

Evaluating the Direct Influences Exerted by Strategic Practices in Human Resource Management on the Quality of Public Service Delivery

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Abstract

In a constantly changing world where the demand for high-quality public services is increasing, we investigate the crucial role of strategic practices in human resource management (HRM) in ensuring efficient and effective delivery of these services to the community. This paper examines the direct influences of strategic HRM practices on the quality of public service delivery using structural equation modeling. By integrating HR theories and public service management, we have developed a conceptual model that highlights the connections between strategic HRM practices and organizational performance in delivering public services. The results of the analysis reveal significant and positive influences of strategic HRM practices on the quality of public service delivery. Specifically, the implementation of employee-oriented HR practices, such as rigorous recruitment and selection, skills development, and employee involvement, has a significant impact on the quality of public services. These findings underscore the importance of investing in human resources and strategic HR management in the public sector to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided to citizens.

Key words: human resource management, public services, strategic practices, structural equation modeling

J.E.L. classification: H83, J24

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, where societies face complex and dynamic challenges, the efficiency and effectiveness of public services have become increasingly crucial for the well-being and progress of communities. Globalization accelerated technological changes, and the pressure to do more with less has emphasized the need for efficient resource management and the delivery of high-quality public services. In this context, there is a particular emphasis on identifying and understanding the factors that contribute to the quality of service delivery, as it can have a direct impact on citizen satisfaction and sustainable social and economic development. One of these critical factors is human resource management (HRM), which plays a fundamental role in shaping organizational performance and, consequently, the quality of public services. Through the implementation of effective HRM practices, managers in the public sector can attract, develop, and retain talented personnel, improve employee engagement and productivity, and promote a culture of excellence and innovation, all of which contribute to the delivery of more efficient, transparent, and community-oriented public services. Thus, HRM becomes a central element in efforts to improve organizational performance and the quality of public services, and a deep understanding of the relationship between HRM practices and organizational outcomes becomes essential for the efficient management of public institutions in a complex and ever-changing environment.

This paper focuses on evaluating the direct influences exerted by strategic practices in human resource management on the quality of public service delivery. In this regard, we aim to investigate the essential connections between HRM strategies and organizational performance regarding the provision of public services. By analyzing and understanding these connections, we seek to contribute to the development of a comprehensive perspective on how human resource management can influence and enhance the quality of public services for the benefit of communities and citizens. The paper provides a systematic and coherent presentation of the relationship between strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services. Through the exploration of relevant literature and detailing of the research methodology, the aim is to understand and highlight the impact of HRM practices on organizational performance in delivering public services. This structure is intended to ensure coherence and clarity, contributing to a deep understanding and full utilization of the research results.

2. Theoretical background

In recent decades, research in the fields of human resources and public management has highlighted a significant increase in interest regarding the influence of strategic human resource practices on the quality of public services. Various authors have analyzed this complex relationship and emphasized the importance of implementing effective human resource management practices in public sector organizations.

Chung-Jen Chen et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive study to evaluate the impact of human resource management practices on performance within governmental organizations in Taiwan. They investigated various aspects of HRM, focusing mainly on recruitment and selection practices, as well as employee development. Their results demonstrated that these practices significantly influence organizational effectiveness and the quality of public services provided. Their study provides a deep understanding of how HRM strategies can contribute to improving organizational performance and the quality of public services, offering valuable guidance for practitioners and managers in the public sector.

Chung-Jen Chen et al. (2018) conducted a comprehensive study to evaluate the impact of human resource management practices on performance within governmental organizations in Taiwan. They adopted a multidimensional approach, investigating not only recruitment and selection practices but also aspects such as employee training and development, performance management, and rewards. By analyzing data collected from a series of governmental organizations, their study highlighted that HRM practices significantly influence organizational effectiveness and the quality of public services provided. Furthermore, it was found that a strategic and integrated approach to HRM, which includes a wide range of coherent practices and policies, has a more substantial positive impact on organizational performance compared to isolated practices. Their results not only confirm the importance of effective human resource management in the public sector but also emphasize the need to adapt these practices to the specificities of governmental organizations to maximize their impact on the quality of public services. This research offers a deeper and more detailed understanding of the vital link between HRM practices and organizational performance in the public sector, thus providing a valuable framework for the development and implementation of effective HRM practices in governmental organizations.

In contrast, the studies by Perry and Wise (2020) highlighted specific challenges faced by human resource management in the public sector, revealing that bureaucratic rigidity and financial constraints are significant obstacles to implementing effective HRM practices and, consequently, improving the quality of public services. Bureaucratic rigidity may hinder the processes of staff recruitment and promotion, affecting the flexibility and capacity of organizations to respond to changes in their external and internal environments. Additionally, financial constraints may limit the resources available for investments in human resource development and for the implementation of effective HRM policies and programs. This can lead to underutilization of employee potential and, consequently, to a decrease in the quality of services provided. In light of these challenges, managers in the public sector need to adopt innovative approaches and develop flexible strategies for human resource management so as to overcome existing constraints and maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of their organizations in delivering public services.

Previous research underscores the importance of strategic human resource management in the public sector and its impact on the quality of services provided. However, there are still challenges and specific aspects that require special attention in future research to understand better the complex relationship between strategic HRM practices and organizational performance in the public sector.

3. Research methodology

For this research, we selected a representative sample of organizations from the public sector operating in a variety of fields, such as local administration, public health, education, and social services. The sample was chosen to reflect the diversity of public organizations and to ensure adequate representation of different contexts and characteristics. Data were collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to employees at various hierarchical levels of the selected organizations, with a focus on departments or teams directly involved in delivering public services.

To assess strategic human resource management practices, a questionnaire based on hypotheses was developed and administered to employees of public institutions in Olt County. The questionnaire consists of 32 items comprising seven primary variables, each of which is detailed by secondary variables (questionnaire items) as follows: socio-demographic variables (6 items); recruitment and selection of human resources (B8a-B10a); employee training and development (C11a-C14a); performance management (D15a-D19a); work environment (E20a-E23a).

A questionnaire was developed and administered to beneficiaries of public services provided by the selected public institutions in Olt County to evaluate the quality of services provided by public institutions. The questionnaire consists of 14 items comprising seven primary variables, each of which is detailed by secondary variables (questionnaire items) as follows: socio-demographic variables (B1b-B3b); quality of public services (B4b); tangible elements (B5b-B7b); assurance (B8b); reliability (B9b, B10b); responsiveness (B11b, B12b); empathy (B13b, B14b).

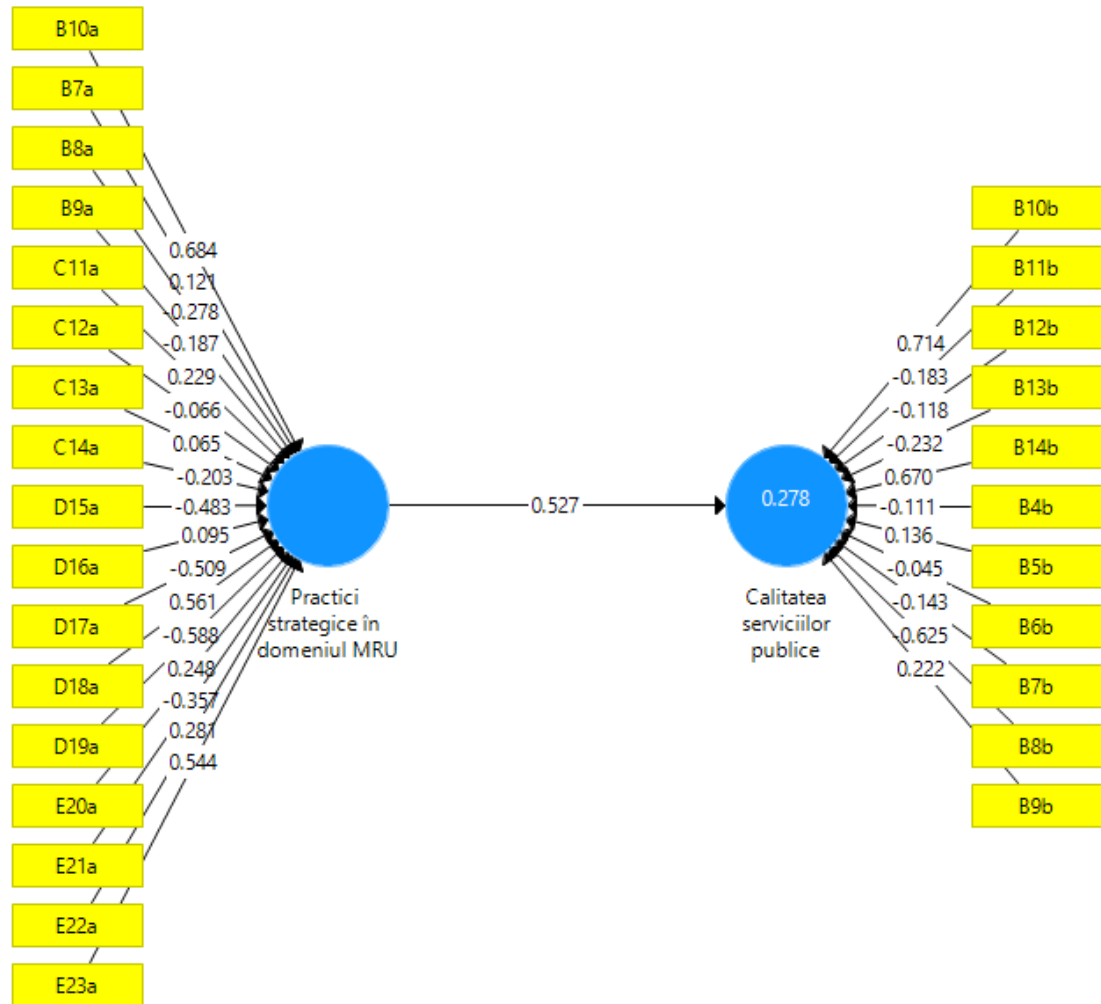
The collected data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM allows for the examination of complex relationships between multiple variables and the identification of latent models that explain the relationships between them. Various researchers also use it.

The research hypothesis proposed was that strategic practices in human resource management exert a significant favorable influence on the quality of public services. To validate our hypothesis, we used SEM to test the relationship between strategic HRM practices and the quality of public services while controlling for other relevant variables, such as organizational and contextual characteristics.

4. Results and discussions

To test the research hypothesis, we used structural equation modeling (SEM). The SEM model used is of the PLS (partial least squares) formative type. Latent variables are represented by strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services. Each of these latent variables (endogenous) is characterized by observable variables (exogenous) represented by questionnaire items. The empirical model resulting from testing hypothesis IP4 is presented in Figure No. 1.

Figure no. 1. Empirical model of the direct relationships between strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services.



Source: Developed based on data collected using SmartPLS v3.0

For a formative model, the validity of the model is given by the analysis of multicollinearity. VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) is a measure used in SEM models to assess the degree of collinearity or intercorrelation between independent variables. VIF is calculated for each independent variable, taking into account its relationship with the other independent variables in the SEM model. When independent variables are strongly correlated with each other, VIF increases, signaling a collinearity problem. A higher VIF indicates stronger collinearity and suggests that the independent variable may share redundant information with other independent variables in the model. A VIF of 1 indicates no collinearity, while a VIF greater than 5-10 may indicate significant collinearity (Hair et al., 2017). For the given model, the multicollinearity indicators (Variance Inflation Factor) are presented in Table No. 1.

Table no. 1. Multicollinearity within the model of direct relationships between strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services.

Strategic practices in human resource management	VIF	Quality of public services	VIF
B7a	3.886	B4b	2.229
B8a	3.608	B5b	1.939
B9a	2.917	B6b	1.786
B10a	2.230	B7b	1.605
C11a	2.617	B8b	1.557
C12a	2.789	B9b	1.807
C13a	2.169	B10b	2.587
C14a	1.914	B11b	1.816
D15a	2.580	B12b	2.189
D16a	2.403	B13b	1.508
D17a	2.869	B14b	1.948
D18a	2.958		
D19a	1.706		
E20a	1.938		
E21a	2.055		
E22a	2.159		
E23a	2.149		

Source: Developed based on data collected using SmartPLS v3.0

The indicators characterizing the adequacy of the model fit fall within the recommended values (Hair et al., 2017). SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) registers values below 0.8 (0.073), while NFI (Normed Fit Index) has a value of 0.951, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.9 (Table no. 2).

Table no. 2. Model fit indicators of the direct relationships between strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services.

	Saturated Model
SRMR	0.045
d_ ULS	0.809
d_ G	0.193
Chi-Square	190.480
NFI	0.942

Source: Developed based on data collected using SmartPLS v3.0

Table no. 3 presents the influences exerted by the latent variables of organizational culture and governmental policies on the strategic practices in human resource management.

Table no. 3. Path coefficients of the model depicting the direct relationships between strategic practices in human resource management and the quality of public services.

	Path coefficient	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Strategic practices in human resource management -> Quality of public services	0.527	0.162	0.642	2.821	0.012

Source: Developed based on data collected using SmartPLS v3.0

Based on all these findings and considerations, it can be said that IP4 is validated. From Table 4.15, it can be observed that the latent variable of strategic practices in human resource management exerts a significant favorable influence ($C > 0.5$; $p < 0.05$) on the quality of public services. This finding underscores the importance of implementing and maintaining effective strategic practices within public institutions' human resource management. The fact that these practices have a significant influence on the quality of public services highlights the crucial role of human resources in delivering efficient and high-quality services to their beneficiaries. This research, highlighting the significant positive influence of strategic practices on service quality, indicates a certain degree of alignment between human resource management and the goals of public institutions (Beattie and Waterhouse, 2022). The research results suggest that, within public institutions, effective human resource management can be a crucial component in improving the quality of public services provided. Implementing and maintaining appropriate strategic practices in this area could represent a crucial aspect of organizational strategies aimed at increasing efficiency and beneficiary satisfaction (Vărzaru and Vărzaru, 2013a, 2013).

5. Conclusions

In light of the research conducted, the conclusions of this study highlight the importance of strategic practices in the field of human resource management (HRM) in the quality of public service delivery. The results of the SEM analysis have confirmed the initial hypothesis, demonstrating that strategic HRM practices exert a positive and significant influence on the quality of public service delivery. Specifically, it has been found that recruitment and selection practices, training and development, and performance management have significantly contributed to improving organizational performance and the quality of public services.

Employee engagement and satisfaction are critical factors in ensuring the quality of public services. Data analysis revealed that employee engagement and satisfaction play a crucial role in the delivery process of high-quality public services. Organizations that have successfully implemented effective HRM practices have shown a higher tendency to have engaged and motivated employees, leading to an improvement in the quality of services provided.

Organizational and cultural context influences the implementation of HRM practices and the quality of public services. Although HRM practices have been identified as having a positive impact on the quality of public services, the analysis has shown that the organizational and cultural context can influence how these practices are implemented and employees' perceptions of them. Organizations need to consider these aspects and adapt HRM practices to their specific context in order to maximize their impact on the quality of public services.

Overall, these conclusions underline the importance of effective human resource management in ensuring the quality of public services and highlight the continued need for investment in the development and implementation of effective HRM practices in public sector organizations. By adopting a strategic and employee-oriented approach, organizations can significantly improve the performance and effectiveness of public services, thereby contributing to citizen satisfaction and the achievement of their social and economic objectives.

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