

# Assessment of the Adoption of the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM) in the Local Government Units in Palawan, Philippines

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90300243>

Received: 27 February 2025; Accepted: 08 March 2025; Published: 11 April 2025

## ABSTRACT

Transitioning from a traditional to strategic human resource management (SHRM) has been the primary objective of the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM) by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), with the goal of building a culture of excellence within organizations. However, local government units (LGUs) in Palawan face difficulties in effectively adopting the said program. Hence, the study assessed the roles of the Human Resource Management Officers (HRMOs) and Practitioners (LGUs) from LGUs in the province in adopting PRIME-HRM in their respective agencies. The study population is majorly composed of Government Department Heads, involved in PRIME-HRM implementation as board members or technical staff, and have attended the learning and development (L&D) orientation of the program. Findings reveal that the respondents have implemented their roles in adopting PRIME-HRM across the four (4) core HRM systems, showing greatest confidence in implementation when explaining associated concepts with each system within their respective agencies. Common challenges identified in adopting PRIME-HRM include lack of resources, unclear understanding of PRIME-HRM-associated roles, absence of formal training, and difficulty in managing demands from different stakeholders, to name a few. It underscores the need for key implementers of the program to continuously adopt measures to ensure that LGUs can transition efficiently from traditional to SHRM through PRIME-HRM. Moreover, routinary assessment of the quality of implementation, from the jurisdiction of HRMOs and HRMPs, are warranted to improve public service delivery in dynamic and resource-limited environments.

**Keywords:** Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM); strategic human resource management

## INTRODUCTION

The Philippine public sector endeavors to be more business-like in terms of service delivery and governance strategies to meet the demands of its constituents, embracing new technologies, restructuring, and transforming conventional and outdated HRM systems to address common human resource (HR) challenges (Aulich, 1996; Noguiera & Paranaguá de Santana, 2015). One of current changes is the adoption of strategic human resource management (SHRM), emphasizing performance and results-oriented service by aligning HR strategies, policies, and practices to organizational objectives, as evident in other countries who have implemented the HR reform (Kramar & Parry, 2014; Legnick-Hall *et al.*, 2009; Özçelik & Kulak, 2006).

Building a utilitarian organizational culture of excellence has been the guiding principle of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the central human resource agency of the Philippine bureaucracy, in creating the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM), through CSC

Memorandum Circular No. 3, s. 2012, based on four (4) core HR systems (i.e., recruit, selection, and placement [RSP]; learning and development interventions [L&D]; performance management [PM]; rewards and recognition [R&R]). Flagship implementation of the project centers on elevating HRM in the public sector to a performance-based level of excellence through the use of structured indicators that describe how well the behaviors, practices and processes of an agency can reliably and sustainably produce the desired outcomes, termed as HRM maturity levels.

The CSC MC 30, s. 2014 outlined the PRIME-HRM maturity level indicators for the four (4) core HRM systems for adoption by all government agencies: (1) Maturity Level I (Transactional HRM), wherein organizational processes are sufficiently documented at the very least, with separation of personnel function from organization and talent needs, and line managers performing HR activities as they see best; (2) Maturity Level II (Process-Defined HRM), wherein agencies have established sets of defined and document standard operating processes (SOPs), following goal-oriented decision-making, and having an automated system for data integration; (3) Maturity Level III (Integrated HRM), wherein agencies have metrics for their processes, following data-driven decision-making, and having their own HRM toolkit; and (4) Maturity Level IV (Strategic HRM), wherein organizations are expected to have processes focused on continuous improvement of process performance, a systematic management combining continuous improvement and process optimization, and HR decisions being part of the agency strategy. Currently, government agencies are expected to at least the Maturity Level II, or process-defined HRM.

Under the same memorandum, indicators are also identified per maturity level for each of the four (4) core HRM systems. Strategic recruitment, selection, and replacement (RSP) ensures the right calibre of individuals placed in a job, vital to organizational success, ensuring critical RSP of the right people in the right number at the right time (Amegashie-Viglo, 2014; Chinwendu & Godbless, 2019). The learning and development (L&D) system improves employee performance by equipping employees with knowledge, skills, and expertise needed to perform well in their roles, with training and development being the most common (Arucy & Juma, 2018; Bhartiya, 2015; Oluwaseun, 2020). On the other hand, a performance management (PM) system accomplishes important employee-based objectives such as motivating performance, capacitating the workforce, and building a dynamic performance culture, among others (Lawler, 2003; Randeree & Youha, 2009). Lastly, rewards and recognition (R&R) systems motivate and encourage employees to improve their commitment by positive work habits and conduct, benefitting both the workforce and the organization (Bwowe & Marongwe, 2018; Goswami, 2018; Vesin, 2021).

Agencies are also motivated to transform their HRM systems based on their respective agency mandates and strategic objectives, serving as an avenue for collaboration and enhancement of competence and expertise in the HR arena among and between government agencies, and becoming a model for floating best practices in HRM. Transforming Philippine government agencies from transactional to strategic HRM, through PRIME-HRM, is crucially performed by HRM officers and practitioners, key implementers and strategic partners of organizations. The process involves strict adherence to policies, adoption and development of HR reforms pursuant to civil service laws and regulations, and effective implementation of HR strategies that ensure successful attainment of organizational goals and objectives.

Currently, the CSC Field Office Palawan has a total of 36 oversight agencies, with 25 being local government units (LGUs), four (4) government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), two (2) state colleges and universities (SUCs), and five (5) national government agencies (NGAs). Despite the 12-year existence of PRIME-HRM, LGUs in Palawan still face difficulties in effectively adopting the said program, with only two (2) LGUs within the jurisdiction were recognized and conferred with the Bronze Award, equivalent to being awarded with Maturity Level II, the highest awarded so far in the province. To provide an overview of how LGUs in Palawan adopt PRIME-HRM within their respective jurisdictions, the study focused on assessing the roles of HRM Officers (HRMOs) and Practitioners (HRMPs) from LGUs through identifying them by their socio-demographic characteristics, and determining their familiarity with their roles in adopting PRIME-HRM and the challenges encountered in the program implementation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The adoption of SHRM replaces the traditional model of public service administration and shifts the workplace culture from “rule-bound” to “performance-based”, making the public sector the “model employer” by being at the forefront of employment reform and innovation (Brown, 2004; Cooke *et al.*, 2020). The paradigm shift of the Philippine government from transactional to SHRM, through PRIME-HRM, seemingly raised awareness in the HR industry about the advantages of business-like practices in public service (Adrias, 2022). The CSC partners with HRMOs and HRMPs of various public sectors, key implementers of the program, responsible for numerous HR activities such as employee recruitment, training and development, performance appraisal (Goswami, 2018; Rotich, 2015).

However, SHRM implementation tends to put additional pressure on HR professionals, reflecting struggles and difficulties faced by public sectors in implementing SHRM (Adrias, 2022; Teo *et al.*, 2007). Poor working relationships between the top management and HRMOs were observed, attributed to differences in perception, lack of support and participation, unclear understanding of roles, and short-sightedness mentality (Adrias, 2022; Fishwick, 2011; Teo *et al.*, 2007). Demographic changes, economic dynamics, new developments in modern technology, and data-driven HR practices also make the adoption of SHRM difficult in the workplace (Schramm, 2016). In the Philippines, most companies overlook the need for SHRM due to economic concerns, such as recession and high unemployment rates, in which, along with political (e.g., laws, political climate) and cultural forces (e.g., current attitudes, values) impact the adoption and implementation of HR policies and practices.

The study finds strength from theories formulated by various scholars, whose principles on SHRM, organizational change, and resource-based view support the researcher’s concept of the study. The SHRM theory entails the concept as an interplay of four (4) factors (i.e., strategy, performance, HR systems, human capital), all of which are critical in organizational success (Uysal, 2020). The organizational change theory considers 2 principles: (1) the process where organizations change its organizational structure, strategies, operational methods, technology, policies, systems, practices, and behaviors, among others; and (2) the effect of these changes to the organization (Hussein *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, the theory also recommends the use of appropriate diagnostic tools to assess the effectiveness of change strategies. Lastly, the resource-based view theory states that sustainable competitive advantage is met if resources satisfy the following criteria: (1) the resources should increase value to the organization, (2) the resources should be rare and unique among rivals, (3) the resources cannot easily be imitated, and (4) the resources must be imperfectly imitable (Siambi, 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

Palawan, situated in the MIMAROPA Region, is the westernmost province in the Philippines, and is the largest in the country by total land area. As of 2020, Palawan has a population density of 64 inhabitants per square kilometer (65 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, including Puerto Princesa), with a population of 939,594 (1,104,585, including Puerto Princesa), distributed across 23 municipalities and 1 highly urbanized city (HUC). Palawan, in total, cradles 25 LGUs, representing the 23 municipalities (Aborlan, Agutaya, Araceli, Balabac, Bataraza, Busuanga, Brooke’s Point, Cagayancillo, Coron, Culion, Cuyo, Dumarang, El Nido, Sofronio Espanola, Kalayaan, Linapacan, Magsaysay, Narra, Quezon, Rizal, Roxas, San Vicente, Taytay), 1 HUC (City Government of Puerto Princesa), and the Provincial Government of Palawan.

Adopting a cross-sectional design, an online survey was employed across all 25 LGUs in Palawan, with the 100 respondents composed of 25 HRMOs selected using total enumeration method, and 75 HRMPs pooled through simple random sampling. These individuals are key implementers in adopting PRIME-HRM, all by the four (4) core HRM systems in their respective agencies. A cross-sectional study captures the present situations of HRMOs and HRMPs in implementing the PRIME-HRM in their respective LGUs through one-time data collection based on standard indicators.

Said questionnaire was divided into three (3) parts: (a) the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, which include their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, employment status, number of years in the LGU, number of years in the current position, role in the adoption of PRIME-HRM, and L&D interventions on PRIME-HRM attended; (b) a Likert scale-based self-assessment questionnaire on their roles in adopting

PRIME-HRM, following a matrix of indicators; and (c) identification of challenges and problems encountered by the HRMOs and HRMPs relative to the adoption of PRIME-HRM in their respective agencies. Data were evaluated through frequencies, relative frequencies, and mean and standard deviation, whichever is most appropriate for the variable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean age of the study population was at  $43.46 \pm 12.03$  years, with the majority of the respondents coming from the 25-32 and 33-40 year-old age groups (Table 1). On the other hand, females and married individuals dominate the categories sex and civil status, respectively. Lastly, the majority of the study population obtained a bachelor's degree as their highest educational attainment. While some posts do not require the need to finish undergraduate studies to be eligible for the position, the latter characteristic reflects the need for, at least, a bachelor's degree to have a regularized position in LGU offices.

Table 1 Personal Demographic Profile of the Study Population ( $N = 100$ )

Characteristics	Frequency
Age*	
25-32	23
33-40	24
41-48	15
49-56	18
57-64	19
65-72	1
Sex	
Male	39
Female	61
Civil Status	
Single	27
Married	67
Separated	1
Widowed	5
Highest Educational Attainment	
Undergraduate Level	7
Diploma	3
Bachelor's Degree	66

Bachelor's Degree with Masteral Units	17
Master's Degree	7

Moreover, the respondents provided their position titles in the LGUs they are currently employed to (Table 2). Thirteen individuals in the study population were appointed as *Human Resource Management Officers (HRMOs)*, with most from the LGUs in municipalities ( $n = 11$ ). Other department heads ( $n = 13$ ) include *Municipal Government Department Heads* with different designations, such as municipal assessors, planning and development officers, and engineers, to name a few. The title *Government Department Head* also harbors different occupational functions, such as a treasurer, a planning officer, or a health officer, to name a few, within their respective areas of jurisdiction (Magayam, 2023). Some of the respondents are municipal administrators ( $n = 3$ ), and one is an assistant department head. The remaining individuals of the population ( $n = 70$ ) include several position titles, including administrative positions and HRMO staff.

Table 2 Position Titles of the Study Population ( $N = 100$ )

Position Titles	Frequency
<b>Human Resource Management Officers (HRMOs, Department Heads) (<math>n = 13</math>)</b>	
Provincial Government Department Head (Provincial Human Resource Management Officer)	1
City Government Department Head (City Resource Management Officer)	1
Municipal Government Department Head (Human Resource Management Officer)	11
<b>Other Department Heads (<math>n = 13</math>)</b>	
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Budget Officer)*	1
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer)	2
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Assessor)*	3
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Civil Registrar)	2
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Engineer)	2
Municipal Government Department Head (Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator)	3
<b>Assistant Department Head (<math>n = 1</math>)</b>	
Municipal Government Assistant Department Head (Assistant Municipal Human Resource Management Officer)	1
<b>Municipal Administrators (<math>n = 3</math>)</b>	
Executive Assistant/Designated Municipal Administrator	1
Municipal Administrator	2
<b>HRMO Staff and Other Positions (<math>n = 70</math>)</b>	



Administrative Aide IV (Human Resource Management Aide)	1
Administrative Assistant II (Human Resource Management Assistant)	6
Administrative Officer II (Human Resource Management Officer I)	2
Administrative Officer IV (Human Resource Management Officer II)*	4
Administrative Officer V (Human Resource Management Officer III)*	4
Human Resource Management Assistant	2
Human Resource Management Officer I	1
Human Resource Management Officer II**	6
Human Resource Management Officer III*	2
Human Resource Management Officer IV	1
Administrative Officer I (Records Officer I)	1
Administrative Officer II**	5
Administrative Officer III	1
Administrative Officer IV	2
Supervising Administrative Officer	2
Administrative Assistant I	1
Administrative Assistant II	2
Administrative Assistant IV	3
Senior Administrative Assistant II	2
Administrative Aide I	2
Administrative Aide II	1
Administrative Aide IV	6
Administrative Aide VI	1
Information Technology Officer I	1
Information System Analyst II	1
<i>Sangguniang Bayan</i> Member	2
Process Server	1
Budget Officer I	1

Local Legislative Staff Employee I	1
Community Affairs Officer II	1
Local Treasury Operation Officer II	1
Sports and Games Inspector II	1
Assessment Clerk III	1
Management and Audit Analyst	1

*Note.* Position titles were verified and cross-checked based on the *Generic and Parenthetical Titles of Positions in LGUs* (Trillana, 2022). Specific titles of the respondents can be viewed on Appendix E. The number of asterisks (\*) indicate how many employees of the position title are *designated HRMOs*.

The respondents were asked to identify the LGUs they are currently employed at (Table 3), representing all 23 municipal LGUs ( $n = 92$ ), the LGU of the highly urbanized city, Puerto Princesa ( $n = 4$ ), and the provincial LGU ( $n = 4$ ).

Table 3 Agencies of Current Employment of the Study Population ( $N = 100$ )

Local Government Unit (LGU)	Frequency
City of Puerto Princesa	4
Province of Palawan	4
Aborlan	4
Agutaya	4
Araceli	4
Balabac	4
Bataraza	4
Brooke's Point	4
Busuanga	3
Cagayancillo	4
Coron	4
Culion	4
Cuyo	4
Dumaran	4
El Nido	4
Kalayaan	4
Linapacan	4

Magsaysay	4
Narra	5
Quezon	4
Rizal	3
Roxas	4
San Vicente	4
Sofronio Española	5
Taytay	4

Further profiling of the 100 respondents according to their employment characteristics (Table 4) revealed that the majority of the population has a permanent employment status ( $n = 90$ ), with most individuals working for more than 20 years in their respective LGU ( $n = 36$ ). However, more than half of the respondents ( $n = 59$ ) were found out to be working for less than 5 years in their current position. Moreover, 9 of the respondents were appointed as designated HRMOs, assuming the position for 3 years or less. On the other hand, their roles in PRIME-HRM adoption vary, with the majority being HRMPSB members ( $n = 39$ ), HRM technical staff ( $n = 35$ ), and as part of the Performance Management Team (PMT;  $n = 31$ ). Among the four core HR systems, most were focal for Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (RSP;  $n = 11$ ) and Performance Management (PM;  $n = 9$ ) systems. The “Other” roles categorized under *roles in PRIME-HRM adoption* were specified as follows: 2 respondents as HRMPSB secretariats, 1 as an unspecified secretariat, and 1 assuming the role of PMT chair.

Table 4 Employment Profile of the Study Population ( $N = 100$ )

Characteristics	Frequency
<b>Employment</b>	
Status of Employment	
Permanent	90
Coterminous	4
Elected	2
Job Order/COS	2
Contractual/Casual	2
Number of years in the Local Government Unit (LGU)	
More than 20 years	36
16 to 20 years	5
11 to 15 years	13
6 to 10 years	22
Less than 5 years	24
Number of years in the current position	



More than 20 years	14
16 to 20 years	6
11 to 15 years	3
6 to 10 years	18
Less than 5 years	59
If designated as HRMO, number of years as HR designate*	
More than 10 years	2
More than 5 years	2
3 to 5 years	1
1 to 2 years	2
Less than 1 year	2
Role in the PRIME-HRM**	
Highest HRMO	25
Focal for the 4 Core HR Systems	6
Focal for RSP	11
Focal for L&D	7
Focal for PM	9
Focal for R&R	7
HRMPSB Member	39
HRDC Member	12
PMT Member	31
PRAISE Committee Member	22
HRM Technical Staff	35
Others	4

*Note.* \* $n = 14$ . \*\*Cumulative frequency, more than one answer per respondent. COS: Contract of Service; RSP: Recruitment, Selection, and Placement; L&D: Learning and Development; PM: Performance Management; HRDC: Human Resource Development Committee; PMT: Performance Management Team; PRAISE: Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence.

The learning and development (L&D) interventions are highlighted in the employment profile of the respondents, as these provide strategic alignment between the individual learning and development goals of the workforce to the objectives of the organization [7]. In relation to the program, the respondents were classified according to the L&D interventions on the PRIME-HRM they have attended, with the majority being introduced to the project through an orientation program ( $n = 78$ ). Several employees have attended the L&D interventions for PRIME-HRM Maturity Level II, with focus on RSP ( $n = 28$ ) and L&D ( $n = 26$ ). Lastly, the “Other” interventions were specified as follows: 1 focusing on RSP on an unidentified maturity level, and 3 not being

able to attend any L&D interventions due to the lack of funds. One of the respondents cited training for the Strategic Performance Management System (SPMS), a program of the CSC linking employee performance with organizational performance relative to the compensation system (CSC, 2018).

Table 5 Employment Status of the Study Population Based On the Learning and Development (L&D) Interventions on the Prime-Hrm Attended

L&D intervention on PRIME-HRM attended	RSP	L&D	PM	R&R
PRIME-HRM Orientation	79			
PRIME-HRM Maturity Level II	28	26	17	19
PRIME-HRM Maturity Level III	1	—	1	1
PRIME-HRM Maturity Level IV	—	—	—	1
Others	6			

The 100 respondents from different LGUs across Palawan were asked about their familiarity in their roles in adopting the PRIME-HRM, in terms of the four core HR systems. Generally, respondents were generally implementing competencies expected of the RSP focus (Table 6), showing outstanding implementations in describing how candidates are evaluated vis-à-vis the approved/prescribed Qualification Standards and updated job descriptions ( $4.21 \pm 0.59$ ), and in explaining its orientation program for new hires by providing information networks and functional guidance ( $4.23 \pm 0.65$ ). HRMOs partner with organizations in achieving growth through providing expertise in human resource management, implementing the goals of the organization more successfully (Strobel, 2016).

Table 6 Familiarity of the Respondents in Their Roles in Prime-Hrm - Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (Rsp) System

Statements	Mean Rating
The HRMP can describe/explain how Agency's RSP policies and processes comply with CSC policy and meet its recruitment, selection, and placement requirements.	$4.10 \pm 0.69$ (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the HRMPsBs role and functions in the Agency's RSP process and how it evaluates candidates to ensure selection of qualified candidates.	$4.20 \pm 0.65$ (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency tracks the efficiency of RSP processes, and uses data to improve the system.	$3.99 \pm 0.72$ (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the computer-based system used to maintain RSP data and documents.	$3.81 \pm 0.81$ (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain that the agency maintains documentation and records on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSP process flow;</li> <li>• System review data on RSP efficiency; and</li> <li>• System implementation (e.g., PSB minutes of meetings, deliberations, comparative assessment data, selection criteria).</li> </ul>	$4.08 \pm 0.73$ (B)

The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency's annual staffing plan supports their organizational unit's objectives.	3.85 ± 0.74 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency's Recruitment Plan meets anticipated vacancies of the year.	3.92 ± 0.71 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how candidates are sourced.	4.14 ± 0.65 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency's recruitment strategies attract diverse applicants and uphold equal employment opportunity principles.	4.10 ± 0.66 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the Agency's approved/prescribed Qualification Standards and updated job descriptions for positions that were recently filled up (i.e., past year).	4.18 ± 0.67 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how candidates are evaluated vis-à-vis the approved/prescribed Qualification Standards and updated job descriptions.	4.21 ± 0.59 (A)
The HRMP can cite examples of how the Agency's assessment and selection criteria and processes promote equal opportunity for applicants regardless of gender, disability, civil status, ethnicity, and religion, to name a few.	4.18 ± 0.64 (B)
The HRMP can explain its orientation program for new hires and employees new in their role, as well as the available information networks to help them in their new job.	4.23 ± 0.65 (A)
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>4.08 ± 0.70 (B)</b>

*Note.* Mean rating: 4.21–5.00 (Highly implemented, A), 3.41–4.20 (Implemented, B), 2.61–3.40 (Moderately implemented, C), 1.81–2.60 (Fairly implemented, D), 1.00–1.80 (Not implemented, E).

The L&D system functions to empower the growth and development of employees to drive better business performance, usually employed centrally in LGUs under the jurisdiction of human resources (Munaty & Yustinus Rawi Dandono, 2022). Familiarity in the core system was exhibited by the respondents by implementing L&D competencies in PRIME-HRM (Table 7), showing the highest mean rating in explaining how the L&D policies and processes of their respective agency comply with the CSC policy, and at the same time, meet the needs of their LGU ( $3.83 \pm 0.68$ ). Findings of a study implied that there is a relationship between the extent of implementation of L&D programs and the proficiency level of core competencies of employees, recommending to improve the quality of training programs (Estuche *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, it was also observed that technical training is implemented slightly more than behavioral training, emphasizing the use of new technologies such as the internet, company information technology (IT), and social networks (Edralin, 2011).

Table 7 Familiarity of the Respondents in Their Roles in Prime-Hrm - Learning and Development (L&D) System

Statements	Mean Rating
The HRMP can describe/explain how Agency's L&D policies and processes comply with CSC policy and meet the Agency's needs.	3.83 ± 0.68 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the functions of the HRDC and how it selects and recommends qualified candidates to training and scholarship programs.	3.82 ± 0.69 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency tracks the efficiency of L&D processes, and uses data to improve the system.	3.73 ± 0.78 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the computer-based system used to maintain L&D data and documents.	3.68 ± 0.83 (B)

The HRMP can describe/explain that the agency maintains documentation and records on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L&amp;D process flow;</li> <li>• System review data on L&amp;D efficiency; and</li> <li>• System implementation (e.g., HRDC minutes of meetings, deliberations, comparative assessment data, selection criteria).</li> </ul>	3.67 ± 0.81 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain their plan to meet the learning and development needs of their employees.	3.81 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency assesses the learning acquired by participants from L&D interventions.	3.70 ± 0.76 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain or cite examples of how the L&D design process aligns the training objectives with the learning needs of the target employees.	3.71 ± 0.74 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain or cite examples of in-house training programs that use a mix of methodologies that are appropriate to identified learning objectives.	3.72 ± 0.78 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the types of learning materials and training aids that are used in in-house training programs that they have attended.	3.74 ± 0.77 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how delivery of training programs according to the training activity plan is ensured.	3.74 ± 0.76 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the Agency's guidelines for identifying, monitoring and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of L&D service providers.	3.65 ± 0.74 (B)
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.73 ± 0.76 (B)</b>

*Note.* Mean rating: 4.21–5.00 (Highly implemented, A), 3.41–4.20 (Implemented, B), 2.61–3.40 (Moderately implemented, C), 1.81–2.60 (Fairly implemented, D), 1.00–1.80 (Not implemented, E).

The Performance Management (PM) system is the systemic involvement of employees to improve organizational effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, achieved through planning expectations, monitoring employee performance, and rating performance periodically (Withey, 2005). The familiarity of the respondents in their roles in implementing the PM system in PRIME-HRM had been assessed (Table 8), implementing all competencies indicated, with the highest mean rating in describing functions of the PMT, particularly on its role in reviewing organizational and individual performance (4.02 ± 0.71). The CSC has recognized the importance of objective assessment of employee performance, making sure to perform outstanding functions on par or exceeding the expectations of the taxpaying public (CSC, 2019). The performance bonus is one of the most common manifestations of this HR system, exerting efforts to align agency-wide targets with efforts of individuals and teams within the organization (Yanson, 2024).

Table 8 Familiarity of the Respondents in Their Roles in Prime-Hrm - Performance Management (Pm) System

Statements	Mean Rating
The HRMP can explain how the Agency's Performance Management policies and processes comply with policies and guidelines issued by CSC and other relevant authorities, and how it meets the Agency's needs.	3.95 ± 0.72 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the functions of the PMT and how it reviews office and individual performance targets and accomplishments.	4.02 ± 0.71 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency tracks the efficiency of PM processes, and how the Agency uses data to improve the system.	3.88 ± 0.77 (B)

The HRMP can describe/explain the computer-based system used to maintain PM data and documents.	3.76 ± 0.73 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain that the agency maintains documentation and records on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PM process flow;</li> <li>System review data on PM efficiency; and</li> <li>System implementation (e.g., PMT minutes of meetings, deliberations, comparative assessment data, selection criteria).</li> </ul>	3.89 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how individual performance targets are set guided by established performance standards.	3.99 ± 0.70 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the process for setting performance standards at the beginning of the performance period.	3.98 ± 0.71 (B)
The HRMP can describe the tools and processes they use to track individual performance.	3.89 ± 0.67 (B)
The HRMP can explain how performance coaching is provided to affirm and/or improve performance.	3.92 ± 0.73 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how individual performance is reviewed and evaluated.	3.98 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how agreed performance standards are applied in reviewing individual performance assessments.	3.94 ± 0.71 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain how they conduct performance discussions/coaching to involve employees in preparing their individual development plans.	3.80 ± 0.77 (B)
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.92 ± 0.73 (B)</b>

*Note.* Mean rating: 4.21–5.00 (Highly implemented, A), 3.41–4.20 (Implemented, B), 2.61–3.40 (Moderately implemented, C), 1.81–2.60 (Fairly implemented, D), 1.00–1.80 (Not implemented, E).

The Rewards and Recognition (R&R) system in HR is a systematic form of appreciation and acknowledgement of employees within an institution, citing their contributions and performance through rewards (e.g., public recognition, monetary and non-monetary incentives, and other forms of recognition, boosting their performance and morale (Department of Education Schools Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, 2024). The familiarity of the respondents in their roles in implementing the R&R system in PRIME-HRM had been evaluated, showing competent implementation of underlying policies, exhibiting the highest mean score in explaining the functions of the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) committee and how it evaluates to ensure the selection of qualified candidates and nominees to the R&R program of respective agencies (3.86 ± 0.77). The CSC-led PRAISE committee requires agencies to establish their own employee suggestions and incentive rewards systems in line with the R&R principles (CSC, 2016). Implementation of an R&R system has been proven to improve job performance by enhancing system packages for employees in Philippine companies (Camposano *et al.*, 2023).

Table 9 Familiarity of the Respondents in Their Roles in Prime-Hrm - Rewards and Recognition (R&R) System

Statements	Mean Rating
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency's R&R policies and processes comply with policies and guidelines issued by CSC and other relevant authorities, and how it meets the Agency's needs.	3.81 ± 0.76 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the functions of the PRAISE committee and how it evaluates to ensure selection of qualified candidates/nominees to the Agency's R&R	3.86 ± 0.77 (B)



program.	
The HRMP can describe/explain how the Agency tracks the efficiency of R&R processes, and uses data to improve the system.	3.73 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the computer-based system used to maintain R&R data and documents.	3.72 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain that the agency maintains documentation and records on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R&amp;R process flow;</li> <li>• System review data on R&amp;R efficiency; and</li> <li>• System implementation (e.g., PRAISE minutes of meetings, deliberations, comparative assessment data, selection criteria).</li> </ul>	3.77 ± 0.74 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain the Agency's annual R&R plans and programs.	3.77 ± 0.75 (B)
The HRMP can cite examples of planned and "on-the-spot" incentives and recognition programs that recognize ideas, suggestions or inventions, and exemplary behavior.	3.87 ± 0.69 (B)
The HRMP can describe/explain their role in identifying, screening and selecting nominees for rewards and recognition.	3.78 ± 0.74 (B)
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>3.79 ± 0.74 (B)</b>

*Note.* Mean rating: 4.21–5.00 (Highly implemented, A), 3.41–4.20 (Implemented, B), 2.61–3.40 (Moderately implemented, C), 1.81–2.60 (Fairly implemented, D), 1.00–1.80 (Not implemented, E).

Challenges hampered HRMO and HRMPs in different LGUs across Palawan in adopting the PRIME-HRM system in their respective agencies, citing the (1) lack of support, (2) unclear or undefined roles, (3) lack of required structure, (4) lack of resources, and (5) other HR-associated problems (Table 10). Inadequate support is mostly observed through the unwillingness of key authorities to accept additional HR-related tasks, while confusion in role assignment is rooted on the unclear understanding of the PRIME-HRM itself. On the other hand, the lack of resources is mostly cited across manpower and budget, which can be attributed to the impact of the economy, rapid developments in modern technology, and emergence of data-driven HR practices (Schramm, 2016). Non-categorized HR challenges include compromise of the PRIME-HRM adoption due to stakeholder demand and pressure, difficulty in customizing the system, and poor documentation. Public offices tend to face a lot of pressures in adopting the PRIME-HRM system due to the need to overhaul existing traditional systems and adapt to constantly evolving ethics, governance, management, and digital technologies (Rotich, 2015).

Specific observations were also noted between LGUs. Outside Puerto Princesa, the lack of resources were attributed to deficiencies in budget, supplies, and technologies, likely attributed to the economic disparity between the HUC and the municipalities. Moreover, the municipalities also experienced the lack of support due to PRIME-HRM adoption not being the priority of their respective agencies, which can be attributed to resource limitations. The municipality of Rizal has shown that their HR managers and practitioners are unwilling to adopt PRIME-HRM. Moreover, in the Provincial Government of Palawan, political issues and constraints, and difficulty in managing the demands of different stakeholders hamper the implementation of the program.

Further local assessment of the PRIME-HRM system is warranted, citing poor literature in the topic, as findings will be essential in improving LGU-specific competencies and functions, especially in areas affected by perceived centralization of governance and public service in independent cities and populous municipalities.



Table 10 Challenges and Problems Encountered in the Adoption of the Prime-Hrm in Local Government Units in Palawan

Challenges/Problems Encountered	Frequency
Lack of support	
HR managers and practitioners are not considered as strategic partners by the head of agency and department heads.	12
HR managers and/or practitioners are unwilling to accept their new HRM responsibilities.	3
HR managers and/or practitioners are unwilling to adopt PRIME-HRM.	1
Key authorities (head of agency, department heads, committee members) are unwilling to accept additional tasks, particularly in HR related functions.	30
Key authorities (head of agency, department heads, committee members) are unwilling to adopt PRIME-HRM.	12
PRIME-HRM is not the priority of the agency.	18
Unclear or undefined roles	
HR managers and/or practitioners have unclear understanding of their roles.	9
HR managers and/or practitioners have unclear understanding of PRIME-HRM.	24
Key authorities (head of agency, department heads, committee members) have unclear understanding of their roles.	31
Key authorities (head of agency, department heads, committee members) have unclear understanding of PRIME-HRM.	38
Lack of required structure	
HR managers and/or practitioners lack formal training on PRIME-HRM.	51
Key authorities (head of agency, department heads, committee members) perceived HR managers and practitioners as incompetent and ineffective.	10
Lack of resources	
Lack or limited budget.	55
Lack or limited manpower.	69
Lack of technologies (e.g., computers, internet connectivity).	39
Lack of technical know-how (e.g., new technologies, utilization of metrics).	48
Lack of supplies.	15
Other HR challenges	
HR Managers and/or practitioners have multiple tasks and demands from different stakeholders (i.e., citizens, politicians, line agencies) that they could no longer attend to the PRIME-HRM.	45

Unclear benefit of PRIME-HRM to the agency.	22
Difficulty in customizing the system.	33
Lack of documentation.	32
Political issues and constraints (i.e., red tape and bureaucratic processes, political accommodations, nepotism) within the agency.	13

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research is a prevalence study on the status of PRIME-HRM implementation in the LGUs in Palawan, assessing the roles of HRMOs and HRMPs in adopting PRIME-HRM in their respective agencies. The study population, distributed across the 25 LGUs under the jurisdiction of the CSC Palawan Field Office, have an average age of  $43.46 \pm 12.03$  years, with majority being married, graduating with a Bachelor's degree, on a permanent employment status, and working more than 20 years in their LGU but less than 5 years in their current position. Most of the respondents are *Government Department Heads*, involved in PRIME-HRM implementation as HRMPSB members or HRM technical staff, attending mostly PRIME-HRM orientations as L&D interventions. Respondents implement the RSP system, with high implementation on explaining how candidates are evaluated and boarded when they are hired for the position. On the other hand, the L&D system is generally implemented, showing highest ratings on explaining the compliance of L&D policies with the CSC, while meeting the needs of specific LGUs. Implementation of PM is most observed in describing functions of the team in reviewing both organizational and individual performance. Lastly, R&R system implementation is most described in explaining the functions of the PRAISE committee in their respective agencies. Challenges experienced by the LGUs in adopting the PRIME-HRM include lack of resources, unclear understanding of PRIME-HRM-associated roles, absence of formal training, and difficulty in managing demands from different stakeholders, to name a few.

Based on the findings, the study recommends several strategies that help in the effective adoption of PRIME-HRM in LGUs within Palawan, particularly in assessing the quality of implementation within the lens of HRMOs and HRMPs:

- Continuous assessment of the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the employees and key implementers, and their effects to the attainment of the organizational goals;
- Continuous orientation of key authorities regarding possible situations faced in implementing PRIME-HRM, such as the need to accept additional tasks;
- Provision of formal training for HR managers and/or practitioners in identifying and understanding their roles in adopting PRIME-HRM, and the possible scenarios that they may face during implementation;
- Routinary orientation of technical know-how necessary for PRIME-HRM implementation, including new technologies, relevant metrics, and indicators used for routine quality assessment of the program;
- Prioritization and investment in resources necessary for a successful adoption of PRIME-HRM, such as budget, manpower, and supplies;
- Allocation of greater budgets for municipal LGUs to comfortably implement PRIME-HRM along with their other existing projects;
- Mapping out of strategies to make the core HRM systems customizable to the needs and demands of the LGU, subject to basic compliance to the CSC;
- Strict monitoring of red tape and bureaucratic processes, political accommodations, and nepotism within the agency, and enforcement of objective and impartial penalties and/or sanctions to the violations; and

- Provision of a conducive working environment that would help HRMOs and HRMPs to effectively handle the implementation of PRIME-HRM, along with constant and open collaboration with the CSC, Head of Agency, HRMPSB members, and other individuals directly or indirectly involvement in PRIME-HRM adoption is encouraged.

Future studies are encouraged to identify relationships between the demographic variables identified among the study population, and their roles in adopting PRIME-HRM. Moreover, familiarity and competence of HRMOs and HRMPs in their roles can be further assessed using a reliable diagnostic tool (e.g., expert-reviewed examination), since their degree of implementation may not fully reflect their involvement in the PRIME-HRM implementation. The sample size of the study for each LGU may be too small to conduct LGU-specific inferential statistics, hence it is suggested to also study possible relationships between the geographic area of origin of the LGU, the competency of HRMOs and HRMPs in performing their roles related to PRIME-HRM, and the challenges they encountered during the implementation of the said program.

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