



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

“STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT AND HR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AT GAIL (INDIA) LIMITED” A Qualitative Study of Apprentice Recruitment, Onboarding, Payroll Checking, Employee Records, Compliance and Digital HR Systems

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Course: MBA – Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT :

Every organisation runs on its people, and the HR department looks after them from the day they join until the day they leave. In a large public sector company like GAIL (India) Limited, this work is wide and needs a lot of care. This paper looks at the HR practices I saw during my on-the-job training (OJT) at GAIL's Vijapur unit from 15 May to 30 June 2026. I worked mainly with the Administration, Establishment and Industrial Relations (IR) sections.

The paper covers apprentice recruitment, onboarding, payroll checking, employee records, basic labour-law compliance, and the way GAIL is moving everyday HR work from paper files to systems such as SAP, VijayNet and CLMS. The study is descriptive and qualitative. It rests on my own observation, talks with HR officials and company documents. It does not use a survey or statistical data, so it does not claim to measure how well GAIL's HR department performs overall.

1. Introduction

Employees are the real strength of any company. Machines and money matter, but it is people who use them. HR is the function that hires people, keeps their records, pays them correctly, trains them and handles their concerns. In an energy company, good HR matters even more, because the work involves pipelines, safety risks and many government rules, and a small mistake can become an expensive one.

GAIL (India) Limited is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. It was set up on 16 August 1984 and is best known for transporting and marketing natural gas through a large pipeline network. It also works in LPG, petrochemicals, city gas distribution, LNG and clean energy. A business this big needs an HR team that keeps its processes organised and up to date.

This paper is based on my OJT in the HR Department at Vijapur. Beyond the daily tasks, I noticed how GAIL is slowly replacing manual, paper-based work with online systems. That change became the main thread of this study.

1.1 Need and Significance of the Study

Classroom learning explains what HR should do, but it rarely shows how the work really looks on a busy office day. This study joins the two. It will be useful for MBA (HR) students who want to see how recruitment, records, compliance and employee services run in a public sector company. It is also useful because it shows, with real examples, how digital tools can save time and cut paperwork in HR.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the HR work done in the Administration, Establishment and IR sections at GAIL, Vijapur.
2. To study apprentice recruitment and onboarding documentation.
3. To understand payroll checking, employee record keeping and basic labour-law compliance.
4. To examine how SAP, VijayNet and CLMS have made HR processes simpler and faster.
5. To connect the observed practices with relevant HRM literature.
6. To suggest practical steps that may improve accuracy and speed in selected HR processes.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the HR Department of GAIL at Vijapur and to the period of the OJT. It covers:

- **Administration:** transport, accommodation, canteen, inventory and office assets.
- **Establishment:** joining and exit, attendance and leave, payroll documents, benefits, training and HR records.
- **Industrial Relations:** labour laws, grievances, statutory records and contract labour.
- **Manual versus digital methods:** how paper-based work compares with online work.

2. Research Methodology

This section explains how the study was carried out and how the information was put together.

2.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive qualitative design. This suits the purpose well, because the aim is to understand and explain how HR activities work in practice, not to calculate numbers or test statistical links.

2.2 Method of Information Collection

The main source was my direct observation of HR work during the OJT. I also used discussions with HR officials, departmental presentations, conversations with employees, company documents and information about the HR systems in use. Academic literature gave the theory behind what I observed. No structured questionnaire or formal interview schedule was used, so none is presented as part of this study.

2.3 Unit of Analysis and Method of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the HR activity or process, not any individual employee. I sorted my observations into four themes: apprentice recruitment and onboarding; payroll checking and compliance; employee records; and digital HR systems. For each theme the paper explains what was done, what I learned and what could support the process. Findings and recommendations are kept in separate sections so that the reader can tell what was observed from what is only suggested.

2.4 Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

The paper contains no employee names, salary details, personal records or confidential documents. It describes general processes and learning only. Sample formats prepared during the OJT used dummy entries.

2.5 Summary of Research Methodology

Table 1: Summary of research methodology

Research element	Approach used
Research design	Descriptive qualitative study
Place and period	GAIL (India) Limited, Vijaipur; 15 May to 30 June 2026
Main areas	Administration, Establishment and Industrial Relations
Information sources	Observation, talks with HR officials, presentations, company documents, HR systems information
Secondary information	Relevant academic literature
Statistical analysis / survey	Not conducted / not used
Confidential information	Not included

3. Review of Literature

Becker (1964) explained human capital as the knowledge and skills people carry with them, which have real economic value for an organisation. Building on such ideas, Wright and McMahan (1992) discussed how people and HR practices can be tied to an organisation's wider strategy. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) describe HR as work that supports the business through areas such as resourcing, reward, employee relations and learning. This is the sense in which the word "strategic" is used in this paper.

Bondarouk and Ruël (2009) described electronic HRM (e-HRM) as the joining of HR and information technology to create value for employees and managers, and Strohmeier (2007) reviewed the research on how e-HRM works and what it achieves. Frögéli, Jenner and Gustavsson (2023) reviewed studies on formal onboarding and its role in helping new joiners settle in. Together, these works give a base for looking at GAIL's joining formalities and its move to online HR services.

4. Internship Exposure and Findings

This section describes the work I was exposed to and what I learned from it. It does not claim to rate the overall performance of GAIL's HR department.

4.1 Apprentice Recruitment and Onboarding

I helped in recruiting apprentices through the company's recruitment portal. My work was to screen applications against the required qualification and eligibility, help prepare the shortlist and support interview scheduling. For onboarding, I checked joining documents, verified the information given and helped keep joining records. The main lesson was that a joining process goes smoothly only when documents are complete, checked on time and recorded properly.

4.2 Payroll Checking, Records and Compliance

I did not process payroll myself. I helped check salary records, mainly PF deductions and bonus amounts, to understand how they are worked out. I also helped update employee records and checked whether apprentices were receiving the stipend they were entitled to. This showed me that even small details in HR records have legal and financial weight, and that records must be accurate and kept private.

4.3 Digital HR Systems and Process Improvement

The clearest change I observed was the move to digital work through SAP, VijayNet and CLMS. For example, marketing bus tickets were earlier booked by visiting the HR office, with staff keeping the records by hand; now they are booked online through VijayNet. The canteen register has been digitised, CLMS now sends notifications directly to HR, and gate passes, hostel inventory, service contract feedback and employee document tracking have also moved to digital systems. An Online Overtime Management System was being proposed during my training.

Table 2: Manual and digital HR processes observed at GAIL

Earlier way	Digital way	Benefit seen
Physical records and registers	Digital records (canteen, hostel inventory)	Less paperwork, easier to find
Visiting HR to book tickets	Online booking on VijayNet	Saves time for employees and HR
Repeated manual follow-up	CLMS notifications to HR	Faster communication
Paper gate passes and documents	Online gate pass and document tracking	Better control and tracking

4.4 Summary of Findings

Table 3: Summary of findings

HR area	Internship exposure	Main learning	Possible support measure
Recruitment	Screening apprentice applications, interview scheduling	Eligibility must be checked carefully	Simple status tracker
Onboarding	Checking joining documents	Complete documents prevent delays	Joining checklist
Payroll and compliance	Checking PF, bonus and stipend	Small errors have legal weight	Periodic cross-checks
Employee records	Updating and organising HR records	Accuracy and privacy both matter	Clear access rules
Digital systems	Observing SAP, VijayNet, CLMS	Technology saves time and paper	Better linking of systems

5. Recommendations

These suggestions come from my observations and general HR principles. They are not claims that GAIL has confirmed weaknesses.

- **Keep going digital.** Remaining paper-based tasks, such as overtime records, can move online, as the proposed Online Overtime Management System aims to do.
- **Link the systems.** If SAP, VijayNet and CLMS share information, staff will not need to enter the same data again and again.
- **Train people.** Short, regular training on the new systems helps employees and HR staff use them with confidence.
- **Use simple trackers and checklists.** A status tracker for recruitment and a checklist for joining documents can reduce missed follow-ups.
- **Review records regularly.** Periodic checks of payroll and compliance records, with proper access rules for confidential data, support accuracy and privacy.

6. Conclusion

This paper studied selected HR practices at GAIL (India) Limited, Vijaipur, based on my OJT from 15 May to 30 June 2026. It showed that routine tasks such as screening applications, checking joining documents, verifying salary details and maintaining records are the base on which the wider HR function stands. It also showed that GAIL is steadily improving these processes through SAP, VijayNet and CLMS, which cut paperwork, save time and make employee services easier to use. The study links these observations with HR literature and offers practical suggestions. However, it covers only what I could observe and does not measure the performance of the whole department.

7. Limitations of the Study

1. The study rests on a training period of about six weeks at one location, Vijaipur.
2. It covers only the HR activities I was able to observe and take part in.
3. No questionnaire, formal interview data or numerical HR data was used.
4. Access to confidential information was limited, so such material is not included.
5. It does not measure employee satisfaction, retention or overall HR effectiveness.

8. Suggestions for Future Research

A future study could take just one area, such as the effect of digital HR services on employee satisfaction, and collect proper survey data with the company's permission. It could also compare processing time before and after a system was introduced. Numbers should be reported only when real, checked data are available.

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