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Ethical human resource practices in agribusiness organizations: Implications for employee welfare, job satisfaction and organizational performance

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Abstract

Ethical human resource management (HRM) is particularly important in agribusiness because employment in agricultural production, processing, input supply and related enterprises often involves seasonal, contractual and field-based work. The present study examined ethical issues encountered by HR professionals in agribusiness organizations in Maharashtra, India, and assessed the association of ethical HR practices with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction. It also examined the contribution of company policies and ethics training to the effectiveness of resolving workplace ethical issues. Primary data were collected from 60 conveniently selected HR professionals using a structured questionnaire. Garrett ranking, Pearson's correlation, t-tests and multiple regression were used for analysis. Labourer exploitation ranked first among the ethical concerns (mean Garrett score 58.42), followed by unequal pay and wage disparities (53.98) and gender misconduct (53.87). All eight ethical HR practices considered were positively and significantly associated with organizational performance ($r = 0.4458-0.7793$) and employee job satisfaction ($r = 0.5709-0.8211$). Bias-free HR decisions showed the strongest association with organizational performance ($r = 0.7793$), while fair and equal pay for equal work showed the strongest association with job satisfaction ($r = 0.8211$). Company policies and ethics training together explained 73.26% of the variation in the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues ($R^2 = 0.7326$; $F = 78.1018$; $p < 0.001$), with ethics training showing the larger regression coefficient ($\beta = 1.1411$). The findings highlight the importance of fair employment practices, transparent HR systems, worker welfare and organizational learning for strengthening ethical management and socially responsible agribusiness workplaces.

Keywords: Ethical HRM, agribusiness, employee welfare, job satisfaction, organizational performance labour ethics

1. Introduction

Human resources are central to organizational functioning, and the way employees are recruited, compensated, evaluated and supported can influence productivity, satisfaction and organizational continuity ^[1, 2]. Ethical HRM places fairness, justice, honesty, transparency and respect at the centre of decisions concerning recruitment, compensation, performance appraisal, promotion, employee welfare and workplace relationships ^[3]. In this perspective, employees are treated as stakeholders whose dignity and rights matter alongside organizational objectives.

Agribusiness includes agricultural production and a wide range of activities such as food and agro-processing, dairying, seed and input supply, farm-equipment services and agricultural marketing. These enterprises contribute to employment and rural economic activity ^[4]. At the same time, seasonal, contractual and field-based employment can create distinctive HR challenges involving wages, working conditions, discrimination, favouritism, worker welfare and grievance handling. Such issues are relevant not only to organizational management but also to the social dimensions of agricultural and rural development.

Although ethical HRM has been examined extensively in

manufacturing, corporate and service-sector settings, sector-specific empirical evidence from agribusiness remains comparatively limited. Agribusiness organizations often operate at the interface of agricultural production, rural labour and value-chain activities; therefore, ethical HR practices may have implications for employee welfare, decent employment and the sustainability of rural economic activity. Against this background, the present study examined ethical issues encountered by HR professionals in agribusiness organizations and assessed the association of ethical HR practices with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction. It also examined the role of company policies and ethics training in resolving ethical issues.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical issues in human resource management

Research on HR ethics has identified ethical concerns in recruitment and selection, compensation, privacy, layoffs, promotion and performance appraisal ^[5-7]. HR professionals may have to balance organizational objectives with employee welfare, and ethical dilemmas may remain even when minimum legal requirements are satisfied ^[7]. Employees have

also been conceptualized as organizational stakeholders, while later work has examined ethical muteness, ethical leadership, employee well-being, organizational justice and responsible conduct in agri-food organizations [3, 8-14].

Strategic HRM research has linked employee-oriented HR practices with organizational outcomes [15-18]. Organizational-justice research suggests that perceptions of distributive, procedural and interactional fairness can influence cooperation and workplace outcomes [19]. Related research has examined socially responsible HRM, employee well-being and ethical HRM in relation to employee behaviour and organizational outcomes [20-24].

2.2 Ethical HR practices and organizational performance

Ethical HR practices can influence organizational performance by shaping employee commitment, cooperation, trust and the consistency of workplace processes. Strategic HRM research has linked employee-oriented HR practices with organizational outcomes [15-18]. Organizational-justice research suggests that perceptions of distributive, procedural and interactional fairness can influence cooperation and workplace outcomes [19]. Related research has examined socially responsible HRM, employee well-being and ethical HRM in relation to employee behaviour and organizational outcomes [20-24].

Ethical conduct is influenced not only by individual judgement but also by organizational systems, including policies, supervision, ethical codes and training [30-33]. Formal ethics programmes and training can strengthen ethical awareness and support consistent decision-making, particularly when senior management visibly supports ethical standards [32-40]. Such mechanisms may be especially relevant in agribusiness settings where employment arrangements and workplace conditions can vary across activities and worker groups.

2.3 Ethical HR practices and employee job satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects employees' evaluation of their work experiences and the extent to which work-related expectations and values are met [25]. Fair treatment, equitable rewards, respectful leadership and transparent procedures have been associated with satisfaction, commitment and employee well-being [19, 26-29]. These perspectives provide a basis for examining whether ethical HR practices are associated with job satisfaction among employees in agribusiness organizations.

Empirical studies have provided support for the link between fairness and employee attitudes. Judge *et al.* [27] noted that fair and respectful treatment contributes to job satisfaction across cultural settings. Research on organizational justice has likewise associated fair rewards and procedures with satisfaction and commitment [19]. Ethical leadership and fair appraisal have been linked with employee confidence and morale [9, 28]. Similar relationships have been examined in socially responsible HRM, employee well-being, and the broader relationship between ethical HRM, trust and organizational commitment [29, 22-24].

2.4 Role of company policies and ethics training

Ethical conduct is shaped not only by individual judgement but also by the organizational environment in which decisions are made. Ferrell and Gresham³⁰ highlighted the

influence of organizational policies, supervision and reward systems on ethical decision-making. Sims [31] emphasized the need for formal standards and ethics training so that ethical intentions can be translated into routine workplace behaviour. Weaver, Treviño and Cochran [32] found that the effectiveness of corporate ethics programmes was influenced by visible support from senior management, while Schwartz [33] showed that clear ethical codes can reduce uncertainty and strengthen accountability.

Research on ethics training has further demonstrated the value of organizational mechanisms. Valentine and Fleischman [34] linked formal ethics training with perceptions of organizational ethics and job satisfaction. Treviño, Weaver and Reynolds [35] argued that policies, ethical codes and training can operate together to limit unethical behaviour. Ardichvili *et al.* [36] and Kaptein [37, 38] identified transparency, accountability and leadership integrity as important features of an ethical culture. Verhezen [39] distinguished compliance-based systems from integrity-oriented approaches, with the latter encouraging employees to internalize ethical values. In the Indian setting, Singh [40] associated ethical leadership, structured HR policies and training with workplace trust and harmony. Mpinganjira *et al.* [41] similarly emphasized continuous ethics training and clear organizational policies as means of reducing misconduct and supporting organizational commitment.

2.5 Research gap: Previous research has established links between ethical HRM, organizational performance and employee satisfaction, while also identifying policies and training as important supports for ethical conduct. However, much of this evidence has been generated in manufacturing, corporate and service-sector settings. Agribusiness operates under a different employment structure, often involving seasonal and contractual workers, field activities and employees from diverse rural and socio-economic backgrounds. Sector-specific evidence on ethical HRM therefore remains limited. The present study addressed this gap by examining ethical issues experienced by HR professionals in agribusiness organizations and by measuring their association with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction. It also assessed the contribution of company policies and ethics training to the resolution of ethical issues.

3. Objectives and hypotheses

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To identify the common ethical issues encountered by HR professionals in agribusiness organizations.
2. To assess the relationship between ethical HR practices and organizational performance.
3. To examine the relationship between ethical HR practices and employee job satisfaction.
4. To determine the role of company policies and ethics training in addressing ethical issues.

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested

- **H₀₁:** Ethical HR practices are not significantly associated with organizational performance in agribusiness organizations.
- **H₁₁:** Ethical HR practices are significantly associated with organizational performance in agribusiness organizations.

- **H₀₂:** Ethical HR practices are not significantly associated with employee job satisfaction in agribusiness organizations.
- **H₁₂:** Ethical HR practices are significantly associated with employee job satisfaction in agribusiness organizations.
- **H₀₃:** Company policies and ethics training do not significantly contribute to the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues.
- **H₁₃:** Company policies and ethics training significantly contribute to the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Research design and study area

A descriptive and analytical research design was used. The descriptive component documented ethical issues reported by HR professionals, while the analytical component examined associations among ethical HR practices, organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and the effectiveness of company policies and ethics training. The study was conducted in Maharashtra, India, and covered agribusiness organizations involved in agricultural production, food processing, dairying, poultry, seed production, farm-input supply and agri-services.

4.2 Data sources

Primary data were collected from HR professionals using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire covered respondent characteristics; ethical issues in HR functions, including recruitment, wages, employee welfare, workplace safety, discrimination, privacy and grievance handling; and statements relating to ethical HR practices, organizational performance, job satisfaction, and the effectiveness of company policies and ethics training. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale. The questionnaire was administered in person, allowing clarification where required. Secondary information used to develop the conceptual framework and questionnaire was obtained from peer-reviewed journals, books, dissertations, government publications and organizational documents.

4.3 Population and sampling

The study population consisted of HR managers, HR executives, HR officers and HR business partners employed in agribusiness organizations in Maharashtra. Convenience, non-probability sampling was used to select 60 respondents. Participants were required to be employed in agribusiness, actively involved in HRM, familiar with workplace ethical issues and willing to participate voluntarily. The sample size was within the range suggested by Roscoe⁴² for behavioural and social-science research involving specialized populations. Because convenience sampling was used, the sample should be interpreted as a study-specific group rather than as a statistically representative sample of all agribusiness HR professionals in Maharashtra.

4.4 Statistical analysis

The responses were coded and analysed using the following methods:

1. **Garrett ranking technique:** Respondents' rankings of ethical issues were converted into percentage positions and corresponding Garrett scores using the standard Garrett conversion procedure. Mean Garrett scores were used to establish the final rank order.

2. **Pearson's correlation analysis:** Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to assess the direction and strength of association between ethical HR practices and organizational performance, ethical HR practices and employee job satisfaction, and company policies/training and the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues.
3. **Significance test for correlation coefficients:** The calculated correlation coefficients were tested using the t statistic and compared with the tabulated value of 2.002 at the 5% level with 59 degrees of freedom.
4. **Multiple regression analysis:** Multiple regression was used to estimate the combined contribution of company policies and ethics training to the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues. The fitted model was expressed as $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$, where Y denotes problem-solving effectiveness, X_1 denotes company policies, X_2 denotes ethics training, a is the intercept, b_1 and b_2 are regression coefficients, and e is the error term.

5. Results

5.1 Profile of respondents

The demographic and professional characteristics of the 60 respondents are presented in Table 1. The sample included HR professionals from different age groups, educational backgrounds, levels of work experience, designations and types of agribusiness. Male respondents represented 53.33% of the sample, female respondents 43.34%, and 3.33% preferred not to disclose gender. MBA/PGDM holders constituted the largest educational group (55.00%). Agri-produce processing (30.00%) and agri-input supply (28.33%) accounted for the largest shares of organizational type.

Table 1: Demographic and Professional Profile of Respondents (n = 60)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	32	53.33
	Female	26	43.34
	Prefer not to say	2	3.33
Age group (years)	Below 25	15	25.00
	26-35	8	13.33
	36-45	15	25.00
	46-55	11	18.34
	Above 55	11	18.33
Education	MBA/PGDM	33	55.00
	Other postgraduate	14	23.33
	Undergraduate	7	11.67
	PhD	6	10.00
Work experience	Less than 2 years	13	21.66
	2-5 years	12	20.00
	6-10 years	10	16.67
	11-15 years	15	25.00
	More than 15 years	10	16.67
Designation	HR Manager	15	25.00
	HR Officer	11	18.33
	HR Executive	20	33.33
	HR Business Partner	14	23.34
Type of agribusiness	Agri-Produce Processing	18	30.00
	Agri-Input Supply	17	28.33
	Farm Equipment	13	21.67
	Agri-Export	5	8.33
	Crop Production	4	6.67
	Other	3	5.00

Source: Primary data.

5.2 Ethical HR practices reported by organizations

Table 2 summarizes respondents' views on eight ethical HR

practices, with percentages representing combined 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' responses. Workplace harassment prohibition recorded the highest agreement (66.67%), followed closely by consistent communication of ethical guidelines (66.66%). Fair and equal pay for equal work was supported by 61.67%, while 33.34% expressed disagreement.

Ethical violations addressed promptly and transparently recorded 65.00% agreement. These results indicate generally favourable perceptions of formal ethical HR practices, while also showing scope for improvement in pay equity and the consistent implementation of ethical systems.

Table 2: Perceived Ethical HR Practices in Sample Organizations (n = 60)

Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)
Written Code of Ethics for HR practices	60.00	16.67	23.33
Ethical guidelines consistently communicated	66.66	16.67	16.67
HR decisions free from bias and nepotism	60.00	13.33	26.66
Fair and equal pay for equal work	61.67	5.00	33.34
Ethical conduct part of performance evaluation	61.66	15.00	23.33
Workplace harassment strictly prohibited	66.67	13.33	20.00
Labour laws and statutory compliance followed	63.33	8.33	28.33
Ethical violations addressed promptly and transparently	65.00	11.67	23.33

Source: Primary data.

5.3 Ranking of ethical issues faced by HR professionals

Thirteen ethical issues were ranked using the Garrett technique (Table 3). Exploitation of labourers ranked first (total Garrett score 3505; mean Garrett score 58.42), followed by unequal pay and wage disparities (53.98) and gender misconduct (53.87). Lack of transparency in HR policies and discrimination in recruitment and promotion ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. These results indicate that labour treatment, remuneration and workplace dignity

were prominent ethical concerns among the participating HR professionals.

At the lower end of the ranking, breach of employee privacy and data confidentiality, suppression of employee grievances and whistleblowing, and falsification of employee records ranked eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth, respectively. The ranking provides descriptive evidence that ethical concerns were reported by the participating HR professionals.

Table 3: Garrett Ranking of Ethical Issues Faced by HR Professionals

Rank	Ethical Issue	Total Garrett Score	Mean Garrett Score
I	Exploitation of Labourers	3505	58.42
II	Unequal Pay and Wage Disparities	3239	53.98
III	Gender Misconduct	3232	53.87
IV	Lack of Transparency in HR Policies	3124	52.07
V	Discrimination in Recruitment and Promotion	3081	51.35
VI	Violation of Employee Rights	3051	50.85
VII	Non-compliance with Health, Safety and Working Conditions	3041	50.68
VIII	Favoritism and Nepotism	2913	48.55
IX	Misuse of Contract or Terms and Conditions	2872	47.87
X	Denial of Maternity/Paternity and Statutory Leave Benefits	2833	47.22
XI	Breach of Employee Privacy and Data Confidentiality	2809	46.82
XII	Suppression of Employee Grievances and Whistleblowing	2744	45.73
XIII	Falsification of Employee Records	2556	42.60

Source: Primary data.

5.4 Ethical HR practices and organizational performance

Table 4 presents the association between the eight ethical HR practices and organizational performance. All eight practices showed positive and statistically significant correlations with organizational performance. The correlation coefficients ranged from 0.4458 to 0.7793, and all calculated t-values exceeded the tabulated value of 2.002 at the 5% level with 59 degrees of freedom.

HR decisions free from bias and nepotism showed the strongest association with organizational performance ($r = 0.7793$), followed by a written Code of Ethics ($r = 0.7395$) and consistent communication of ethical guidelines ($r = 0.6961$). Prompt and transparent handling of ethical violations showed the lowest coefficient ($r = 0.4458$), although the association remained statistically significant. Accordingly, H_{01} was rejected and H_{11} was supported.

Table 4: Correlation between Ethical HR Practices and Organizational Performance

Ethical HR Practice	r	t-calculated
Written Code of Ethics for HR practices	0.7395*	8.4371
Ethical guidelines consistently communicated	0.6961*	7.4480
HR decisions free from bias and nepotism	0.7793*	9.5513
Fair and equal pay for equal work	0.6720*	6.9701

Ethical conduct part of performance evaluation	0.6532*	6.6266
Workplace harassment strictly prohibited	0.6136*	5.9688
Labour laws and statutory compliance followed	0.5486*	5.0394
Ethical violations addressed promptly and transparently	0.4458*	3.8258

Source: Primary data. * Significant at the 5% level; t-tabulated = 2.002, df = 59.

5.5 Ethical HR practices and employee job satisfaction

Table 5 shows that all eight ethical HR practices were positively and significantly associated with employee job satisfaction. The coefficients ranged from 0.5709 to 0.8211. Fair and equal pay for equal work showed the strongest

association ($r = 0.8211$), followed by HR decisions free from bias and nepotism ($r = 0.8113$). Labour-law and statutory compliance showed the lowest coefficient ($r = 0.5709$), although it remained statistically significant. Accordingly, H_{02} was rejected and H_{12} was supported.

Table 5: Correlation between Ethical HR Practices and Employee Job Satisfaction

Ethical HR Practice	r	t-calculated
Written Code of Ethics for HR practices	0.7114*	7.7760
Ethical guidelines consistently communicated	0.7515*	8.7508
HR decisions free from bias and nepotism	0.8113*	10.6599
Fair and equal pay for equal work	0.8211*	11.0495
Ethical conduct part of performance evaluation	0.6143*	5.9801
Workplace harassment strictly prohibited	0.6921*	7.3650
Labour laws and statutory compliance followed	0.5709*	5.3417
Ethical violations addressed promptly and transparently	0.6147*	5.9857

Source: Primary data. * Significant at the 5% level; t-tabulated = 2.002, df = 59.

5.6 Effectiveness of resolving ethical issues

Table 6 summarizes the reported status of ethics-related complaints and the distribution of participating organizations by problem-solving effectiveness. Across the organizations included in the study, 7,583 complaints were reported; 6,494 (85.64%) were successfully resolved and 1,089 (14.36%) remained unresolved or pending. The reference period for the reported complaint data was not specified in the available study records, which limits temporal interpretation of these

figures.

Thirty-eight organizations (63.33%) were classified as having high effectiveness (80-89.99%), 20 (33.33%) as very high (90-100%), and two (3.34%) as moderate (70-79.99%); none were classified as low or very low. Thus, 96.66% of the participating organizations fell in the high or very-high categories. These categories should be interpreted as the study's operational classification of problem-solving effectiveness.

Table 6: Status of Complaints and Organizational Effectiveness in Resolving Ethical Issues

Particulars	Value	Percentage (%)
Total complaints formally reported	7,583	100.00
Complaints successfully resolved	6,494	85.64
Complaints unresolved / pending	1,089	14.36
Organizations — Very high effectiveness (90-100%)	20 orgs.	33.33
Organizations — High effectiveness (80-89.99%)	38 orgs.	63.33
Organizations — Moderate effectiveness (70-79.99%)	2 orgs.	3.34
Organizations — Low / very low effectiveness (< 70%)	0 orgs.	0.00

Source: Primary data.

5.7 Role of company policies and training in solving ethical issues

Company policies and ethics training were positively associated with the effectiveness of resolving ethical issues. The reported correlation coefficients were 0.7044 for company policies and 0.8198 for ethics training. In the multiple regression model, company policies had $\beta = 0.6837$ ($SE = 0.1901$, $t = 3.5955$, $p = 0.0007$), while training had $\beta = 1.1411$ ($SE = 0.1607$, $t = 7.1008$, $p = 1.83 \times 10^{-9}$). The overall model recorded Multiple $R = 0.8559$, $R^2 =$

0.7326, adjusted $R^2 = 0.7233$, standard error = 3.2476 and $F = 78.1018$ ($p = 4.70 \times 10^{-17}$). Thus, company policies and ethics training jointly explained 73.26% of the observed variation in problem-solving effectiveness in this sample. The training coefficient was larger than the company-policy coefficient. On this basis, H_{03} was rejected and H_{13} was supported. Because the study was cross-sectional and based on convenience sampling, these results should be interpreted as associations and model-based contributions rather than causal effects.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis of Company Policies and Ethics Training on Problem-Solving Effectiveness

Variable	β	SE	t-value	p-value
Company Policies	0.6837*	0.1901	3.5955	0.0007
Training	1.1411*	0.1607	7.1008	1.83×10^{-9}
Intercept (constant)	37.468	4.2846	8.7447	4.04×10^{-12}

Source: Primary data. *Significant at the 5% level.

Model statistics

Model Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.8559
R ²	0.7326
Adjusted R ²	0.7233
Standard Error	3.2476
F-value	78.1018
Significance F	4.70×10^{-17}
Observations (n)	60

Source: Primary data.

6. Discussion: The study identified several ethical concerns among HR professionals in agribusiness organizations. Labourer exploitation ranked first, followed by wage disparities and gender misconduct. The prominence of labour and remuneration issues is consistent with the employment conditions described in the study context, particularly the use of seasonal, contractual and field-based labour. The finding is also relevant to responsible professional conduct in agri-food organizations^[12]. The lower ranking of privacy, record-related and grievance-suppression issues does not imply that these issues are unimportant; rather, they received lower mean Garrett scores in the present sample.

All eight ethical HR practices were positively and significantly associated with organizational performance. This pattern is broadly consistent with strategic HRM research linking employee-oriented practices with organizational outcomes^[16-18]. Bias-free HR decisions showed the strongest association ($r = 0.7793$), which is compatible with the organizational-justice perspective that fair procedures can influence workplace responses and outcomes^[19]. Because the design was cross-sectional, the findings do not establish that ethical practices caused higher organizational performance.

All eight ethical HR practices were also positively and significantly associated with employee job satisfaction. Fair and equal pay for equal work recorded the highest coefficient ($r = 0.8211$), followed by bias-free HR decisions ($r = 0.8113$). These findings are consistent with the view that employees' satisfaction reflects their evaluation of work experiences and the extent to which work conditions meet their expectations and values^[25]. Fair compensation and impartial treatment therefore appear to be important dimensions of ethical HRM in the participating agribusiness organizations.

The regression model showed statistically significant associations of company policies and ethics training with problem-solving effectiveness, with ethics training having the larger coefficient. This finding is consistent with literature emphasizing formal standards, organizational learning and ethics training as mechanisms for supporting ethical conduct^[31, 34, 40]. In agribusiness, practical training may help HR personnel and supervisors respond more consistently to issues involving seasonal labour, field operations and varied employment arrangements. However, the coefficient size should not be interpreted as proof that training alone causes improved problem-solving effectiveness.

Taken together, the results show that labour exploitation, wage equity and gender misconduct were prominent ethical concerns; ethical HR practices were positively associated with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction; and company policies and ethics training were significantly associated with the effectiveness of resolving

ethical issues. The findings strengthen the case for integrating worker welfare, ethical HRM and responsible management into the social-development dimension of agribusiness.

7. Conclusion and managerial implications

The study examined ethical HR issues in agribusiness organizations in Maharashtra and their associations with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction. Labourer exploitation, wage disparities and gender misconduct were the leading concerns identified through Garrett ranking. All eight ethical HR practices were positively and significantly associated with organizational performance and employee job satisfaction. Company policies and ethics training jointly explained 73.26% of the observed variation in problem-solving effectiveness, with training showing the larger regression coefficient. The findings suggest that ethical HRM can be treated as an important management and social-development concern in agribusiness, particularly where employment conditions affect worker welfare and the quality of rural livelihoods.

- Working conditions should be monitored regularly, and seasonal and contract workers should receive fair and equitable treatment because labour exploitation ranked first among the reported ethical concerns.
- Wage structures should be reviewed periodically to improve transparency and equity, as fair and equal pay showed the strongest association with employee job satisfaction and a strong positive association with organizational performance.
- Recruitment, promotion and performance appraisal should follow transparent, merit-based criteria because bias-free HR decisions showed the strongest association with organizational performance.
- Ethical policies should be communicated regularly and supported by clear procedures for implementation, review and accountability.
- Ethics and labour-law training should be conducted regularly and should include practical situations relevant to agribusiness; training showed the larger coefficient in the regression model.
- Grievance-handling systems should include systematic documentation, timely follow-up and escalation mechanisms, particularly because 14.36% of reported complaints remained unresolved or pending.
- Senior management should visibly support ethical conduct and ensure that employees can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

8. Limitations and scope for future research

The findings should be interpreted in light of several

limitations. The study included 60 HR professionals from selected agribusiness organizations in Maharashtra and used convenience sampling; therefore, the results should not be generalized to the entire agribusiness sector or to other regions without further evidence. The study relied on self-reported responses from HR professionals, which may be affected by perception and social-desirability considerations. The cross-sectional design identifies associations but does not establish causal relationships. In addition, the study focused on HR-related ethics and did not examine financial, marketing or production ethics.

Future research should use larger and more diverse samples, probability sampling where feasible, and multi-state or multi-sector comparisons. Longitudinal designs could help examine changes over time, while studies involving employees, seasonal workers and other stakeholders could provide perspectives beyond HR professionals. Future studies should also report the measurement development, reliability and validity of organizational-performance and job-satisfaction scales, as well as the data-collection period and the operational definition of complaint-resolution effectiveness.

Ethics approval and voluntary participation

Institutional approval for the study was obtained through the Student Advisory Committee at the time of the Outline of Research Work (ORW). Participation of respondents was voluntary.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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