



## International Journal of Science, Architecture, Technology and Environment

### **Balancing Individual and Collective Rights in Democratic Workspaces: An HRM Perspective from Indian Public Institutions**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63680/ijstate1025084.014>

#### **Abstract**

This study examines how individual and collective rights interact dynamically in democracies, with a particular emphasis on human resource management (HRM) in India. India, a thriving democracy and one of the oldest civilizations in the world, maintains a constitutional framework that, under Part III (Articles 12 to 35) of the Constitution, provides both individual liberty and social entitlements. These rights, which serve as the moral cornerstone of institutional administration, include equality, freedom of speech and religion, protection against exploitation, and cultural autonomy. In this regard, HRM serves as a mediator of constitutional principles in addition to being a strategic administrative instrument, especially in public institutions and educational contexts. Here, institutional culture, legal requirements, and organizational norms frequently overlap—and occasionally clash—making it necessary to strike a balance between individual liberty and the welfare of the group. This study combines case law, constitutional analysis, and HR practices to develop a rights-based HRM model that is consistent with India's democratic values. By doing this, it emphasizes how important HRM is to create inclusive, legal, and morally sound workplaces that uphold both individual integrity and group integrity.

**Keywords:** Individual Rights, Collective Rights, Constitution of India, Human Resource Management, Educational Institutions, Workplace Ethics

#### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

India, as a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic, is governed by the values enshrined in its Constitution—values that seek to uphold justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all citizens. A central pillar of this constitutional architecture is the guarantee of Fundamental Rights, which are not merely legal entitlements but essential conditions for the full development of the human personality and the functioning of a democratic society. These rights are universal, inalienable, and justiciable, ensuring protection against arbitrary state actions and facilitating the active participation of individuals in political, social, and economic life.

Fundamental rights are fundamental human rights that are guaranteed to every citizen of India. These rights are non-discriminatory and can be enforced by the courts under certain conditions.

Our Indian Constitution consists of 6 fundamental rights which include the Right to Equality (Article **14-18**), the Right to Freedom (**Article 19-22**), the Right against Exploitation (Article **23-24**), the Right of Freedom of Religion (Article **25-28**), Cultural and Educational Rights (**Article 29-30**), the Right to Constitutional Remedies (**Article 32**). Equal protection under the law and non-discrimination are guaranteed by the Right to Equality (Articles 14–18). The Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22) encompasses the protection of life and individual liberty as well as the freedom of speech, movement, and occupation. Articles 23–24 of the Right against Exploitation forbids child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking. The freedom to practice and spread one's religion is guaranteed by the Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28). Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29–30). It Protect the rights of minority groups to create educational institutions and maintain their culture. Article 32, "Right to Constitutional Remedies," gives people the ability to petition the courts to have their rights upheld.

Despite being articulated within a national framework, these rights have profound organizational ramifications, particularly in public institutions like government buildings, universities, and nonprofits. The recruitment, development, evaluation, and retention of employees in firms are governed by human resource management (HRM), which is intrinsically tied to these constitutional requirements. It is essential to the operationalization of these rights in work settings. HRM acts as the ethical and administrative framework that enables the grassroots implementation of constitutional ideals, whether through the promotion of diversity and inclusion (Articles 29–30), the protection of freedom of association (Article 19), the provision of a safe and respectable workplace (Article 21), or the guarantee of equal employment opportunities (Article 16).

However, the necessity for collective rights—such as upholding discipline in the workplace, defending institutional norms, and preserving team cohesion—often coexists with the exercise of individual rights. For HR professionals, this means striking a careful balance between maintaining group duties and organizational objectives and respecting individual autonomy. The problem is made more difficult in a multicultural and democratic country like India, where institutions usually cater to people from a wide range of sociocultural and religious backgrounds.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine how HRM practices and fundamental rights intersect in Indian institutions, with a focus on public sector and educational institutions. The study aims to develop a model of rights-based HRM—one that balances institutional responsibilities and individual liberties in a way that is in line with the spirit of the Indian Constitution—through constitutional analysis, legal case references, and organizational policy review. Human resource management (HRM) must negotiate the confluence of these rights, especially in democratic and public institutions such as educational institutions. HRM regulations must promote corporate discipline and cohesion while honouring individual liberties. This article examines how HRM in India maintains a balance between individual and collective rights while also being consistent with constitutional norms.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Upadhyay (2018) and Sharma (2021), HR professionals in public institutions act as both administrative staff and stewards of constitutional ideals, underscoring the growing significance of constitutional literacy in the HR field. The foundation of legal compliance in public HRM activities is provided by constitutional laws, especially those pertaining to equality, freedom of speech, and religious autonomy (Bhatia, 2020).

Thomas (2019) and Sen & Jha (2017) have demonstrated how workplace rights, including non-discrimination, fair treatment, and freedom of expression, are extensions of more general human rights. These rights have an impact on HR procedures like hiring, assessing employees, and handling grievances.

Research on Indian public sector organizations demonstrates how employment strategies are impacted by constitutional demands such as Article 14 (equality before the law) and Article 21 (protection of life and liberty) (Rao, 2020).

In these situations, authors such as Misra (2016) and Pathak (2022) draw attention to the conflict between cultural preservation and legal compliance. A common reference point for comprehending how to strike a balance between minority rights and state power in education is the Supreme Court's decision in *DAV vs. State of Punjab*.

Employees' rights to privacy, expression, and religious practice may be curtailed by organizational rules including uniformity standards, codes of conduct, and social media regulations, as demonstrated by Rao (2017) and Thomas (2019).

On the other hand, institutional values, team discipline, and collective bargaining are seen as necessary for productivity and order. Indian court decisions, such as *ONGC v. Association of Scientific Officers* (2005), have reaffirmed the necessity of balancing individual liberties with the organization's obligation to uphold operational discipline and public confidence.

Organizations in the public and educational sectors frequently traverse difficult terrain where rights are both legal and sociocultural, particularly in a multicultural culture like India. The use of Articles 29–30 by minority institutions to protect their cultural and religious autonomy in hiring and curriculum is examined by Misra (2016) and Pathak (2022). In order to maintain administrative uniformity, the state simultaneously enforces uniform service conditions. Thus, HRM policies serve as both regulatory and inclusive tools, necessitating tact, knowledge of the law, and ethical clarity.

Frameworks for incorporating individual and group rights into HRM systems have been put forth in recent literature. A "Rights-Conscious HRM Model" that respects organizational coherence and integrates proportional punishment, grievance redress, and participatory decision-making is suggested by Bhattacharya & Menon (2022). These models use constitutional theories to strike a balance between accountability and freedom, such as the Doctrine of Proportionality and the Basic Structure Doctrine. The focus is on changing HRM from a compliance role to a democratic governance platform.

## CHAPTER 3: CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF RIGHTS-BASED HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

### 3.1 Fundamental Rights and Their HRM Implications

The Indian Constitution's Article 14-18, "Right to Equality," states that everyone is entitled to equality regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sex, caste, or place of origin. This right forbids the State from discriminating against individuals based on their caste or religion and ensures equal employment chances inside the government. It also covers the right to be untouchable and the right to have titles revoked. Non-discrimination in hiring, promotions, and benefits, as well as equal employment opportunity

Article 19-22 (Right to Freedom), Freedom is one of the core principles of any democracy. The right to freedom is guaranteed to Indian citizens by the Constitution. Freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly without weapons, freedom to practice any profession, freedom to reside anywhere in the nation, etc. are all included in this right. State security, public morals and decency, goodwill toward other nations, etc., all affect some of these freedoms. As a result, the State is allowed to impose reasonable limitations on these rights. Workplace expression and union rights are directly impacted by freedoms of speech, association, mobility, and profession.

The right against exploitation (Article 23–24) forbids the transportation of people, begging, and other types of servitude. It also forbids the employment of minors in manufacturing facilities. Children under the age of 14 are not allowed to work in hazardous jobs under this Constitution. HR hiring procedures are influenced by the ban on child labour and forced labour.

Article 25–28 (Freedom of Religion) allows minorities to preserve their customs and traditions, these rights protect their religious, linguistic, and cultural rights. The goal of educational rights is to guarantee equal access to education for all. It protects employees' freedom of dress, holidays, and religion. Important for educational HRM, Article 29-30 (Cultural and Educational Rights) safeguards linguistic and religious minorities in personnel and institutional governance. Employees can file a lawsuit to challenge unfair or discriminatory HR practices under Article 32, "Right to Constitutional Remedies."

### 3.2 Legal Doctrines and HRM

Human resource management (HRM) must function within the nation's legal and constitutional framework in a democratic society where the rule of law is upheld. Despite being essentially legal in nature, Indian constitutional principles have a big impact on how HR policies are created, carried out, and assessed. Applying important legal ideas guarantees that organizational procedures uphold and strengthen the values of equality, justice, and fundamental rights. Particularly pertinent to human resource management are the following constitutional doctrines:**Doctrine of Severability:** According to this theory, a statute or regulation will only be invalidated if a portion of it is shown to be unconstitutional or to violate fundamental rights; the remaining portions of the law will still be enforceable. This theory is essential to HRM when examining organizational policies that can partially violate workers' rights. For example, merely the single phrase that inhibits an employee's freedom of speech or association (as provided by Article 19) in an internal code of conduct may be declared unconstitutional, without nullifying the policy. For any problematic clause to be addressed separately without interfering with the overall policy framework, organizations must make sure that their HR policies are written with clarity and precision. Severability protects operational continuity while fostering legal

compliance.**Doctrine of Eclipse:** According to the Doctrine of Eclipse, a law or regulation that was in effect prior to the Constitution's adoption but that infringes upon basic rights is deemed ineffective (eclipsed) but not void. If the conflicting constitutional provision is changed or removed, it might be resurrected. In public sector organizations or educational institutions, many legacy HR rules that date back to colonial administrative practices or pre-independence regulations may still be in effect. Although these antiquated laws violate fundamental rights, they must be kept dormant until they are changed to reflect constitutional principles. For instance, if discriminatory hiring or promotion standards are based on gender or caste and are the result of outdated laws, they must be abandoned and replaced with inclusive procedures.**Basic Structure Doctrine:** This theory, which was developed by the Supreme Court in the famous *Kesavnanda Bharati v. State of Kerala* case, maintains that the Constitution's "basic structure" is made up of essential elements such as equality, the rule of law, secularism, and judicial review, and that the legislature cannot change or repeal it. Even institutional regulations and HR policies supported by statutory or legislative power must adhere to the fundamental framework of the Constitution. It would be unlawful for any contract or legislation to compromise the rights to justice, equality (Article 14), and non-discrimination. For instance, it would be against both the fundamental structure theory and Article 15 for a company to arbitrarily deny promotions to workers based on their religious identification. This theory also serves as a defence against authoritarian or regressive HRM practices in public entities. It ensures long-term institutional responsibility by upholding the moral and constitutional bounds that human resources policies must adhere to.

Important checks and balances on HR practices are provided by legal theories such as severability, eclipse, and the basic structural principle. They guarantee that an organization's governance and human resource development are not only strategic and effective, but also compliant with the law and the constitution. To avoid legal issues and advance fair workplace cultures, HR managers and legislators must keep these ideas in mind while creating and enforcing regulations.

### 3.3 HRM as Mediator of Rights in Public Institutions

Public institutions serve as crucial venues for the enactment and testing of democratic norms in addition to being hubs for the provision of services and the execution of policies. In these institutions, human resource management (HRM) must strike a balance between individual freedoms, organizational goals, and regulatory requirements. Since public organizations are directly answerable to constitutional values, as opposed to private businesses, HRM takes on a quasi-legal, ethical, and regulatory role. This section examines the ways in which HRM mediates rights in these situations.

#### 3.3.1 Individual Rights in HRM

Public institution workers are constitutional citizens with rights that must be upheld and safeguarded, not just labour resources. The protection of these rights must be guaranteed by HRM policies and procedures while staying within the bounds of institutional goals and discipline. **The right to privacy in data protection and employee monitoring:** The right to privacy was acknowledged as a basic right under Article 21 of the Supreme Court's 2017 *Puttaswamy* ruling. This calls for strict measures in HRM for background checks, biometric data utilization, and employee surveillance. CCTV, keyboard recording, and email tracking are examples of monitoring systems that need to be reasonable, transparent, and proportionate. **Right to Freedom of Speech in the Workplace:** If beliefs do not degenerate into hate speech, defamation, or violations of service conduct regulations, employees are still allowed to voice their constitutional rights, including criticism of institutional actions. Strong whistleblower protections are necessary to promote accountability

and openness, especially in public organizations. **Right to Professional Development and Fair Assessment:** HR systems must guarantee that training opportunities, promotions, and performance reviews are all based on merit and devoid of discrimination. Articles 14 and 16 concerning equity and equality of opportunity in public employment may be violated by any capricious denial of opportunities.

### 3.3.2 Collective Rights in HRM

Further, HRM mediates employees' collective rights, which are crucial for establishing a fair and inclusive workplace. These rights are in line with both international labour norms and constitutional clauses that protect the right to organize associations, including Article 19(1)(c).

**Establishment of Unions and Employee Associations:** Workers in government agencies are entitled to establish unions and associations to bargain for better working conditions, advocate their interests, and seek remedies. HRM regulations must uphold these rights and encourage constructive discourse. **Collective Bargaining for Fair Wages and Conditions:** Collective bargaining has helped many public businesses and academic institutions institutionalize fair pay plans, paid time off, and favourable working conditions. This process must be facilitated by HR without interfering with institutional operations. **Cohesive workplace culture and organizational integrity:** HRM must make sure that initiatives don't undermine administrative effectiveness or split organizational unity while yet providing room for group action. Grievance redressal procedures and codes of conduct can aid in striking a balance between representation and order.

### 3.3 Balancing Challenges

To prevent legal problems, ethical quandaries, and operational inefficiencies, the mediation of rights in HRM has inherent tensions that need to be carefully controlled. Digital monitoring and surveillance tools (such as AI-based productivity trackers, email filters, and attendance systems) must not infringe upon an employee's Article 21 right to autonomy and dignity. The scope, goal, and permission procedures associated with this type of surveillance must all be spelled out in detail in policies. The Institutional Image against Expression: Given the popularity of social media, the public's opinion of the organization may be impacted by the online speech of its personnel. HRM must develop social media guidelines that safeguard the organization's image without restricting free expression or legitimate criticism. For example, a professor who opposes administrative acts on social media sites shouldn't be subject to arbitrary sanctions unless doing so violates legal or professional standards. To promote discipline, public institutions frequently impose clothing rules, behavioural norms, and rituals (such as flag hoisting or institutional promises). These must not, however, violate freedoms of religion or culture. The employee's right to freedom of religion (Articles 25–28) may be violated, for instance, if western clothing rules or attendance at religious events are required. To preserve professional identity, HR must provide inclusive practices that honour plurality.

In public institutions, human resource management is a constitutional interface as well as an administrative function. It must constantly walk a tightrope between upholding institutional standards and defending the rights of both individual workers and collective bargaining groups. Participatory governance frameworks, ethical awareness, and legal literacy are necessary for effective HRM in these kinds of situations. Public institutions can only fulfil their operational purpose and democratic character by keeping this equilibrium.

## CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY: DAYANAND ANGLO VEDIC INSTITUTIONS VS. STATE OF PUNJAB (1971)

The Supreme Court of India decided in favour of DAV (Dayanand Anglo Vedic) institutions in a historic decision, concluding that mandatory enrollment at Guru Nanak Dev University violated the rights protected by Articles 29(1) and 30(1) of the Indian Constitution. These articles safeguard minorities' rights to maintain their cultural identity and to create and run the educational institutions of their choosing, regardless of their religion or language. The Court noted that DAV institutions, which have their roots in the Arya Samaj tradition, embody a unique religious and cultural identity that serves as the foundation for their administrative structure and teaching philosophy. Their cultural ethos would be diluted, and institutional autonomy would be undermined if affiliation with a university that does not share their core beliefs were required. The rights of any segment of the population to preserve their own language, script, or culture are protected by Article 29(1), as this ruling reiterated. Religious and linguistic minorities are granted the freedom to create and run educational institutions free from excessive interference under Article 30(1). By protecting cultural identity and institutional autonomy, the Supreme Court's ruling reaffirms the necessity of HRM in minority institutions to protect constitutional rights. The founding community's ideals must be reflected in key HRM tasks like hiring, curriculum alignment, governance, and staff orientation while avoiding excessive government intervention. This guarantees cultural continuity as well as legal conformity.

## CHAPTER 5: EMBEDDING CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS IN HRM: A FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE IN INDIAN PUBLIC AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

**5.1 Concept of RBHRM:** The concept of rights-based human resource management (RBHRM) incorporates legal and constitutional rights into the fundamental HRM operations of companies, particularly public and educational institutions. In contrast to traditional HRM, which prioritizes production and efficiency, RBHRM places a strong emphasis on social justice, ethical governance, and participatory decision-making. It views workers as rights-bearers whose opportunities, freedoms, and dignity must be preserved and encouraged rather than just as resources. Equality (Article 14), freedom (Articles 19–22), cultural autonomy (Articles 29–30), and legal remedies (Article 32) are among the constitutional ideals that RBHRM aims to bring institutional practices into line with.

**5.2 Pillars of Rights-Based HRM:** The principles of equality, freedom, and justice found in the constitution are the foundation of a rights-based human resource management (HRM) system. It starts with the non-discrimination and equity concept (Articles 14–16), which guarantees equal opportunities for hiring, advancement, and training irrespective of a person's gender, caste, religion, language, or political views. Within appropriate institutional bounds, employees' rights to free speech, association, and professional mobility are safeguarded by freedom and autonomy (Article 19). Institutions, particularly those managed by minorities, are required by Articles 25–30 on respect for cultural and religious diversity to make accommodations for customs pertaining to attire, language, and observance. In order to protect employee rights, the right to redress (Article 32) requires open and understandable grievance procedures. Additionally, by promoting employee participation in the development of institutional choices and HR policies, participatory governance strengthens democratic principles. Together, these pillars guarantee that HRM maintains moral, inclusive, and responsive workplace practices in addition to following legal requirements.

**5.3 Implementing Rights-Based HRM in Practice:** Implementing a Rights-Based Human Resource Management (RBHRM) framework successfully requires a methodical and structured strategy based on institutional responsibility and constitutional integrity. Reviewing and auditing current HR policies, where all employment practices and service standards are analysed from a constitutional perspective, is one of the fundamental phases. It is necessary to change or remove clauses that go against fundamental rights, such as those that permit discrimination or limit liberties. Building capacity through education and awareness-raising is equally crucial. To raise understanding of constitutional values, anti-discrimination laws, and inclusive workplace standards, HR professionals, academics, and administrative personnel should regularly participate in workshops and development programs.

Prioritizing inclusive hiring and retention strategies is necessary to guarantee significant change. To encourage diversity and equal representation of underrepresented groups, hiring procedures should be open, merit-based, and, when appropriate, backed by affirmative action. To evaluate policy execution and institutional conformity with RBHRM requirements, the organization must also establish strong monitoring and evaluation systems, such as HRM audit committees or Rights Oversight Boards. In addition to guaranteeing accountability, these systems will encourage ongoing development in bringing HRM procedures into line with social justice objectives and constitutional values.

**5.4 Challenges to Rights-Based HRM** The application of Rights-Based Human Resource Management (RBHRM) is fraught with several serious obstacles, despite its revolutionary potential. Since deeply ingrained hierarchies, inflexible bureaucratic structures, and administrative inertia can obstruct policy reform and postpone progressive HRM improvements, institutional opposition is a significant obstacle. Furthermore, HR professionals' ignorance of the law frequently leads to ill-informed decisions that could unintentionally breach human rights norms or constitutional obligations. Another major obstacle is a lack of resources, which makes it challenging to operationalize extensive reforms like grievance redressal procedures or inclusion training, particularly in public institutions with tight budgets and inadequate infrastructure. Managing cultural conflicts is another crucial issue, as attempts to establish institutional uniformity—like uniform clothing codes or behavioural norms—may clash with the requirement to honour cultural or religious variety. In educational environments where staff and teachers come from a variety of backgrounds, this is especially delicate. Institutions must implement a change-management strategy based on ethical commitment, legal literacy, and inclusive stakeholder engagement to successfully address these challenges. RBHRM can progressively become ingrained in institutional practice and identity by cultivating a culture of rights awareness, consultation, and adaptation.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In addition to being a legal charter for defending individual rights, the Indian Constitution also acts as a compass for encouraging moral, just, and inclusive governance in public institutions. Human resource management (HRM) becomes more than just an administrative task when it is in line with these fundamental principles; it becomes an essential tool for implementing rights, protecting human dignity, and reaffirming democratic values in routine institutional operations. This essay has examined how HRM in India must manage the intricate relationship between individual freedoms and group obligations, particularly in public and educational environments characterized by administrative complexity and cultural diversity. HR practices can uphold legal integrity while advancing social justice and inclusivity by implementing constitutional theories

including Severability, Eclipse, and the Basic Structure Doctrine.

The importance of cultural autonomy and the constitutional protections necessary for the management of minority-run organizations are further demonstrated by the case study of Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) institutions. It emphasizes how a Rights-Based Human Resource Management (RBHRM) paradigm may support organizations' cultural values while guaranteeing compliance with national legal requirements. In addition to promoting equity and employee dignity, RBHRM implementation encourages significant democratic engagement inside institutional structures. throughout the end, such a model is essential for maintaining and promoting the constitutional spirit throughout India's public and educational sectors, not just for legal compliance.

## **CHAPTER 7 RECOMMENDATION**

Several practical suggestions are made considering the study's research and conclusions to help public and educational institutions successfully implement a Rights-Based Human Resource Management (RBHRM) framework. Institutions must first incorporate required legal literacy and awareness programs into HR training modules to institutionalize constitutional training. This will promote a rights-conscious workplace culture by giving HR professionals, administrators, and employees the knowledge they need on ethical governance and fundamental rights.

The second step is to create HR Rights Oversight Cells, which are specialized internal organizations tasked with examining HR procedures to make sure they comply with constitutional requirements. By serving as grievance monitors and internal auditors, these departments help improve institutional accountability. Third, by putting in place fair hiring, advancement, and retention practices, organizations may actively promote diversity and inclusion. This entails implementing culturally aware procedures and affirmative action policies that honour and reflect India's diverse society.

Fourth, current institutional frameworks must be revised to expressly reference constitutional elements like equality (Articles 14–16), freedom (Article 19), and cultural autonomy (Articles 25–30) to formalize rights-based HRM policies. In addition to making institutional commitments clearer, this codification guards against capricious decision-making. Lastly, organizations need to take a proactive approach to policy advocacy, working with government agencies and legal professionals to update antiquated HR regulations and service standards that violate fundamental rights. By adopting these suggestions, HRM can shift from an administrative role focused on compliance to a transformative tool that supports justice, equity, and participatory governance, strengthening the constitutional values that underpin Indian public and educational institutions.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and publication of this article.

## Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and publication of this article.

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