

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Statement of the problem

The higher education sector of India is growing at a fast pace. From 20 universities in 1950 to 1043 in 2020, the growth is around 52 times (Deo, 2015) Despite a huge number of institutes pouring in the last two decades, there are many challenges faced by the Higher Education sector of the country. Similar to other sectors, for the growth and development of education organizations, human resources are important. Care should be taken to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. An increase in institutions gives rise to an increase in employees and therefore working conditions of employees of educational institutes must be analyzed.

Psychological Contract and its breach have proved to be an upcoming and significant concept in the domain of human resources and management in general. From (Nutakki, Reddy, & Balan, 2016) we have seen that the psychological contract of teachers in public and private schools differ. Such a study is essential to carry out in the Higher education sector of the country as well. From the literature review, we can see the relations of Psychological Contract and its breach with various HR functions such as engagement, commitment, participation, etc. Like corporate organizations, employees of educational institutions also perceive expectations and obligations with the employers and thus maintain a Psychological Contract. To understand the concerned employees, it is important to analyze their perceptions, expectations, and violations of the Psychological Contract, which will further help us in improving their conditions if needed.

The Higher Education sector in the state of Assam is largely unexplored. The literature review revealed a few studies that mainly focus on the challenges faced by the concerned sector. Challenges such as shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and limited resources can be improved if the effect of the psychological contract of employees is analyzed. The existence and violation of the Psychological Contract in the institutions would help us in determining its effects on both employees and the organization. With this study, perceptions of employees working in the universities can be analyzed and a proper environment concerning education can be encouraged. Since the study covers all the universities of the state imparting general courses, it is expected to help in improving the overall scenario of higher education in the state. Since education plays an important part in the development of the nation, improving the higher education sector of Assam will lead to the development of the state.

4.2 Research Plan

The research methodology adopted for the study is as follows:

For this study, information was collected on the status, existence, and effect of Psychological Contract and Psychological Contract Breach among the employees of the public and private universities of Assam. A Survey technique was undertaken and a questionnaire was framed. Different sections of the questionnaire pertained to the fulfillment of the three objectives. Respondents were divided into pre-determined strata (academic employees of public universities, academic employees of private universities, administrative employees of public universities, administrative employees of private universities). For the fulfillment of objective 1, responses were sought on the knowledge and awareness of psychological contracts present among them. For objective 2, they were asked about psychological contract breaches, if any. For the third objective, respondents are questioned whether the psychological contract and its breach had any effect on their work environment and relationship with the organization. Few variables and their sub-variables for the fulfilment of the objectives were considered and accordingly questions were framed. The scales used for measuring the parameters of the objectives were formed with the help of standard scales adapted from previous work.

A comparative analysis was done wherein responses of employees from public and private universities are compared.

Detailed methodology is as follows:

4.2.1 Population: The population for the study includes a section of employees of the universities in the state of Assam. Concerned employees taken for the study are- Faculty and Administration, the reason being their highest contribution to the growth of a university. To maintain similarity, niche universities (engineering, medical, law, etc) are not considered. In the initial period, universities offering general courses from both public and private sectors were considered, a total of which was fourteen (14). Employee count of the universities, both faculty and administration stood at 2144.

- *Population Element:* Individual University employee
- *Sampling Unit:* Individual University employee

- *Time:* March 2020 to December 2020
- *Extent:* Eight universities across Assam

During the Pilot Survey, one of the main difficulties which arose was the duration of the existence of the university. The concerning factor played a significant role in the employment structure and the employee mindset. Therefore it was decided that the duration of the existence of universities shall be considered. A minimum of 10 years time frame was taken to select the universities for the study. This resulted in the selection of eight institutions for the study - Assam Rajiv Gandhi University of Co-operative Management (ARGUCOM), Bodoland University, Dibrugarh University, Gauhati University, Tezpur University, Assam University, Assam Down Town University, and Assam Don Bosco University

4.2.2 Geographical location: The study is done in the state of Assam, India

4.2.3 Type of Data: For fulfilment of all the three objectives of the study, the type of data was both Primary and Secondary.

4.2.4 Data collection method: Survey method.

4.2.5 Research instrument: A questionnaire was used for data collection. Existing questionnaires on Psychological contracts were reviewed and a separate distinct questionnaire based on inputs from the pilot study was prepared. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were included in the questionnaire.

4.2.5.1 Variables of the study: From the literature review, several variables were identified for the study. To strengthen the effect and influence of the variables considered from the literature review, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was done with some of the employees of the universities, before designing the survey questionnaire. This was done taking into account the novelty of the research in the geographical location. After the FGD, a few variables were removed and a few were added. The final list of variables pertaining to the individual objectives are-

Table 4.1: List of variables corresponding to the objectives of the study

OBJECTIVES	VARIABLES
Objective 1: To determine the status of Psychological Contract in the Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Employment relationship, Organizational support
Objective 2: To determine the Psychological Contract Breach, if any, among the employees of Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Organizational trust, Job satisfaction
Objective 3: To determine the affect of Psychological Contract and Psychological Contract Breach on employees of Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Employee engagement, Employee commitment

4.2.5.2 Scales for measuring the variables: Several scales were reviewed for identifying items to measure the variables- Employment Relationship; Organizational support; Organizational trust; Job satisfaction; Employee engagement; Employee commitment; Psychological Contract and Psychological Contract Breach.

A consolidated set of items were prepared pertaining to each of the variables from one or many measuring scales identified from literature review. A list of scales for respective variables is listed below:

Table 4.2: List of scales for respective variables against each objective of the study

OBJECTIVES	VARIABLES	ITEMS ADAPTED FROM
Objective 1: To determine the status of Psychological Contract in the Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Employment relationship, Organizational support, Psychological Contract	(Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986); (Biggs, 2016); (Rousseau D. , 2000)
Objective 2: To determine the Psychological Contract Breach, if any, among the employees of Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Organizational trust, Job satisfaction, Psychological Contract Breach	(Smith, 1969); (Cook & Wall, 1980); (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994); (Tzafir & Dolan, 2004)

Objective 3: To determine the affect of Psychological Contract and Psychological Contract Breach on employees of Government and Private Universities of Assam.	Employee engagement, Employee commitment, Psychological Contract, Psychological Contract Breach	(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994); (Cook & Wall, 1980); (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004); (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979)
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The items for the research tool were identified from previous scales of similar studies. The final list of items under individual factors as well as the respective scales they are referred from is listed below:

Table 4.3: List of items pertaining to the scales and variables of the study

VARIABLE	ITEMS	SCALES REFERRED
Organizational support	“The organization cares about my opinions and views	(Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986)
	The organization deals with my complaints in an efficient manner	
	The organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part	
	The organization is proud of my accomplishments	
	The organization cares about my well-being	
	The organization strongly considers my goals and values	
Employment relationship	The organization does not take undue professional advantage of me	(Potgieter, Olckers, & Ehlers, 2015); (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986)
	The supervisor/head deals with differences among employees in a constructive manner	
	The supervisor/head applies workplace rules and codes correctly	
	No groups or individuals are favoured over others	
	Employees are encouraged to develop their skills	
	The employer practices what they say	
Organizational trust	My supervisor’s actions and decisions in the workplace are consistent	(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994); (Gabarro & Athos, 1976); (Tzafrir & Dolan, 2004)
	I believe I am valued by my employer	
	Information sharing in the organization is strong	
	Friendly relationship exists between different departments in the organization	
	Introduction of changes in the organization are done by consulting employees	
	There is clear communication network between faculty and management	
	I fully trust my employer	

	My employer is open and upfront with me	
	I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion	
	My employer treats me fairly	
Job satisfaction	I have a supportive group of people working with me	(BGSU, 2009)
	I plan to stay in the organization for a long time	Job Descriptive Index (JDI)
	My job gives me a sense of accomplishment	
	I have a comfortable pay structure	
	There are fair chances of promotion in the job	
	My supervisor/head is supportive	
Employee engagement	I feel a sense of belongingness in the organization	(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994);
	I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	(Cook & Wall, 1980); (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004);
	I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization	(Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979)
	I feel the organization's problems are my own	
	I am proud of my work	
Employee commitment	I am not willing to join another organization for better financial offer	(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994);
	I shall recommend others to join my organization	(Cook & Wall, 1980)
	I feel the values of the organization are similar to my personal values	
	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization	
	This organization inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	
	I really care about the fate of this organization	
Psychological Contract	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	(Rousseau D. , 2000)
	The job is helping me grow in my career	
	I can leave the organization whenever I want	
	I will perform only required tasks for which I am paid for	
	I will follow company policies and procedures	
	I will remain with this organization indefinitely	
	Employer shall be concerned for my personal welfare	
	Employer will provide feedback on my performance	
	Employer will provide proper training and development	
	Employer will provide adequate wages and benefits timely	
Psychological Contract Breach	Employer will provide me with employment security	(Rousseau D. , 2000)
	Do you believe that you have fulfilled your commitment to your employer?	
	Do you live up to your promises to your employer?	
	Do you believe that your employer has fulfilled its commitments to you?	

	Does your employer live up to its promises?"	
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The Research Plan included conducting a Focus Group Discussion to analyse and verify the variables identified from the literature review. Before designing the questionnaire, all the factors identified from prior research work were taken into account and a focus group discussion was held with prospective respondents from our sample institutions. Due to the relatively new concept of Psychological Contract, the FGD helped us understand the respondents' perspectives pertaining to the topic. The FGD helped us format our research tool concerning the employees of the different universities of Assam and assist us customise our study in the respective field. A detailed overview of the Focus Group Discussion is mentioned below:

4.2.6 Focus Group Discussion (FGD): As the name suggests, "Focus Group Discussion is an interactive discussion with a pre-determined group of people, focussing on a certain topic". FGD can be described as "an interactive discussion between six to eight pre-selected participants led by a moderator and focussing on a specific set of issues. The aim of a FGD is to gain a broad range of views on the research topic over a 60-90 minute period, and to create an environment where participants feel comfortable to express their views" (Hennink et. al., 2011) The practice of FGDs although documented in the 1920s, were popularized in the 1980s when researchers sought to overcome limitations in traditional interview method.

Focus Group Discussions mainly provide a range of perspectives on a particular topic. It also provides us direct insights and opinions from the participants themselves. The group discussion helps in forming a better qualitative analysis of an issue, rather than interviewing the participants separately. The protected environment required for FGD, provides participants with a safe space to voice out their perspectives. (Hennink, 2014)

4.2.6.1 Need for Focus Group Discussion: The initial Plan of Research on the study was laid out right after conception of the topic. Thorough literature review and studies related to Psychological Contract and its breach was carried out and variables for the same were considered. With respect to the novelty of the study in the proposed geographical location and respondents from both public and private sector, a Focus Group Discussion was carried out. The FGD was basically done to assess the views of

the participants in the said subject matter and to strengthen the use of variables taken from literature review with respect to our respondents.

Following are the details of the Focus Group Discussion conducted:

4.2.6.2 Aim: To assess the pre-determined variables for the study.

4.2.6.3 Participants: A total of ten (10) employees (faculty and administrators) from four universities of Assam participated in the FGD. (List to be attached in Annexure)

4.2.6.4 Date and Venue: 29th June 2019 (12:00 PM) K.K. Handique Central Library, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam

4.2.6.5 Discussion on: Following are some of the topics discussed during the session. The topics were considered based on previous studies on Psychological Contract, Psychological Contract Breach, Higher Education sector of Assam and difference in Public and Private sector educational institutions.

- Psychological Contract
- Psychological Contract Breach
- Employment relationship
- Organizational support
- Employment obligations
- Organizational trust
- Employee engagement
- Employee commitment
- Higher Education sector of Assam
- Any other discussions related to the work atmosphere, job and concerned institution

4.2.6.6 FGD Questionnaire: The FGD questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the concept of Psychological Contract and its variables, identified from previous literature works. The participants were also encouraged to discuss on the education sector of Assam.

4.2.6.7 Moderator: The Research Scholar acted as the moderator in the Focus Group Discussion.

4.2.6.8 Duration: 60 - 75mins

4.2.6.9 Analysis: The entire session of Focus Group Discussion was recorded. It was later qualitatively analysed by the researcher and important details from the discussion were recorded.

The Focus Group Discussion helped us design our research roadmap as follows:

4.2.7 Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling (for the pre-defined strata) and Convenience Sampling (for identifying the respondents)

4.2.8 Identification of strata: The study is targeted at employees (Faculty and Administrative officers) of universities in the state of Assam. The study will provide a comparative analysis of universities from the private and public sectors, thus both the sectors were taken as individual strata. For the above-mentioned primary reasons, Stratified Random Sampling was chosen for the study. The different strata defined for the study are:

Central University

State University

Private University

Presently there are twenty-five universities in the state of Assam as on January 2020. To strengthen our study on the higher education sector of Assam, universities offering general courses were taken into consideration. To further focus on the existing conditions of employees in these universities, a time frame of 10 years of existence was also taken into account. The final list of universities offering general courses and having an existence of 10 years is as follows:

“Assam University (Central University)

Assam Rajiv Gandhi University of Co-operative Management (State University)

Bodoland University (State University)

Dibrugarh University (State University)

Gauhati University (State University)

Tezpur University (Central University)

Assam Down Town University (Private University)

Assam Don Bosco University (Private University)”

4.2.9 Identification of respondents: For identifying respondents non-probabilistic sampling was adopted. Convenience Sampling was used for identifying the respondents from each of the individual strata. The total population for the study was around 1600. From the total population, the individual proportional contribution of every university concerning the total population was calculated. After that exact proportion of employees to the proportion of the university’s contribution to the total population was calculated. Accordingly, the number of respondents from each university was identified by Convenience Sampling.

The data collection for our study was started in March 2020, which saw the initial stages of the global outbreak of Corona virus pandemic. Due to this reason, we had to adopt Convenience sampling over our initial plan of random sampling. Responses were collected both physically and virtually (over e-mails and phone calls).

4.2.10 Sampling unit: Sampling unit comprised of Individual employees (Faculty and Administrative Officers) of the concerned Public and Private Universities of Assam. To maintain uniformity the employee grade/scale of the different universities were taken into account. For faculty count, employees under the positions of Assistant Professor and Professor were considered. Similarly, administrative officials corresponding to the similar grade were taken into count. The designations extended from Assistant Registrars to Finance/ Account Officers, depending on the university nomenclature.

4.2.11 Sample size: From Literature Review, it was found that researchers adopted various methodologies for dealing with Psychological Contracts. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are found to be in use. After reviewing the literature, some of the methodologies used by researchers and the respective sample sizes pertaining to it are listed as follows:

- I. The average sample size of previous works is calculated to be 431. Please refer to Table 3.1

Table 4.4: Types of research methodologies adopted by various researchers and the sample sizes of their studies

AUTHOR	METHODOLOGY ADOPTED	SAMPLE SIZE
(McInnis & Meyer, 2012)	Mixed methods design (qualitative and quantitative)	624
(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)	Survey method	128
(Moore, 2014)	Variance model approach	385
(Barman, 2007)	Survey method	258
(Agarwal & Gupta, 2016)	Qualitative case study Approach	20
(Aggarwal & Bhargava, 2009)	Mixed methods design (qualitative and quantitative)	538
(Robinson, 1996)	Survey method	125
(Agarwal P. , 2014)	Survey method	1000
(Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013)	Survey method	1302
(Chaubey & Bist, 2016)	Survey method	250
(Nutakki, Reddy, & Balan, 2015)	Mixed methods design (qualitative and quantitative)	113

Source: Compiled by the researcher

- I. According to (Bujang et al., 2017) for observational studies, a sample size of minimum 300 must be collected to represent the parameters in the population and make it feasible to conduct tests such as Multiple Linear Regression, ANCOVA and Factor Analyses.
- II. According to (Comrey & Lee, 1992), “sample sizes of 100 = poor, 200 = fair, 300 = good, 500 = very good, 1,000 or more = excellent”. It was mentioned to use a sample size of 500 whenever possible.
- III. A probable sample size is also calculated from the formula given by “Krejcie & Morgan” (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970)

$$“s = X^2 NP(1 - P) \div d^2(N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P)”$$

- IV. The population proportion is taken as 0.50 and degree of accuracy is taken as 0.05. The sample size for each stratum is taken individually and the sample size is derived to be 325.
- V. According to (Garson) a rule of 10 must be followed while selecting the samples, wherein for every item in the instrument, there must be 10 cases present. The study has seven variables and it can be safely assumed that for every variable 10 items will be present, which gives a total of 700.
- VI. For larger population, a smaller number of sample ratio is required and for a smaller population, a larger number of sample ratio is advised for efficiency. For smaller population, a minimum of 30% of the total population size is recommended. For our study, the following calculation is done:

$$30\% \text{ of total population size} = \frac{30}{100} \times 1542 = 462.6$$

A minimum sample size of 467 is recommended for the study.

- VII. The sample size for the study is calculated in “Raosoft Sample Size Calculator”, by assuming the error margin as 5% along with 99% confidence level. The final value is shown as 470. (Raosoft, 2004)

Taking the above factors into consideration, a sample size of 800 is taken, which is inclusive of any non-respondent in the field.

The data collection for the study took place during the months of March – December 2020. Due to the worldwide pandemic and instability of working schedule of the selected institutions, a large number of non-respondents were recorded. The final count of respondents is 643 which is 41.7% of the total number of employees and 80.3% of our original selected data. This gave us a non-response rate of 19.7%.

Number and proportion of respondents from individual universities along with the selected and collected sample list is shown in Table 4.5

Table 4.5: Number and Proportion of respondents from individual universities

SI No.	List of Universities	No. of Employees	Proportion in population	Samples selected	Samples collected
1	Assam Rajiv Gandhi University of Co-operative Management	18	2.04	10	08
2	Bodoland University	100	8.62	53	50
3	Dibrugarh University	318	16.51	163	143
4	Gauhati University	385	23.94	199	151
1	Tezpur University	267	16.05	138	94
2	Assam University	157	14.03	83	82
1	Assam Down Town University	43	2.67	22	27
2	Assam Don Bosco University	254	16.14	132	88
Total		1542	100.00	800	643

The employee count is taken as per the registered full-time employee list of faculty and administration officials at the time of survey. Samples expected to be collected prior to the survey was 800, which is around 52% of the population. Final count of samples collected was 643, which is around 41.7% of the total population count. Therefore, we can conclude that the sample collected is a representative of our population.

4.2.12 Time of Data Collection: March 2020 to December 2020

SUMMARY

The chapter provides a step-wise research methodology of our work. The chapter started with statement of the problem, which explains the growth and development of India's higher education sector. It then proceeds to the Research plan which gives us the detailed methodology of our work, including explaining and detailing terms such as Population, Sample Unit, Type of Data, Research Instrument etc. The variables and scales of the study are mentioned, pertaining to the three objectives of our work. After that, individual items against every variable are listed. Due to the novelty of the concept and limited related work, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was arranged involving participants from

various educational institutes of the state spanning across State, Central and Private sectors. Discussion and outcomes of the FGD are detailed in the chapter. The FGD gave us insights on sample, strata and respondent identification. We then proceed for sample size calculation. Sample size was calculated depending on various factors such as – Average sample size of previous work, existing formulae, rules and Sample size calculator. Finally, the number and proportion of respondents from individual universities are listed along with the time period for data collection.

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