lot of turnover. This makes it hard for HR to plan for leadership succession and keep good employees (Anonymous, 2021). Human resources departmental turnover is indicative of larger patterns in employee attrition, which in turn weakens HR leadership development pipelines and causes HR strategies to be reactive rather than proactive.

The patterns of attrition and urban movement also contribute to the deterioration of leadership continuity in human resources departments. Because of the rapid turnover of professionals who are coming and departing the organization, human resources departments are having a difficult time keeping employees who have the potential to be promoted to management roles. As per the industry statistics, over seventy percent of organizations situated in Tier 1 cities such as Delhi reported elevated attrition rates, which presents a challenge to the stability that is necessary for leadership development (Moneycontrol, 2024). Human resources departments must cope with not just filling roles but also nurturing a solid cadre of leaders in this particular situation. Succession planning gets fragmented when there is not enough time for people to develop and progress into leadership positions.

There are a lot of big companies in the Delhi/NCR area, but many HR strategies don't do enough to foster future leaders from inside. Rather of focusing on developing leaders or preparing for the future, most HR development programs are more cookie-cutter and geared around improving operational performance. Instead of consistently preparing HR personnel

for leadership positions, the focus is still on recruiting outside talent. In addition, many companies see HR more as a service than a strategic role, which means HR professionals don't get to experience many types of leadership and can't hone their leadership skills. What this means is that HR policies may not be tailored to meet the needs of HR executives in dynamic regions, even if they do exist.

Short HR staff tenure, lack of formal mentoring, restricted career mobility, and insufficient succession planning are recurring themes shown by comparative evaluations of case studies from firms headquartered or managing important HR operations in Delhi/NCR. Sectoral reports and attrition statistics give strong inferential insights that the area serves as a microcosm of national level HR leadership difficulties, even though there are few publicly available case studies specifically covering HR leadership development in Delhi/NCR. This makes the Delhi/National Capital Region (NCR) an HR stress zone for leadership development as well as a high-demand workplace. Cultivating HR leadership is particularly challenging in today's climate due to the confluence of urban demands, the fast-moving talent market, and the structural restrictions of organizations.

As a result of its dynamic workforce, high mobility and attrition rates, HR policy gaps, and difficulties in developing internal pipelines, Delhi/NCR is experiencing leadership pressure. Because they show how larger national HR leadership disparities are exacerbated in metro zones, it is crucial to understand these regional insights. Building HR leadership continuity requires targeted strategies, organized development paths, and policies that foster quick but sustained talent growth for organizations in Delhi/NCR and similar metropolitan hubs.

CONCEPTUALIZING A STRATEGIC ROADMAP TO BRIDGE HR LEADERSHIP GAPS

Competency frameworks, such the Korn Ferry Leadership ArchitectTM, have become indispensable in international human resource management for developing future leaders. Leader effectiveness, team engagement, and organizational success are all correlated with a set of 38 behavior-based skills identified by the Korn-Ferry framework. Organizations are able to benchmark leadership behaviours such as *Instils Trust, Drives Results, Develops Talent* and *Strategic Mindset* against role levels. This evidence-based architecture enables HR and leadership development practitioners to articulate leadership standards, design targeted development tracks, and evaluate leader readiness (Korn Ferry, 2019)

International HR-leadership practices provide structured pathways for HR leadership development in nations like Australia and Singapore, going beyond competency frameworks. As an example, the Global HR Leaders Program at the National University of Singapore's Business School aims to prepare future leaders in the Asia-Pacific region via comprehensive HR transformation. As an example of how HR departments may develop into centers of strategic leadership, the RBL Group in Singapore provides individualized training for HR leaders as well as modules for strategic HR business partnerships. Leadership capabilities, talent pipelines, formal mentorship, development results, and HR leadership's engagement with business strategy are some of the main enablers highlighted by these worldwide programs.

It would be necessary to make certain adjustments in order to adapt these global best practices to the Indian business environment. Rather than functioning as strategic partners, many Indian HR departments, particularly in rapidly expanding metropolitan centers, operate in a reactive and transactional approach. Indian companies might benefit from a "HR Leadership Cultivation Model" that has modular components:

- **Competency Identification:** Leveraging frameworks such as Korn Ferry's 38 competencies, Indian HR functions must define leadership-relevant behaviours and skills for HR roles (e.g., strategic orientation, business acumen, talent development).
- **Skill-Gap Assessment:** Conducting assessments of existing HR professionals to identify gaps relative to the leadership competency profile, thereby linking current state to desired future state.
- **Leadership Mentoring Programmes:** Establishing formal mentorship and coaching schemes that pair high-potential HR professionals with senior leaders, enabling experiential learning and role transitions.
- **Role-Based Mobility Mapping:** Facilitating structured career-path planning that moves HR professionals across roles (e.g., business-partnering, talent analytics, organizational development) to build leadership readiness.
- **HR Leadership Succession Design:** Ensuring that organisations develop internal pipelines of HR leaders, with clear succession plans for critical HR leadership posts, thus reducing dependency on external hires and building continuity.

Human resources will be elevated from a support role to a strategic leadership capacity upon the implementation of this road plan. Adopting such a structured methodology provides a significant way for Indian firms in areas like Delhi/NCR, where talent mobility is high and leadership continuity is fragile, to move away from reactive HR operations and toward proactive HR leadership development. By integrating competence frameworks, assessment processes, mentorship and mobility paths, and succession architecture into a unified model, the roadmap serves as a strategic reference for HR practitioners and lawmakers.

Therefore, it will need more than just targeted training to close the HR leadership gap in Indian companies. Specifically, it calls for the establishment of leadership standards based on competencies, development pipelines that are methodical, and role-based mobility that is connected to company strategy. In order to ensure that HR professionals are prepared to manage organizational development, strategic change, and workforce transformation, organizations may construct strong HR leadership pipelines by integrating global best practices with local realities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This paper has concluded that Human Resource (HR) management in India, particularly in metropolitan business zones like Delhi/NCR, encountered substantial structural and strategic challenges in nurturing HR leadership. There was a lack of a defined and organized process for producing HR executives in many Indian companies, even as HR's strategic relevance was becoming more apparent. There was a lack of succession continuity and a reliance on external candidates due to the fact that HR departments did not have formal leadership development processes in place to help foster the growth and grooming of internal talent.

The leadership deficit among HR functions was especially noticeable in the Delhi/NCR area because of its fast industrial expansion, significant employee turnover, and competitive talent marketplace. Amidst changing labor demographics and organizational goals, companies in this region faced challenges in implementing consistent leadership development programs. The absence of formal competence evaluations, mentorship programs, and chances for role-based mobility prevented human resources departments—typically occupied with operational and administrative duties—from becoming into incubators for strategic leadership.

Furthermore, the disjointed nature of HR leadership development in India was contrasted sharply with foreign frameworks like Korn Ferry's Leadership Architect and global HR training models from Singapore and Australia. According to the research, a policy-aligned, modular, and competency-based roadmap is urgently needed to modify and localize these global models for the Indian environment.

Indian companies' long-term strategic agility, employee engagement, and organizational succession planning were all negatively affected by the leadership vacuum in HR activities. It will take concerted action from businesses, governments, and universities to close this gap.

Recommendations

- **Adoption of Structured HR Leadership Frameworks:** Leadership development frameworks based on competencies that are specific to human resources should be used by Indian organizations. Leadership behavior mapping, skill-gap assessments on a regular basis, and mentorship programs that complement company goals should all be part of these.
- **Policy Advocacy for Institutional Support:** The government and businesses should work together to promote or mandate HR leadership development through measures such as leadership certifications, training subsidies, or compliance requirements. Human resources leadership is one indicator that regulatory bodies use to assess business governance.
- **Development of Region-Specific Leadership Academies:** In order to teach future HR leaders in a contextual, experienced, and modular fashion, metro zones like Delhi/NCR should set up specialized leadership academies or Centers of Excellence (CoEs). Together with nearby businesses and urban HR groups, these might run the show.
- **Integration into Corporate Governance and CSR Mandates:** Companies of a medium to large size would do well to incorporate HR leadership development programs into their CSR and ESG plans so that they may make investments in their people leadership pipelines for the long haul.
- **Industry-Academia Collaborations:** Develop HR leadership certification programs that are industry-aligned and incorporate academic knowledge with real-world organizational needs by encouraging collaborations between business schools, HR

professional bodies, and corporate organizations. Mentorship, case-based learning, and leadership simulations tailored to Indian business environments should be included of these programs.

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