

Strategic Human Resource Practices and Leadership Development Effectiveness in Digital Governance

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Abstract

This study determined the strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness in digital governance among selected public sector organizations. It assessed strategic human resource practices in terms of leadership development and training, digital skills, recruitment and staff retention, culture and change management, and performance management, as well as leadership development effectiveness in terms of alignment with digital strategy, speed and agility, openness and transparency, employee engagement and motivation, and service delivery outcomes. The study employed a descriptive-comparative-correlational research design with 230 respondents composed of 33 human resource personnel, 56 local government unit personnel, and 141 clients. Data were gathered using a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann–Whitney U test, Kruskal–Wallis H test, and Spearman rho correlation. Findings revealed that strategic human resource practices were generally rated as highly practiced, indicating that the organizations had established HR systems that support digital readiness and workforce development. Leadership development effectiveness in digital governance was rated as moderately effective, suggesting that leadership initiatives were present but still needed further strengthening. Significant differences were found in selected profile variables, particularly civil status among HR personnel and highest educational attainment and years of experience among clients. A significant relationship was also established between strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness. The study concludes that strong strategic human resource practices contribute to better leadership development effectiveness in digital governance and recommends strengthening leadership training, digital skills development, performance management, change management, and alignment of HR programs with digital governance goals.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Practices, Leadership Development Effectiveness, Digital Governance, Public Sector, Human Resource Management

1. Introduction

Strategic human resource practices are essential in strengthening public sector organizations, especially as government offices adapt to digital governance. Digital governance requires not only technology but also competent employees, effective leaders, updated systems, and a workforce prepared for innovation, transparency, and efficient service delivery. Human resource practices such as leadership development, digital skills training, recruitment and retention, culture and change management, and performance evaluation help organizations respond to the demands of digital transformation. Leadership development is also important because leaders guide employees in adapting to new digital systems, improving service delivery, and promoting accountability. In public organizations, effective leadership supports faster decision-making, employee engagement, transparency, and better public service outcomes. This study examined the relationship between strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness in digital governance among selected public sector organizations.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive-comparative-correlational research design. The descriptive design was used to determine the profile of the respondents, the extent of strategic human resource practices, and the level of leadership development effectiveness. The comparative design was used to determine significant differences in assessments when grouped according to profile variables. The correlational design was used to determine the relationship between strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public sector organizations, including offices and public secondary schools in the Local Government Unit of Lapu-Lapu City. These settings were selected because they are involved in organizational processes, public service delivery, and digital governance practices.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were composed of human resource personnel, local government unit personnel, and clients. These groups were selected because they represented different perspectives on human resource practices, organizational operations, and public service experience.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used total enumeration. A total of 230 respondents participated in the study, consisting of 33 HR personnel, 56 LGU personnel, and 141 clients. Total enumeration allowed the study to include all identified respondents from the selected groups.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a structured questionnaire. The instrument gathered data on the respondents' profile and their assessment of strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness. Strategic human resource practices were measured in terms of leadership development and training, digital skills, recruitment and staff retention, culture and change management, and performance management. Leadership development effectiveness was measured in terms of strategy alignment, agility, transparency, engagement, and service delivery. The questionnaire was pilot-tested and obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.983, interpreted as excellent reliability.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers secured permission from the Graduate School and concerned offices before data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to the identified respondents through personal and assisted administration. The researchers monitored the completion and retrieval of questionnaires, checked responses for completeness, and prepared the data for statistical analysis. Confidentiality and proper handling of responses were observed throughout the process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, weighted mean, and standard deviation. Since the normality test showed that the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used. The Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test were applied to determine significant differences, while Spearman rho correlation was used to determine the relationship between strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with academic and institutional ethical standards. Permission was obtained from the Graduate School and concerned offices before data gathering. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Data were used only for academic purposes and were presented in aggregate form.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The study involved 230 respondents composed of 33 human resource personnel, 56 local government unit personnel, and 141 clients from selected public sector organizations. The respondents represented different groups directly connected to human resource functions, organizational operations, and public service delivery in the context of digital governance.

Among the human resource personnel, most were aged 51 and above, slightly more were female, and the majority were married. A large proportion had master's degrees, while several had doctoral degrees, indicating a highly educated HR workforce. Many had also attended more than six relevant trainings and seminars, suggesting strong exposure to professional development activities.

Among the LGU personnel, most were within the 31–40 age range, with a balanced distribution between male and female respondents. Most were married and had either college or master's-level education. Many had served in government for 6–10 years, showing a moderately experienced workforce involved in public service operations.

Among the clients, the majority were also within the 31–40 age range, slightly more were female, and most were married. Most were college graduates and were connected to government, non-government, or private sector agencies. Their varied background provided a broad perspective on the effectiveness of digital governance and leadership development from the standpoint of service users.

The profile of the respondents shows that the study gathered insights from diverse groups with different levels of education, work experience, and organizational exposure. This diversity strengthened the assessment because it allowed the study to capture the views of both internal personnel and external clients.

3.2 Extent of Strategic Human Resource Practices

The findings showed that strategic human resource practices were generally rated as Highly Practiced by HR personnel, LGU personnel, and clients. The overall mean for strategic human resource practices was 3.75, interpreted as Highly Practiced. This indicates that the selected public sector organizations had established HR systems that support workforce development, digital readiness, and organizational adaptation.

In terms of leadership development and training, all respondent groups rated the practices as highly practiced. This suggests that leadership training programs, leadership development initiatives, identification of high-potential employees, and monitoring of leadership outcomes were being implemented. The results indicate that the organizations recognize the importance of preparing leaders who can support digital governance goals.

In terms of digital skills, the respondents also gave a highly practiced rating. This means that digital skills training, e-learning, assessment of digital competencies, and integration of digital skills into HR policies were present in the organizations. However, clients gave slightly lower ratings than HR and LGU personnel, suggesting that digital skills initiatives may be more visible internally than externally.

For recruitment and staff retention, the results were likewise interpreted as highly practiced. This reflects the organizations' efforts to recruit staff suited for digital governance roles, retain digitally competent employees, update job descriptions, use digital platforms in recruitment, and provide career development pathways for digitally skilled personnel.

In terms of culture and change management, the findings also showed a highly practiced rating. This indicates that the organizations were promoting cultural change toward digital transformation, encouraging adoption of digital tools, communicating digital transformation goals, and addressing resistance to digital systems. This is important because digital governance requires not only technology but also a work culture that supports innovation and change.

For performance management and evaluation, the respondents rated the practices as highly practiced. This shows that performance management was being aligned with digital governance goals, digital competencies were included in appraisal systems, and feedback and coaching on digital performance were being provided.

The results suggest that strategic HR practices were already functioning beyond routine administrative work. They were contributing to digital governance by supporting leadership preparation, employee capability, recruitment, retention, performance monitoring, and change readiness.

3.3 Level of Leadership Development Effectiveness in Digital Governance

The findings showed that leadership development effectiveness in digital governance was generally rated as Moderately Effective, with an overall mean of 3.80. This means that leadership development initiatives were already contributing to digital governance, but they had not yet reached a very high or fully mature level of effectiveness.

In terms of alignment with digital strategy, the respondents rated leadership development as moderately effective. This indicates that leadership programs were connected to digital governance goals, but there was still room to strengthen the alignment between leadership competencies, digital strategy, and organizational direction.

For speed and agility, the results were also moderately effective. This suggests that leaders were able to adapt to digital changes, make timely decisions, and use digital tools, but improvements were still needed in reducing delays and responding more quickly to digital policy or system changes.

In terms of openness and transparency, leadership development was also rated moderately effective. This means that digital platforms and data-driven practices supported transparency and access to information, but accountability and public communication could still be strengthened.

For employee engagement and motivation, the rating remained moderately effective. This shows that employees were encouraged to participate in digital initiatives and build confidence in using digital systems. However, the findings also suggest that stronger recognition, rewards, and motivational strategies may be needed to increase participation and commitment.

In terms of service delivery outcomes, leadership development was rated as moderately effective. This indicates that digital governance had contributed to public service delivery, accessibility, convenience, speed, and citizen satisfaction, but these outcomes could still be improved through stronger leadership and better digital systems.

The findings suggest that leadership development in digital governance is present and functional but still developing. The moderate rating means that public sector organizations need more focused, continuous, and practical leadership programs to fully support digital transformation and improve public service outcomes.

3.4 Significant Differences in the Assessment of Leadership Development Effectiveness

The study found significant differences in selected profile variables. Among HR personnel, civil status showed a significant difference in the assessment of leadership development effectiveness, with a p-value of 0.022. This means that HR personnel's assessment of leadership effectiveness varied according to civil status.

Among clients, highest educational attainment also showed a significant difference, with a p-value of 0.041. This suggests that clients with different educational backgrounds may perceive leadership development effectiveness differently. In addition, number of years of experience among clients showed a significant difference, with a p-value of 0.003, indicating that experience influences how clients assess leadership effectiveness in digital governance.

However, agency connected among clients did not show a significant difference, with a p-value of 0.291. This means that whether clients were connected to government, non-government, or private sector agencies did not significantly affect their assessment of leadership development effectiveness.

The post hoc results further showed that among clients, a significant difference existed between those with 1–5 years and 6–10 years of experience. This implies that the length of exposure to organizational or service-related processes may shape how clients evaluate digital governance leadership.

These findings indicate that perceptions of leadership development effectiveness are not uniform. Personal and professional background may influence how respondents understand leadership, digital transformation, and public service effectiveness.

3.5 Relationship Between Strategic Human Resource Practices and Leadership Development Effectiveness

The study established a significant relationship between strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness. This means that stronger strategic HR practices are associated with better leadership development outcomes in digital governance.

This finding implies that leadership development does not occur independently. It is supported by training, digital skills development, recruitment and retention, performance evaluation, and organizational culture. When HR systems are strong and aligned with digital governance goals, leadership capability is also strengthened.

The result highlights the importance of integrating HR practices with leadership development programs. Public sector organizations should not treat leadership training, digital skills, recruitment, and performance management as separate activities. Instead, these areas should work together to build leaders who are adaptive, digitally competent, transparent, and responsive to public service needs.

3.7 Proposed Strategic HR Development Framework for Digital Governance

Based on the findings, the study proposed a Strategic HR Development Framework for Digital Governance. The framework was developed to strengthen leadership capability, improve digital readiness, address resistance to change, and align human resource practices with digital governance goals.

The proposed framework emphasizes leadership training, digital skills development, change management, employee engagement, performance management, and improved service delivery. It encourages public sector organizations to integrate HR systems with leadership development so that employees and leaders are better prepared for digital transformation.

The framework also supports continuous monitoring and evaluation. This ensures that HR programs and leadership initiatives remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with the changing needs of digital governance.

The proposed framework provides a practical guide for strengthening public sector capacity. It may help organizations develop more agile, competent, transparent, and service-oriented leaders who can support effective digital governance.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that strategic human resource practices in selected public sector organizations are generally well established and highly practiced. These practices support workforce development, digital readiness, and organizational adaptation. However, leadership development effectiveness in digital governance remains only moderately effective, indicating the need for stronger, more focused, and more sustained leadership development initiatives.

The study further concludes that strategic human resource practices are significantly related to leadership development effectiveness. This shows that better HR practices contribute to stronger leadership capability in digital governance. However, challenges such as resistance to change, limited training, digital literacy gaps, and limited resources must be addressed to improve overall effectiveness.

It is recommended that public sector organizations strengthen leadership training, digital skills development, recruitment and retention systems, performance management, and change management programs. Leadership development should be aligned with digital governance goals and should respond to the needs of different respondent groups. Organizations should also improve access to training, strengthen senior leadership support, enhance digital infrastructure, and adopt the proposed Strategic HR Development Framework for Digital Governance as a guide for future initiatives.

Future studies may be conducted in other local government units or public sector institutions to validate and expand the findings. Comparative studies may also be undertaken to further examine strategic human resource practices and leadership development effectiveness in different governance settings.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study complied with applicable institutional and academic ethical standards in the conduct of research involving human participants. Participation in both the survey and focus group discussion phases was voluntary, and respondents

were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the data gathered. Informed consent was secured prior to data collection, and all responses were treated with confidentiality and used strictly for academic and research purposes. The researcher observed honesty, proper attribution of sources, and respect for participant welfare throughout the study. No conflict of interest was declared, and the manuscript remains the intellectual work of the author, with all cited materials duly acknowledged in accordance with scholarly and ethical standards.

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