

Implementation of PRIME-HRM in Promoting Meritocracy and Excellence in HRM Practices in Select Public Sector Organizations in the Philippines

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the exemplary approaches and organizational intricacies of public sector organizations implementing the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource (PRIME-HRM). Given the scarcity of research on PRIME-HRM implementation across different levels of government, this study evaluates the challenges encountered by HRM champions representing a National Government Agency (NGA), a Local Government Unit (LGU), and a Government-Owned and Controlled Corporation (GOCC). Using a multiple-case analysis design, the researcher interviewed twelve participants from DepEd Balanga City, the Balanga City Local Government Unit, and the Balanga City Water District—all of which have attained Maturity Level 2 (Bronze Recognition) under the Philippine Civil Service Commission's (CSC) standards. The findings revealed several emerging themes, specifically regarding implementation challenges, increased employee satisfaction, improved engagement, and strengthened retention strategies. By documenting the best practices of these "champion" implementers, the research identifies critical areas for improvement and strategic success. Furthermore, this study advances the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory by demonstrating how public sector resources, such as servant leadership and transparency, effectively buffer bureaucratic stress to foster employee commitment. Ultimately, these results provide a foundation for evidence-based policy, advocating for flexible work arrangements and professional development as essential tools for maintaining a stable, high-performing civil service workforce.

Keywords: PRIME-HRM, Meritocracy, HRM Excellence, Multiple Case analysis, Public Sector in the Philippines

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Introduction

Human resource is a crucial component of every organization, company, or industry. A portion of their responsibilities includes planning, recruiting, evaluating, and determining whether or not people are completing their assigned tasks successfully. It consists of individuals who do various activities to construct a well-established and well-organized organization or group of any kind. They are the minds responsible for achieving the goals of the sector or organization to which they belong. As defined by Barney et al. (2023), human resource management is employee management with an emphasis on employees as company assets. In this context, it is occasionally acknowledged that individuals employed by an organization may be regarded as human capital. During the early twentieth century, and with greater frequency in the sixties, the term "human resources" gained popularity to characterize an organization's workforce. The proliferation and augmentation of intergovernmental entities like the ASEAN and the European Union have resulted in a significant expansion and heightened complexity of human resource development (HRD) operations, particularly from the perspective of (Crocco & Tkachenko, 2022; Euler, 2021).

Former-president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9485 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 or ARTA in June 2007. This law primarily aimed to improve the efficacy of public services and governance. Tomasi (2024) stated that the Philippine government tracked the efficiency of essential bureaucratic civil services through the Contact Center ng Bayan. The Philippine Civil Service Commission (CSC), as the central human resources management agency, conferred awards to government offices, accentuating paramount amelioration in the government transactions in view of accessibility and affordability. The Civil Service Commission instituted the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (CSC, 2021) or PRIME-HRM as a risk mitigation strategy in addressing the enigmas of the government offices. In view of the absence of investigation relative to PRIME-HRM implementation among local and national government agencies, this study evaluated the issues and challenges encountered by the PRIME-HRM champions representing a NGA, an LGU, and a GOCC. The study examined the optimum approaches of these public sector organizations in their execution of the Program as they have attained Bronze Recognition maturity level.

Literature Review

The PRIME-HRM catalyzed the service delivery to public sector human resource indulgences, ensuring efficient and effective delivery of services anchored on the legal framework, supervising the implementation (Barney et al, 2023; Scheibmayr, 2023). Valencia-Inarda (2020) underscored that PRIME-HR further aimed to enhance human resource services through evaluation, support, and recognition of policies, processes and capabilities vis-a-vis the maturity level index para international norms in the public entities Fostering a tradition of quality and meritocracy in human resource management in government offices - on a national and local scales of governance and government-controlled

corporations, is the kernel goal of the CSC's PRIME-HRM. They are expected to consistently empower individuals about their performance, acknowledge their exemplary practices, and simultaneously act as a platform for the exchange and cultivation of expertise among Human Resource practitioners concentrated on the four critical areas of recruitment, selection, placement, and induction; learning and development; performance management; and rewards and recognition encompassing three distinct phases, namely: "Assess," "Assist," and "Award" (Domer, 2024). The Commission will provide technical aid and interventions to enhance the performance of the government agency. Upon satisfying the assessment and recommendation of the Commission, the agency will be given the zeal of excellence award on Human Resource Management (Suringa, 2024) based on four distinct levels, namely: Level I or Transactional HRM, Level II or Process-Defined HRM, Level III or Integrated HRM, and Level IV or Strategic HRM (CSC, 2012).

In 2022, Manahan et al. (2022) carried out a study utilizing cloud-based technology on the implementation of the PRIME-HRM program. The study deduced how cloud-based technology, focusing on Human Resource Information System (HRIS), could be used in implementing the PRIME-HRM in the Department of Health (DOH), which has transpired in the government agencies in the Philippines since 2012. This research intended to create a cloud-based Human Resource Information (HRIS) that progressed human resources functions of the DOH and presented profound reforms to the prosaic system of the DOH. The application of dexterous and robust processes required a fastidious requirements engineering. Valencia-Inarda (2020) evaluated teacher's substantial papers employing the Cluster Analysis to look into the concerns in the evaluation of qualifications of the hiring process in DepEd, Butuan City. In this study, the PRIME HRM Recruitment, Selection, and Placement Core Group utilized the rating scheme to determine the most suited teacher-candidate. The research uncovered underlying concerns, which demanded in-depth analysis to appraise teacher's qualifications and the registry of qualified teacher- applicants should manifest these issues. Apilada et al. (2023) emphasized that the outcome of the English Proficiency Test (EPT), which determines teacher applicant's qualifications, functioned as the groundwork for designing training activities to improve the English language competency and proficiency of teachers.

In 2023, Mamon initiated a study pinpointing the assessment of readiness of the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) in the Western Visayas striving for the Level 1 PRIME HRM accreditation. Using a mixed-method approach, the quantitative data gathered were validated for further evaluation using a qualitative process to look for specific patterns and themes. Through the interview, it was found that the PRC Region VI Office has established a solid foundation of readiness, but has to initiate intervening steps to fully meet the standards needed for the PRIME-HRM level of maturity. Two of the four strategic segments comprising the PRIME Human Resource Management (HRM) model have achieved complete readiness. These segments, specifically "recruitment, selection, and placement" and "performance management," have attained full preparedness. However, the "learning and development"

segment has only partially reached this level of readiness, while the "rewards and recognition" segment is not. As to the qualitative phase, for category 1: Recruitment, Selection, and Placement, PRC Region VI proved to have an established procedure in the hiring and recruitment process. For category 2: Performance Management, some areas need improvement, though they have been proven to be fully ready. In category 3: HRD Learning and Development (L&D), a lack of human resource development personnel and poor management support are the factors explaining why PRC Region VI appeared to be partially ready. Lastly, for category 4: Rewards and Recognition, due to the fact that this is still under the function of the Central Office, the result was undeniably partially ready.

A separate investigation in the Province of Rizal centered on the propositions and mechanisms of human resource management within public service establishments, encompassing its correlation with organizational commitment. The study used the tools made available by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM) alongside the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). The study sampled a population of 219 local government professionals across 27 offices using a stratified sampling technique, with the determined final sample size to be $n=142$ individuals. The implementation of PRIME-HRM has occurred with varying degrees of success. The participants exhibited a significant degree of dedication, expressing their gratification in being a member of the organization and feeling at ease with it. Nonetheless, they considered it not to be the most optimal work environment. Implementing human resource systems has been observed to correlate directly with the level of commitment demonstrated by employees. Therefore, the organization may delve into and appreciate the positive effects of having well-implemented human resource management programs, which will impact commitment in the form of policy improvement or the initiation of worthwhile activities relative to it, consequently, to meet the highest proficiency level of PRIME-HRM geared towards Strategic Human Resource Management. (Egcas and Lacueta, 2018).

Employee Satisfaction

Numerous factors can augment employee satisfaction within the workplace, including establishing a robust organizational culture and fostering favorable relationships between individuals and the agency or workplace. These variables can be attained by establishing a conducive and efficacious organizational culture that fosters a collective sense of accountability amidst employees, consequently nurturing a robust sense of commitment and dedication to job duties among all participants within the organization.

Employee satisfaction in the public sector is no longer driven solely by job security, but is increasingly dependent on organizational culture, inclusive human resource management (HRM), and adaptive leadership styles. Contemporary research emphasizes that leadership style is a cornerstone of employee satisfaction within government-linked and public institutions. Serang et al. (2024) demonstrate

that ethical leadership significantly enhances work engagement and commitment, as leaders who model moral behavior and transparent communication help mitigate the negative effects of corruption and bureaucratic failure. Furthermore, Alrawahi et al. (2020) applying Herzberg's two-factor theory in public health settings found that while professional development and training act as strong "satisfiers," factors like inadequate health and safety protocols and heavy workloads serve as major "dissatisfiers" that can undermine overall performance.

The physical and social work environment has also emerged as a critical mediator. Dewi Nusraningrum et al. (2024) found that motivation positively influences performance, but this relationship is significantly mediated by the presence of a "green" or supportive work environment and high levels of employee engagement. In the context of modern infrastructure, the transition to remote work during the early 2020s provided a unique satisfaction boost for many public sector workers. Pabilonia and Vernon (2023) noted that remote arrangements increased job satisfaction by reducing commute times and grooming costs, allowing employees to reclaim approximately 60 to 75 minutes of their day. However, satisfaction remains vulnerable to extrinsic factors such as salary and interpersonal teamwork, which are consistently identified as key determinants of career contentment in public service.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a multidimensional psychological framework that is critical for public sector performance and resilience. Unlike simple job satisfaction, engagement involves a deep cognitive, emotional, and physical investment in work, which research shows is heavily mediated by leadership quality and internal resource availability.

Recent quantitative studies highlight that engagement in government organizations is driven by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Isler Dent (2024) identified senior leadership, professional development, and work-life programs as statistically significant predictors of high engagement levels in the federal sector. This is supported by Masuku et al. (2025), who applies the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory to show that while heavy workloads (demands) can lead to disengagement, providing resources such as leadership support and career progression opportunities can foster "vigour, dedication, and absorption" among municipal staff. Leadership effectiveness has emerged as the most dominant factor in engagement research during this period. Harter (2024) research indicates that managers or team leaders account for approximately 70% of the variance in team engagement, emphasizing that employees seek purpose rather than just a paycheck. Yue & Walden (2022) further demonstrate that in the federal government, there is a strong correlation between transparent leadership communication and employee trust, which directly increases public service motivation and engagement levels. Jiatong et al. (2022) specifically link transformational leadership to improved job performance, noting that employee engagement acts as a vital bridge (mediator) that turns supportive leadership into tangible organizational results.

Engagement is increasingly recognized as a leading indicator of government efficiency. Batubara et al., (2020) found a positive correlation between engagement and overall organizational success, suggesting that engaged employees are more likely to deliver better citizen outcomes and show resilience during periods of change. Furthermore, a Philippine-based study (2021) showed that employee engagement accounts for nearly 60% of the variation in work performance, proving that psychological "ownership" of tasks is a powerful driver of productivity.

Retaining Employees

Retaining employees in the government and public sector requires a strategic shift from traditional management to a dual-focus approach that manages "hygiene factors" while enhancing "motivational factors". Studies indicate that while competitive compensation remains a moderate predictor of retention, qualitative factors such as leadership support, organizational culture, and work-life balance are the primary drivers of an employee's intention to stay. Subramaniam et al. (2024) and Lee et al. (2022) argue that "hygiene factors"—including salaries, working conditions, and job security—must be maintained to prevent dissatisfaction and immediate turnover, but they do not necessarily foster long-term commitment. In contrast, "motivational factors" such as recognition, growth opportunities, and the intrinsic nature of the work are what truly drive long-term retention and engagement. Leadership support has emerged as a statistically significant predictor of retention in the public sector. Nusraningrum et al. (2024) demonstrate that supportive leadership does not just improve performance but also fosters a "green" or positive work environment that significantly mediates the relationship between employee motivation and their decision to remain with an organization. Furthermore, Haricharan (2023) notes that moving away from rigid, command-and-control hierarchies toward more employee-centric governance models is essential for reducing "burnout" and improving retention in public service.

In the specific context of government agencies and educational institutions, career development and work-life balance have become critical retention strategies. Research suggests that despite limited budgets, public organizations can improve retention by providing clear career progression pathways and professional training. Additionally, Pabilonia and Vernon (2023) highlight that the flexibility offered by remote or hybrid work arrangements—which became more prevalent in the early 2020s—significantly boosted job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions by allowing for better work-life integration.

Despite the preceding literature, there was no evaluation of implementing PRIME-HRM among local and national government agencies in Balanga City, Bataan. Specifically, there has been no investigation into the issues and challenges encountered by implementers and the most effective methods of implementation. This study examines the optimum approaches of the

Department of Education, local government units, and government-owned and controlled corporations, particularly the water district, in their execution of the Priority Development Assistance Fund Rationalization program. The basis for selecting the three agencies was their attainment of the PRIME-HRM Bronze Award from the CSC. The objective was to reveal the methodologies that led to their success in earning the bronze level and to share such practices with other agencies.

This study explored the issues, challenges, and best practices of three government agencies, namely: DepEd SDO City of Balanga, Balanga City Local Government Unity, and Balanga Water District in the Province of Bataan, in championing PRIME-HRM during the fiscal year 2023. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1. What are the issues and challenges in the implementation of PRIME-HRM; 2. How does the implementation of PRIME-HRM affect employee job satisfaction in public sector organizations; 3. How does the implementation of PRIME-HRM affect employee engagement in public sector organizations; 4. How does the implementation of PRIME-HRM affect employee retention in public sector organizations; and 5. What are the best practices of each agency in championing PRIME-HRM?

With the given experiences of the identified government agencies, here are the following assumptions are made: 1. There are some issues and challenges in the implementation of PRIME-HRM; 2. PRIME-HRM in three government agencies was not institutionalized properly; 3. PRIME-HRM was an awakening call to all agencies in streamlining their processes; and 4. Best practices in the implementation of PRIME-HRM can be used as a basis for developing a standardized manual of implementation.

The delimitation of this study is the inability to generalize the data to a larger population since only three participating agencies were considered in the study. The participants' perceptions in the implementation of PRIME-HRM specifically on the challenges, lessons learned, best practices, and the road ahead in leading their organization. In addition, the researcher had a pre-conceived concept about the challenges, lessons learned, best practices, and the road ahead in leading an organization that may influence the result of the interpretation.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative multiple case analysis design to describe the challenges, lessons, and best practices of three identified agencies in Balanga City, Province of Bataan, alongside the implementation of PRIME-HRM. According to Gustafsson (2017), the use of multiple cases makes the findings more robust and reliable because the evidence is often considered more compelling. By comparing different cases, researchers can identify "literal replication" - where cases produce similar results or "theoretical replication"- where cases produce contrasting results but for predictable reasons). Further, Surikova et al. (2025) justify the use of multiple case studies in educational governance by noting that it increases the transferability of the findings. When a study finds that "servant leadership" boosts engagement in three different School Divisions, the recommendation carries more weight for the entire Department of Education than a study focused on just one office. Furthermore, Nzimande et al. (2025) highlights that this design allows researchers to develop a "composite" of best practices. In the context of HR retention, multiple case analysis helps separate unique "fluke" successes from the systematic practices that consistently lead to high employee satisfaction across various government units.

The methodology that was used was the Replication Strategy because it grants the researcher the ability to recognize potential patterns within the data and further investigate them through fieldwork to obtain additional data sources. Using these methodologies ensured that information shared in the interviews was explanations of phenomena derived from empirical evidence validated consistently in the investigation. The constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) within the academic circles was repeatedly validated by collecting, analyzing, comparing, and revising.

Evaluating the public sectors, which were the recipients of the Bronze Level 2 in the PRIME-HRM was the focal point of this inquiry as there were three (3) identified research locations predicated on their readiness to aptly handle academic probe. This research engaged in a deliberate selection process of organizations based on the researcher's knowledge and experience of their respective geographic locations, as well as a practical consideration of the feasibility of conducting participant observations and interviews. Participant selection was conducted using specific criteria to identify those who would be either included or excluded from the study.

The principle of purposive sampling combined with structured multisectoral approach was used in order to obtain proportionate participants from the 3 public sector organizations. The study involved twelve (12) participants, including four (4) officers in human resource management, four (4) PRIME-HRM focal persons, and four (4) senior management representatives. By selecting 4 key representatives from the 3 public sector organizations, it was considered to ensure corroboration of the findings across various sectors of the government bureaucracy. The exploration applied open-ended questions and a multiple-case study design, which applied the propositions of data saturation, deriving at an interview-based comprehensive data analysis. Triangulation of findings, as a part of document evaluation, involved examination of pieces of data, observations of noted and records of transcripts on interviews.

The study employed an open-ended inquiry methodology whereby participants were invited to provide personalized feedback specifically focused on the narratives of the study's subject regarding their challenges and concerns, as well as gained insights into the implementation of the PRIME-HRM. The instrument validation process entailed seeking specialists' aid and carrying out in person assessments. The assistance of human resource professionals and practitioners with varied experience in HR practices were sought. These professionals exhibited aptitude in the four fundamental tenets of PRIME-HRM.

The researcher endeavored to adhere to ethical obligations by protecting participants rights and advancing their well-being. The protection of the rights and welfare of research participants is predicated on a fundamental ethical framework. The participants in this study were regarded as individuals entitled to dignity and self-determination as autonomous agents. They were allowed to exercise the right to withdraw using the Informed Consent provision at their discretion without incurring any adverse consequences or responsibilities. As to the principle of beneficence, the investigation abstained from eliciting any data that could result in emotional hardship or further physical harm to the participants. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants and systematically encoding their responses has necessitated the utilization of numerical identifiers exclusively to represent the three distinct public sector organizations within the territorial confines of Balanga City, Philippines.

The researcher commenced a thorough data collection procedure by obtaining preliminary authorization from the authorities of the involved agencies. Before commencing the interview, an exhaustive review and discussion of the informed consent form were undertaken to acquire the participants with their entitlements as subjects of research. Upon establishing a mutually acceptable framework for the investigation, participants were instructed to fulfill a document indicating their consent to participate. Following the completion of the initial procedural steps, the researcher proceeded with carrying out the interview. In order to streamline the management of the comprehensive interview, the researcher requested information regarding the availability of each participant to organize an interview session. Each interview session had a duration of approximately one hour. To ensure the participant's sustained involvement with their work environment and their organization's human resource management and operations, conducting the interview on-site at their office or workplace was deemed necessary. The researcher employed the data saturation methodology, wherein each participant was interviewed until information saturation was attained before proceeding to the next participant. This approach ensured that sufficient information was collected from each participant and allowed for a rigorous analysis of the data. Throughout the interview sessions, the researcher documented observational notes that served as a reference point in the post-analysis of the collected data.

While undertaking comprehensive, in-depth interviews, the researcher formally requested access to salient documentation, including the PRIME-HRM 4 Pillars Manual and other applicable records and entities, to further augment their comprehension of the implementation of PRIME-HRM. These documents were utilized and meticulously assessed to determine correlations with the results gathered from the compiled

interviews. The findings of the current investigation were validated using established methodological protocols.

Results and Discussion

The study's findings are addressed in this part, divided into five parts, focusing on the scope of practices, obstacles, and possibilities encountered during the implementation of PRIME-HRM by the three public sector organizations in Balanga City, Bataan.

1. On the Implementation Challenges and Difficulties:

The challenges and difficulties experienced by the participants in the process of applying for and implementing PRIME-HRM focus on the participants' journey from processing the needed documents until implementing PRIME-HRM in their organizations. Among the challenges were: *Documents Not Prepared in Time; Unfamiliarity with Processes; and Challenges Posed by the Pandemic.*

Table 1: Generated Themes on the Implementation Challenges and Difficulties Experienced by the Participants

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Documents Not Prepared in Time	This theme primarily discusses challenges participants identified while attempting to obtain crucial paperwork from process owners throughout their PRIME-HRM application process.	Participant 1 Participant 3 Participant 8 Participant 11	<i>"During the application process for PRIME-HRM in the water district office, we encountered some difficulties when trying to collect paperwork from various process owners; they weren't able to submit on time. Our projected timeline of application came to a stall as a result of this in some way."</i> -Participant 11
Unfamiliarity with Processes	In light of the incomplete institutionalization of their processes, this theme focuses on the challenges participants face while applying for PRIME-HRM.	Participant 4 Participant 6 Participant 10	<i>"The SDO adheres to all policies established by the HRDD, but during the evaluation, we discovered that several of our processes were not yet fully institutionalized."</i> - Participant 6
Challenges Posed by the Pandemic	This theme focuses on the challenges and obstacles the participants had in preparing for, validating, and implementing PRIME-HR due to the unforeseen pandemic.	Participant 1 Participant 3 Participant 4 Participant 6	<i>"There's a limitation on the mobility of personnel due to fear of COVID – 19. The pandemic was a challenging time for almost all aspects of SDO operations. Since we were caught off guard by the phenomenon, we had to establish new ways to implement the policies set by PRIME HRM."</i> -Participant 4

It is imperative to consistently pursue improvements in initiatives that are intended to initiate the evaluation process at both the integrated-defined and strategic-defined levels to enhance the implementation of PRIME-HRM, although these public sector organizations are already recognized as process-defined. For the successful and effective deployment of PRIME-HRM, reliable and effective human resource is essential. Without a skilled and competent workforce, we cannot improve the quality of government services and transparency through digital and online platforms. Thus, skilled and well-trained personnel are essential for the effective implementation of PRIME-HR programs.

The public sector's human resource problems make it necessary to create and follow strategic policies and procedures to effectively manage and integrate new technology (Kupeta 2022). Human Resource managers play an important role in organizations since they are the ones who make these changes happen. Their main job is to make the organization better at adapting to and taking advantage of reforms.

Thorough and precise assessment of resources allocation for human capital investments was paramount for government employees, equipping them with relevant tools in e-government programs and initiatives. People strategy and processes profoundly influenced the digital remodeling of the government entities, contributing to the employee's welfare, enthusiasm, and effectiveness. The establishment of an overarching structure in HR enabled adjustment of e-government, aligning with the swift and immense digital reconstruction in the government system.

Moreover, Rashwan and Nour, (2023) highlighted the establishment of trust and integrity as vital precursors of viability in government service. Strategic system, such as integrated reporting, mitigated systemic issues in public governance. Emphasis on transparency and collaboration is vital to stress open government initiatives to stakeholders (The Government Affairs Management Office of the People's Government of Yuexiu District, Guangzhou Municipality, Guangdong Province, 2021). Public entities that actively engaged stakeholders through data access promote robust and skill-based organization that prioritize values and innovation.

2. On the Increased Employee Satisfaction

This section shows the effect of PRIME-HRM implementation on the employee satisfaction in their respective organizations. It further explores the profundity of the participants' experiences and illustrates the very essence of these experiences in relation to their present work. The themes that emerged from the transcripts of the interviews with the participants that reflect how implementing PRIME-HRM improves their working environment are as follows: Enhanced Accountability at Work and Continuous Learning and Improvement.

Table 2: Generated Themes on the Increased Employee Satisfaction Experienced by the Participants

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Enhanced Accountability at Work	This theme focuses on the encouraging and beneficial developments that the participants' increased accountability due to the implementation of PRIME-HRM in their various organizations.	Participant 1 Participant 2 Participant 6 Participant 7	<p><i>"Since PRIME-HRM, I was more in sync with my role here at Water District. I am more conscious that I am responsible for my job. I sharpened my concentration on the accomplishment of my goals and responsibilities. In addition, I improved my ability to concentrate by reducing the number of external factors that could divert my attention and the amount of pressure I put on myself. I have faith that my team will recognize this and that they will see that I am leading by example for them. I want to instill a strong work ethic in my team to achieve our goals."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>-Participant 2</i></p>
Continuous Learning and Improvement	This theme shows how the introduction of PRIME-HRM has ingrained a culture of learning and professional advancement in its workplace.	Participant 1 Participant 6 Participant 9 Participant 11	<p><i>"Continuous learning in the workplace has been a new culture here in LGU since PRIME-HRM was implemented. Our bosses have stressed to the staff the importance of prioritizing continual learning and improvement. PRIME-HRM has established a new culture in which it is clear that management cares about our professional advancement and career by providing us with opportunities for continuous learning and growth that are easily accessible, which, in the long term, will result in improved work performance on our side."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>-Participant 9</i></p>

This study validates that ecosystem ownership cultivates a culture of trust and transparency in corporate world. Moreover, the results accentuate the establishment of a firm human relations increases job satisfaction and emotional commitment to the organizations. In 2023, Pattinaja et al. explicated how sense of belonging motivated government employees to create more meaningful activities from their routine task, turning the ordinary into distinctive shared goals in the organization. Self-assurance in handling work-related activities increases ownership and accountability, leading to communication

symmetry and maximization of their responsibility. Regular and transparent feedback mechanism is tantamount to the enhancement of employee performance and development (Atmaja et al., 2022)

The PRIME-HRM created an opportunity for public sector managers to implement viable learning environment (Asrar-UL-Haq & Anwar, 2018). On the other note, Fuentetaja, et. al 2020 viewed efficient leadership promotes organizational development. Nonetheless, strategic management plays a crucial role in the organizational progress. Prioritizing long-term learning for the development of employees through training, interdepartmental efforts, and information distribution was vital. The disparity and gaps between the present competencies and the future organizational demands rest on the institutionalization of perpetual learning improvement, targeting excellence in human resources. This established system automates government employees in yielding high index of engagement and productivity. Moreover, employees' needs and aspirations dictate the continuous improvement in the public service (Martinez-Bravo and Sanz, 2023). This inquiry verified that diverse hurdles and predictions in the learning and development pillar of the PRIME-HRM keep the abreast on digital and work-related policies targeting the improvement in administration, virtual learning, and automated performance, which enhances learning (Hinkley et al., 2022).

3. On the Improved Level of Employee Engagement

The themes that emerged from the participant interviews indicate how installing PRIME-HRM has improved their working environment. The themes that emerged are: Better Engagement Toward Better Performance; Increased Employee Appreciation; and Expressed Inclusivity in the Workplace.

Table 3: Generated Themes on the Improved Level of Employee Engagement Experienced by the Participants

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Better Engagement Toward Better Performance	This theme explains participants' sense of connection and belonging in their organizations following the implementation of PRIME-HRM.	Participant 2 Participant 4 Participant 9 Participant 11	<i>"It made effective communication easier. In the organization, there has been evidence of open and honest communication between the leadership and the workforce. It results in the promotion of dedication, trust, and understanding among all of the team members."</i> -Participant 4
Increased Employee Appreciation	This theme describes how the deployment of PRIME-HRM has given participants a greater sense of appreciation and rewards at work.	Participant 1 Participant 4 Participant 6 Participant 7 Participant 12	<i>"Employee appreciation was a positive by-product of PRIME-HRM implementation. A reward system in the LGU was created, and employees who perform well are publicly recognized during flag-raising ceremonies."</i> -Participant 7

Table 3: Generated Themes on the Improved Level of Employee Engagement Experienced by the Participants (Continued)

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Expressed Inclusivity in the Workplace	This theme explores the inclusive culture and sense of value participants observed at work due to utilizing PRIME-HRM.	Participant 1 Participant 4 Participant 7 Participant 12	<p><i>Ever since the implementation of PRIME-HRM, there has been improved inclusivity in the SDO. Our senior leaders reviewed and revised our policies and procedures to ensure that they are non-discriminatory and promote equal opportunities for all employees. We have also provided training and development opportunities for our employees to improve their awareness and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Additionally, we have established support networks to provide a safe and inclusive space for underrepresented employees to voice their concerns and seek support. Since in PRIME-HRM, employees are valued and motivated, they are confident to involve themselves in decision-making and contribute their ideas and opinions.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>-Participant 1</i></p>

There is a big impact on job satisfaction (Nurlaila, 2022) that significantly connects the performance of employees when servant leadership is felt in the organization (Roy & Konwar, 2020). Active listening, empathy, and responsible stewardship build stakeholder trust and involvement in servant leadership (Canavesi and Minelli, 2022). Public sector leaders must constantly address stakeholder needs. A servant leadership style and supporting framework boost staff engagement and deliver better performance.

Job contentment also promotes employee performance, according to the theoretical framework. Employee engagement requires servant leadership (Neubert et al. 2016). Active listening, empathy, and responsible stewardship are servant leadership traits that create stakeholder trust and involvement. Public sector leaders must remain in touch with stakeholders and meet their demands. Servant leadership, alongside supportive organization, may boost employee engagement and productivity.

Neubert et. Al (2016) explained the adoption of servant leadership in the organization affected and enhanced employee engagement. Servant leadership demonstrated qualities of active listening, compassionate insight, ethical management. These merits contributed to establishing trust and boosting engagement among the stakeholders. One of the strategies in enhancing servant leadership effectiveness was distributive decision making, which enabled leaders to work with the stakeholders, addressing their needs in time.

There were many variables such as job challenge, meaning and purpose, social support and autonomy activated the enhanced employee engagement. More so, the vital consonance of employee appreciation was integral in worker engagement. This concept entailed a sense of worth and acknowledgement to the worker's labor, elevating the level of work gratification that resulted to enhanced work performance. Employees, who have strengthened work engagement exemplified outstanding attitude and proactive thinking within the organization, elevating their performances and contributing meaningfully to targeting the organization's thrusts (Nakinaalwa, 2022).

According to Domdom (2022), the Safe Space Act, as outlined in Republic Act 11313, encompasses a tangible, mental, and emotional setting in which participants exhibit a heightened consciousness regarding their duty to shield one another against instances of discrimination and harassment. This legislation necessitates the development of a gender-sensitive atmosphere and the adoption of pertinent work policies by both governmental entities and private enterprises. Such policies should incorporate training initiatives designed for employees and establish a mechanism to address grievances.

According to Xie and Camulli (2019), a key challenge in promoting inclusivity in the workplace is the resistance to change demonstrated by employees unaccustomed to inclusivity or diversity. Developing a corporate environment characterized by transparency and effective communication is imperative to effectively confront and surmount the challenges, wherein individuals with diverse backgrounds can exchange their unique experiences and viewpoints. In order to cultivate an organizational climate that emphasizes inclusivity and recognizes its inherent value, leaders must implement comprehensive educational initiatives and training programs centered on the principles of diversity and inclusion. By doing so, employees will gain an enhanced comprehension of the advantages of inclusivity and a heightened awareness of its significance within the workplace. Employers can involve their employees in endeavors that foster diversity, including establishing affinity groups or hosting various cultural events. These endeavors contribute to establishing an inclusive atmosphere where individuals perceive themselves as respected and assisted.

Dela Cruz (2023) presented wide arrays of important insights on the implementation of efficient ways to intensify inclusivity in an organizational locale. There were numerous ways to advance inclusivity in employment practices. It involved prioritizing accessibility and accommodation within the workplace such as deploying adaptive technologies, implementing alternative work arrangements, and tailoring the physical workspace. To help employers create and promote a more inclusive workplace, programs in mentoring, coaching, and career development for individuals with disabilities are crucial to enable an inclusive culture that values diverse employees and their contributions.

4. On Strengthened Strategies for Retaining Employees

Discussion on how the adoption of PRIME-HRM has improved retention in the organization is discussed in this section. Two themes that came out of interview with participants about retention were Improved Career Development Culture and Implementing Equal Opportunity in the Workplace. Organizations must have transparent and steady rules for internal promotions (Ghani et al., 2022). The implementation of incentive programs for outstanding achievement among the employee's performance is a trailblazer. The principles underscore the idea of employees comparing the rewards they acquire with those of their colleagues. Consequently, workers must distinguish the outcomes of their hard work to be fair and equitable in order to boost motivation, lessen attrition rate, and amplify productivity.

Table 4: Generated Themes on the Strengthened Strategies Employed by the Organizations to Retain Employees

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Improved Career Development Culture	This theme emphasizes how employing PRIME-HRM has given employees better career opportunities.	Participant 2 Participant 3 Participant 4 Participant 10	<i>"There became more opportunities when it comes to professional development like training and leadership development programs, mentoring and coaching programs, scholarship and education assistance programs, career coaching and mentoring, job shadowing and cross-functional training opportunities, performance feedback and evaluation processes, succession planning and career pathing, performance management and career conversations, and other professional development workshops and seminars."</i> -Participant 10
Implementing Equal Opportunity in the Workplace	The main focus of this theme is the establishment of equal access and consideration in employment, training, promotion, and other benefits.	Participant 1 Participant 3 Participant 5 Participant 6 Participant 9	<i>"We ensure that all job openings are posted internally and externally and that all qualified candidates are given equal consideration regardless of their background. We provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all employees. We establish clear and objective criteria for evaluating employee performance and making promotion and compensation decisions, and we ensure that all employees have access to the same benefits, such as healthcare, retirement plans, and vacation time."</i> -Participant 9

In 2023, Kanninen stressed numerous exemplary ways to adopt and establish equal opportunity within the organizational setting. These methods involved fostering environmental culture of diversity and inclusivity, equitable access to information, resources, and opportunities, human capital enhancement, engagement of employees in the decision-making process, and career cultivation.

According to Noya et al. (2023), organizations faced employee retention difficulties. It includes scarce infrastructure, flawed fiscal rewards, sparse professional and personal aids, deficit prospect advancements, lessened job satisfaction, and scant recognition. On the other hand, there were suggested varied strategies for employee retention. These ways encompassed educational, regulatory, financial, professional, and personal reinforcement.

Workload factors and reviewing monitoring guidelines and practices were determinants to intensify employee retention (Brady & Wilson, 2022). Leaders sought effective strategies, which were valuable and industry-specific resource, in addressing workload issues. Leaders, who examined workload and accountability policy might yield advantages in distinct contests for facilitating intricate interaction. Thus, it enhanced its relevance.

In a study in 2022, Liu et. al revealed the importance of coherent government response schemes in government communication's objectivity, transparency, and, veracity. The policies had integral part in attaining stakeholder's trust and support. The study also highlighted the principle of impartiality, efficacy, and accountability among offices immensely affected citizen's disposition. It also suggested that public confidence in the effectiveness of government officials played great significance for the viability of future's pandemic confinement initiatives.

Tessema et. al (2022) discussed the significance of effectively minimizing employee turnover. It involved implementing varied retention schemes that encompasses employee development gearing to promotion of healthy work-life balance and competitive compensation deals, and provision of adequate employee assistance. It was imperative for an organization's approach to assess and evaluate the costs and advantages of the strategies and the customization to account for the specific work contexts. During the pandemic period, modernization and adaptation of human resources policies and practices sufficed in efficiently coping in the abrupt modification in the work place. The execution of the retention plan was a requisite in the revision of the organizational work habits. Institutions, which were apt to efficiently reshape the organizational values and adapt to the changing demands of the corporate world held the capacity to withstand adversity, mitigating the consequences of employee turn over. Thus, leaders should master the arts of creative and innovative strategies in employee retention.

5. On Best Practices of Champion PRIME-HRM Implementers

This section exhibits the best strategies of the recognized PRIME-HRM organization in the adoption of the PRIME-HRM principles. The themes that emerged are Digital Integration in HR Processes and Strong Leadership and Commitment.

Table 4: Generated Themes on Best Practices of PRIME-HRM Champion Implementers

Themes	Description	Participants	Sample Text
Digital Integration in HR Processes	This theme stresses how integrating digital technology into HR procedures can improve employee satisfaction and boost productivity.	Participant 3 Participant 9 Participant 11	<i>“Here at LGU, we’re trying to employ digital systems that would allow easier access and handling of data that are relevant to policy formulation.”</i> <i>-Participant 9</i>
Strong Leadership and Commitment	This theme highlights how effective leadership and commitment in PRIME-HRM practices at work improve employees' performances.	Participant 5 Participant 6 Participant 10	<i>“The commitment and leadership of our supervisors in SDO have helped implement PRIME-HRM to a great extent. We express our appreciation for the diligence displayed by the individuals in their endeavors to attain optimal outcomes for our institution and workforce. Through this process, we are equally motivated to exert our utmost endeavors toward the betterment of the organization.”</i> <i>-Participant 6</i>

The importance of digital integration in PRIME-HRM, Knies et al. (2022), cannot be set aside, as digital integration is essential for effective HR performance to achieve organizational outcomes and HR targets (Blom et al., 2024). Digital integration in HRM provides new opportunities to enable the workforce to become strategic assets of organizations (Montero Guerra et al., 2023) and improve HRM's effectiveness, efficiency, and strategic relevance to organizations. (Lu et al., 2023). Implementing electronic human resource management (e-HRM) technologies in government structures will facilitate the sharing and development of human resource-related data, information, services, databases, methods, and solutions, and can improve HR practices through digital integration (Grdzelishvili & Gogolauri, 2022). The e-HRM refers to using web technology-based channels to support the implementation of HRM strategies, policies, and practices in organizations to achieve organizational excellence. It can bridge the gap between traditional internal HR processes and external systems (Nyathi & Kekwaletswe, 2023).

Soomro & Ahmed (2022) suggest that integration increases the contribution of human resources professionals at the strategic level, leading to more efficient management of the workforce and improved organizational performance. Xia et al. (2023) explained that public sector organizations have started adopting digital integration since digital tools are becoming ubiquitous in contemporary HRM practices, such as the use of technology to automate and integrate HR processes (Penpokai, 2023), including recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, and training and development, and the development of an online information management system to streamline and monitor HR processes.

Hazafi & Kajtár (2022) elucidate that a digitally trained workforce is a prerequisite for taking advantage of the technological innovations of the 4th industrial revolution. Organizations introduce new technological tools to enhance the effectiveness of recruitment and selection, e.g., a camera analyzing the candidates' choice of words, facial expression, and body language during the interview. Data and fact-driven decision-making are indispensable for strategic HRM and workforce planning.

Cloud-based solutions have been found to transform HR processes effectively. Using statistics, developing a sense of belonging with the organization, and performance management are the three outcomes of cloud-based solutions for HR practices. Performance as a service and software as a service have been found to strongly and significantly direct human resource practices, respectively (Al-Rwaidan et al., 2023). Through digitization, data will become more accessible, operations more efficient, improving the HR function, providing better customer service, and increasing productivity (Prifti et al., 2023). In support of decisive leadership and commitment in HRM, Blom et al. (2024) explained that HRM practices should be supported by senior management or leadership, who are committed to HRM goals and can facilitate the integration of HRM across organizational departments and levels. Likewise, Grdzlishvili & Gogolauri (2022) stated that leadership commitment is essential for an effective HR management system and the successful implementation of HR policies.

There are best practices that can be adopted and considered by public sector organizations as they prepare for a higher level of PRIME-HRM accreditation. Hazafi & Kajtár (2022) explained that the intelligent application of big data in HR services (Shet et al., 2021) should create a competitive advantage for public sector organizations to use digital tools in workforce planning. Amidst the rapid changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing importance of HR analytics, the use of predictions, algorithms, and AI (Priksht et al., 2021) is also expected to accelerate. The trend should improve not only the speed of decision-making but also its accuracy. These trends can be considered ways forward to be implemented by public sector organizations as best practices in HR processes to vet for integrated and strategically defined processes in the PRIME-HRM.

Malik et al. (2022) supported the concept that commitment- and collaboration-based HRM systems were positively related to the firm's innovation, cost constraints, and bottom-line performance. The dual-force perspective: the "modernization" of HRM practices and the influence of traditional institutions and customary culture play essential roles in HRM pluralism or hybridism among organizations. A hybrid approach (high commitment and compliance) produced the highest organizational performance, suggesting that commitment-eliciting and compliance-achieving practices are essential for organizational performance.

Galanti et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of organizations setting up learning and training programs to guide workers to acquire new skills required by Industry 4.0. These programs will enable workers to collaborate, build functional relationships, and adapt to new work processes. Therefore, one of the best practices in HR is to prioritize continuous learning and training programs for employees to help them develop the necessary technical and soft skills for future workplaces. Public sector organizations should acknowledge the potential of digitalization in transforming the traditional way of work and highlight the need for HR management to implement digital integration in its processes.

Public sector organizations may also develop or procure HR software (Barney, 2023) with embedded analytical capabilities and features to integrate with other organizations' data as they vet for integrated-defined or strategic-defined PRIME-HRM. Various technologies may be required to gather data, translate it into insightful workforce analysis, and then use those insights to inform strategic decision-making.

Aligning human resource management with the sustainability agenda is critical for mitigating external risks and ensuring organizational longevity. Suringa (2024) pinpointed that HR personnel spearheaded the reformation in an organization, ensuring reconciliation practices and strategies in the top level management. This technique cultivated a workplace favorable to change (Ren et al., 2023). In addition, considering the mentioned HRM strategies, as foundation of transformation, allowed institutions to upgrade and upskill their potentials and employee satisfaction. Thus, the workplace projected a sustainable foundation and competitive edge in preparation for future intricacies (Al Awadhi & Muslim, 2023).

The findings showed the hurdles that impeded the application of the PRIME-HRM policies. Numerous arguments surfaced, highlighting the participant's experiences - processing the required documents to executing PRIME-HRM in the workplace. Documents not prepared in time, unfamiliarity with the processes, and pandemic-related challenges were the generated themes. Further, this investigation uncovered the improvement in the employee's satisfaction through the implementation of the PRIME-HRM. Identified themes appeared in the exploration of the employee's work experiences relative to the satisfaction in the work experiences. Enhanced accountability at work and continuous learning and improvement are the generated themes. Moreover, the inquiry revealed

the significance of implementing PRIME-HRM in the commitment of the employee. The generated themes involved Better engagement towards better performance, Increased Employee Appreciation, and Expressed Inclusivity in the Workplace.

The study showed improvement in retaining employees during the implementation of the PRIME-HRM in the workplace. The generated theme included Improved Career Development Culture and Implementing Equal Opportunities in the Workplace. The findings demonstrated the best strategies of the participants' organizations, adopting the implementation of the PRIME-HRM. The emerging themes were Digital Integration in HR Processes and Strong Leadership and Commitment.

Conclusions

The execution of the PRIME-HRM initiatives in human resource management programs - recruitment, selection, placement, learning and development, performance management, and rewards and recognition were in exceptional performance as detailed in the participant's responses. This result stemmed from the HR personnel diligence in the execution of their duties.

In the duration of PRIME-HRM implementation, participants experienced minutest to average challenges. This endeavor addressed the impediment in the HR delivery in the provision of the human resource management services within the organizational framework. Moreover, this initiative guaranteed the attainment of the targets of elevating human resources in the government offices, maximizing good governance and effective public service delivery. The current findings offer a seamless direction for providing and incorporating means to uphold human resources in the public institutions.

The execution of PRIME-HRM offers numerous platforms for organizations, such as the opportunity to serve as exemplary governmental institutions, garner local or national government backing, receive acknowledgment of HRM practices of other agencies, and participate in HR knowledge transfer activities with other agencies. These initiatives are a few of the available opportunities. Primarily, the participants were granted the opportunity to provide a more specific definition of PRIME-HRM, which aims to enhance the capacity of agencies to consistently carry out human resource management tasks utilizing the Assess-Assist-Award approach.

The implementation of the PRIME-HRM in the public sector organizations across all levels of bureaucracy can advance the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) by demonstrating how specific public sector "resources"—such as servant leadership and institutional transparency—buffer against the unique "demands" of bureaucratic stress to foster engagement. This investigation have provide government leaders and managers with a data-driven framework to design targeted intervention programs, such as mentorship initiatives and non-monetary reward systems, that directly address the primary drivers of employee retention and satisfaction. The study serves as a

foundational document for evidence-based policy-making within the Civil Service framework. The results can be used to advocate for the institutionalization of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) and tailored Professional Development Plans, proving that these are not just "perks" but essential strategic tools for maintaining a high-performing and stable public sector workforce.

The study suggested to enhance public trust by ensuring that government frontline services are manned by satisfied and engaged civil servants. The roadmap for succession planning has to be ensured by that of the mid-level managers in order to develop and retain the next generation of public leaders. The specific impact of public service motivation should define the concept of governmental employee satisfaction.

Recommendations

On Recruitment, Selection, and Placement. Because the selection of qualified candidates and applicants relies heavily on the interview process, organizations may wish to conduct additional reviews of the process to ensure that it is centered on the applicants' skills. They may include background interviews, written exams, and psychological testing, particularly personality assessment, in their processes.

On Learning and Development. There is a significant possibility for organizations to seek to explore redesigning their performance improvement interventions to concentrate on workplace development and performance that aligns with the core job requirements as per the demands of organizational strategy. A standard coaching and mentoring program based on the results of a full learning needs analysis is one way that could work. A valuable way to improve performance and productivity is to give new employees onboarding tasks in the form of online modules. Public organizations can also set up Learning Institutes to offer seminars and training to their employees as well as to other government agencies.

On the Performance Management System. The heads of government institutions may conduct operational assessments on the execution of gender and development (GAD) policies within the context of their respective performance management systems. The focus can be either within or beyond the jurisdiction of entities that exhibit expertise in a particular method for implementing the specified benchmarks. The implementation of a 360-degree evaluation feedback system may be considered suitable, as it accurately reflects an employee's comprehensive performance. Stated differently, it facilitates the creation of a more lucid depiction of an employee's efficacy. It is also advised that an exit interview be added to the organization's procedure so that professionals can leave their existing jobs with as little difficulty as possible. The objective is to avoid alienating present co-workers because doing so could hinder their ability to advance professionally in the future. An exit strategy also aids in learning as much as possible about why the person is leaving. This is an excellent chance to learn about pay or work-life balance concerns.

On Rewards and Recognition. Continued assessment of the implementation initiatives of Continued assessment of the implementation initiatives of individualized policies and provisions on rewards and recognition programs for all authorities and employees, as well as consultation with the organization's GAD focal/point persons regarding how to make the program gender-responsive. An institutionalized PRAISE Program for respective organizations may also be taken into consideration. Organizations may develop and implement further best practices and innovations in line with what is advocated by PRIME-HRM. It will be necessary to modify one's approach to human resources administration and conduct more studies to develop new implementation strategies and innovations. To successfully institutionalize meritocracy and excellence, as proposed by the CSC, it is essential to manage human resources using a strategic approach.

On Future Research. Future research is recommended to utilize a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Human Resource Management Officers (HRMOs) and Agency Heads during the transition from Level 2 (Process-Defined) to Level 3 (Integrated). This study could identify the specific tipping points in leadership mindset and organizational culture required to shift from merely following SOPs to using data-driven metrics for continuous improvement. Additionally, investigation on the integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning within the PRIME-HRM framework specifically focusing on how these technologies can accelerate digital government transformation in human resource systems may also be undertaken. Such research could explore the "digital readiness" of government personnel as a mediator between HR maturity levels and overall organizational innovation performance.

It is recommended that future research adopt longitudinal designs to track the long-term impact of PRIME-HRM maturity on employee outcomes, thereby establishing clearer causal relationships beyond seasonal snapshots. Studies should also expand their geographic and sectoral scope to include diverse municipal and national agencies, ensuring that retention strategies are validated across varying localized cultures. Finally, comparative research between Level 2 and Level 4 agencies is essential to create a scalable roadmap that assists lower-maturity organizations in overcoming the foundational hurdles to strategic excellence. Finally, Public Service Motivation (PSM) as a core mediator within the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory may be theoretically explored to better explain how altruistic values influence the motivational process specifically in government settings. Furthermore, future studies should investigate the interaction between digital maturity and personal resources (such as self-efficacy) to refine the theory's "buffering effect" against the unique technological stressors of modern public administration.

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