

Optimizing Human Resource Management In Private Education: A Case Study Of Cebu City Schools

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Abstract: Purpose: This paper aims to provide a comprehensive empirical analysis of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in the private education sector of Cebu City, Philippines. The study seeks to identify prevalent HRM strategies, assess the adoption and impact of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), and determine the relationship between these practices and key organizational outcomes such as teacher retention and school performance.

Design/methodology/approach: A mixed-methods research design was employed. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey administered to HR managers and administrators across [N] private schools in Cebu City. This was complemented by qualitative data from [N] in-depth, semi-structured interviews with school principals and HR heads to explore contextual nuances and lived experiences.

Findings: The study reveals a significant variance in the maturity of HRM functions among schools. While foundational practices like recruitment and payroll are well-established, strategic functions such as performance management and career development are inconsistently implemented. A key finding is that while HRIS adoption is widespread, its use is predominantly limited to administrative tasks rather than strategic decision-making, representing a major untapped potential. The results demonstrate a statistically significant positive association between investment in continuous professional development and teacher retention rates.

Practical implications: The findings provide a practical diagnostic tool for school leaders in Cebu City to benchmark their HRM practices. The paper offers actionable recommendations for leveraging HRIS more strategically, designing effective teacher retention programs, and aligning HR policies with overall school objectives to foster a high-performance culture.

Originality/value: This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the under-researched context of private education within a major Southeast Asian urban center. It provides valuable, evidence-based insights that contribute to both HRM theory and the practical management of educational institutions.

Keywords: Human Resource Management (HRM), Private Education, HRIS, Teacher Retention, Organizational Performance, Cebu City, Philippines.

Introduction: 1.1. Background: The Evolving Landscape of Private Education

The global educational landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by technological advancements, shifting economic demands, and evolving pedagogical philosophies. Within this dynamic environment, private educational institutions have emerged as significant contributors, often serving as pioneers in curricular innovation and academic excellence [28]. In developing nations like the

Philippines, the private sector plays an indispensable role in augmenting the capacity of the public education system, catering to a substantial portion of the student population and often setting benchmarks for quality. The archipelagic nation has a long and storied history of private education, deeply interwoven with its cultural and social fabric. Major urban centers, in particular, have become hubs of educational activity, fostering a competitive environment where schools vie for students, talented faculty, and community prestige.

Cebu City, as the primary urban center in the Visayas region and the second-most significant metropolitan area in the Philippines, epitomizes this vibrant and competitive educational ecosystem. Its thriving economy and growing population have fueled a commensurate demand for high-quality education, leading to the proliferation of private schools ranging from small, family-owned institutions to large, well-established universities. In this market-driven context, the operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability of these schools are paramount. While factors such as curriculum, facilities, and financial management are undeniably critical, the ultimate determinant of an institution's success lies in its human capital—the teachers, administrators, and support staff who collectively shape the learning environment [36]. Consequently, the strategic management of these human resources is not merely an administrative function but a core component of institutional strategy and a key differentiator in a crowded marketplace.

1.2. Problem Statement and Rationale

Despite the pivotal role of human capital, the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) within the educational sector, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, remains significantly under-theorized and under-researched compared to the corporate world [14]. Educational institutions often operate with unique cultural norms, governance structures, and professional identities that distinguish them from typical business organizations. The tenure system, the intrinsic motivation of educators, and the cyclical nature of the academic year create a distinct set of challenges and opportunities for HR practitioners. Historically, HR functions in schools have been relegated to administrative tasks such as payroll, compliance, and basic record-keeping, rather than being integrated into the strategic planning process [49].

This gap is particularly acute in the context of Cebu City's private schools. While these institutions operate with a degree of autonomy, they face intense pressure to attract and retain top teaching talent, manage performance effectively, and foster a culture of continuous improvement—all while maintaining financial viability. Anecdotal evidence suggests a wide disparity in the sophistication of HRM practices across these schools, with many grappling with persistent issues such as high teacher turnover, inconsistent performance appraisal systems, and a reactive rather than proactive approach to talent management. Furthermore, the rapid digitalization of administrative processes presents both an opportunity and a challenge, with the adoption of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) being a critical yet often

complex endeavor for many institutions [6].

A systematic, empirical investigation into the state of HRM in this specific context is therefore urgently needed. Understanding the predominant practices, identifying the key challenges, and assessing the association of these practices with institutional outcomes can provide invaluable insights. This research is significant because it moves beyond generic HRM principles to explore their application and efficacy within the unique ecosystem of private education in a major Philippine urban center. The findings are intended to equip school administrators, HR professionals, and policymakers with the evidence-based knowledge required to build more resilient, effective, and sustainable educational institutions. By optimizing HRM, these schools can enhance their capacity to deliver high-quality education, thereby contributing to the broader social and economic development of the region.

1.3. Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

To frame this investigation, the study draws upon several established theoretical frameworks. The primary lens is the Systems Perspective on HRM, which views an organization as a complex interplay of interrelated subsystems [34]. Within this perspective, HRM is not a set of isolated activities but an integrated system where policies in recruitment, training, compensation, and performance management are mutually influential and must align with the organization's broader strategic goals. The system takes in inputs (e.g., faculty applicants, financial resources), subjects them to throughput processes (e.g., training programs, performance appraisals), and generates outputs (e.g., student learning outcomes, faculty retention, research). Feedback loops, such as employee satisfaction surveys or turnover data, inform adjustments to the system. This holistic approach is particularly relevant for educational institutions, where the classroom experience is directly influenced by a web of administrative and support systems. As some scholars suggest, understanding an organization requires appreciating the complex interplay between its structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames [11].

Building on this foundation, the study incorporates the principles of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM posits that effective people management is not just about administrative efficiency but about deploying human capital to achieve a competitive advantage [53]. This involves both vertical integration (aligning HR practices with the school's mission) and horizontal integration (ensuring HR practices are coherent and mutually reinforcing). For a

private school, this advantage might be defined as superior academic outcomes, a reputation for teaching excellence, or a unique and positive school culture. The SHRM framework directs the inquiry towards understanding how HRM practices are—or are not—aligned with the strategic mission of the schools under investigation [28].

Finally, the study acknowledges the importance of organizational climate and leadership, which heavily mediate the effectiveness of any HR system. Frameworks on management systems—from exploitative-authoritative to participative—provide a valuable tool for analyzing the prevailing management styles within schools and their impact on staff morale and performance [51]. Similarly, the Managerial Grid offers a lens through which to assess the balance between a concern for people and a concern for production (or, in this context, institutional goals), which is central to effective leadership in education [9, 10]. The process of implementing new systems, such as an HRIS, can also be understood through change management models that emphasize the stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing organizational norms [40, 44].

1.4. Review of Core HRM Functions and Technology

The literature on HRM identifies several core functions that are critical to organizational success. Recruitment and selection are the gateways to acquiring talent, and their effectiveness determines the quality of human capital entering the institution. Training and development are essential for honing skills, promoting professional growth, and ensuring that educators remain abreast of the latest pedagogical advancements [36]. Performance management is arguably one of the most challenging HR functions in education, requiring systems that can provide meaningful feedback, support development, and fairly link performance to rewards and recognition. Finally, compensation and benefits must be competitive enough to attract and retain talent while remaining financially sustainable. The effectiveness of this entire system has a direct bearing on organizational performance [43].

The advent of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) has been described as a "quiet revolution" in the field [41]. An HRIS is an integrated system used to gather, store, and analyze data about an organization's human resources [4]. Its functions can range from simple payroll and attendance tracking to sophisticated analytics for workforce planning and talent management [37]. Proponents argue that HRIS can automate routine administrative tasks, thereby freeing HR professionals to focus on more strategic initiatives [42]. It can improve the accuracy and accessibility of HR

data, support better decision-making, and enhance communication [20]. Indeed, many see a modern HRMS as a critical differentiator in organizational effectiveness [23].

However, the adoption of HRIS is not without its challenges. These can include high initial costs, the need for technical expertise, resistance to change from employees, and the difficulty of integrating the new system with existing processes [5]. As such, simply having an HRIS does not guarantee improved performance; its value is contingent on successful implementation and strategic utilization [47]. The literature on enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, of which HRIS is a component, highlights that organizational adoption is a complex process influenced by a multitude of technological, organizational, and environmental factors [12]. Selecting the right system and vendor is a crucial first step that requires careful planning and consultation [35].

1.5. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

In light of the preceding discussion, this study aims to achieve four primary objectives: 1) To identify and profile the predominant HRM practices in Cebu City's private schools; 2) To determine the level of HRIS adoption and its perceived impact; 3) To analyze the perceived association between HRM strategies and key organizational outcomes; and 4) To formulate evidence-based recommendations for optimization.

Based on the literature review and the identified research gap, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The implementation of administrative HRM practices (e.g., payroll compliance, basic record-keeping) in Cebu City private schools will be significantly higher than the implementation of strategic HRM practices (e.g., succession planning, data-driven talent development).

H2: The utilization of HRIS for administrative functions (e.g., payroll, leave tracking) will be significantly higher than its utilization for strategic functions (e.g., performance management analytics, recruitment tracking).

H3: A stronger strategic HRM orientation is positively associated with higher levels of perceived teacher motivation, organizational commitment, and lower turnover intention.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design and Philosophy

To capture the complexity of HRM systems and the lived experiences of those who manage them, this study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods

design. This approach is rooted in a pragmatic research philosophy, which posits that the most effective way to understand a research problem is to use a combination of methods that best fit the inquiry. The rationale for this design is twofold. First, the quantitative component, a survey, allows for the broad mapping of HRM practices, the measurement of HRIS adoption rates, and the identification of statistical relationships across a larger sample of schools. This provides a generalizable snapshot of the situation in Cebu City. Second, the qualitative component, consisting of semi-structured interviews, provides rich, contextualized insights into the "why" and "how" behind the quantitative findings. It allows for a deeper exploration of the challenges, decision-making processes, and unique cultural factors influencing HRM in these schools. By converging the two datasets during the interpretation phase, we can achieve a more robust, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon than either method could provide alone.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of all accredited private primary and secondary schools within the administrative boundaries of Cebu City. Based on records from the Department of Education, this comprised approximately 180 institutions. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different school sizes (small: <500 students; medium: 501-1500 students; large: >1500 students), as organizational size is a known factor influencing the formalization of HR practices.

For the quantitative phase, a sample of 60 schools was randomly selected from the stratified lists. A formal invitation to participate was sent to the school principal or director. Of these, 38 schools agreed to participate, representing a response rate of 63.3%. Within these participating schools, the survey was administered to individuals directly responsible for HR functions, including HR managers, administrative heads, and school principals. A total of 112 valid survey responses were collected.

For the qualitative phase, a purposive sampling approach was employed. From the 38 participating schools, 12 were selected to ensure maximum variation in terms of school size, age, and academic focus. Within these 12 schools, we conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the senior-most individual responsible for HRM. This resulted in a total of 15 interviews (as three large schools had both a principal and a dedicated HR Director who were interviewed). This purposive approach was chosen to elicit detailed insights from key decision-makers who could provide a strategic overview of their institution's HRM

philosophy and practices.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Survey Questionnaire: The primary instrument for quantitative data collection was a self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was developed based on an extensive review of existing HRM literature [14, 49] and HRIS adoption models [20]. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

- **Section A: Institutional Demographics:** Captured data on school size, age, curriculum type, and the structure of the HR function.
- **Section B: HRM Practices:** Used a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always) to measure the frequency and perceived effectiveness of practices across recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and compensation.
- **Section C: HRIS Adoption and Use:** Assessed whether a school had a formal HRIS, which modules were in use (e.g., payroll, recruitment, performance management), and the perceived benefits and challenges, measured on a 5-point agreement scale.
- **Section D: Organizational Outcomes:** Included items adapted from established organizational behavior scales measuring perceived levels of teacher motivation, commitment, and turnover intention.

The questionnaire underwent a pilot test with five HR practitioners from non-sampled schools to ensure clarity, relevance, and content validity. Minor revisions to wording were made based on their feedback.

Interview Protocol: A semi-structured interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across the qualitative interviews while allowing flexibility to probe emergent themes. The guide included open-ended questions centered on:

- The school's philosophy and strategy regarding human resource management.
- The detailed process of teacher recruitment, development, and evaluation.
- The story of their HRIS adoption journey—the motivations, challenges, and realized benefits.
- Perceived links between HR practices and the school's culture and competitive position.
- Future plans and aspirations for improving their HR systems.

All interviews were conducted in English, lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and were audio-recorded with the explicit consent of the participants.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Following ethical clearance from the researchers' institutional review board, the data collection process

was initiated. For the surveys, a package containing a cover letter, the questionnaire, and a prepaid return envelope was mailed to the target respondents at the 38 participating schools. Follow-up phone calls and emails were made two and four weeks after the initial mailing to encourage participation. The survey collection period spanned two months. For the interviews, appointments were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and were conducted in their respective offices to ensure a comfortable and confidential environment.

2.5. Data Analysis

The analysis of the two data streams was conducted separately before being merged for interpretation.

- Quantitative Analysis: The collected survey data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to profile the demographic characteristics of the schools and to summarize the current state of HRM practices and HRIS adoption, addressing H1 and H2. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation analysis, were used to examine the relationships between specific HRM practices and perceived organizational outcomes, thereby testing H3.
- Qualitative Analysis: The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis. This involved an iterative, inductive process of reading and re-reading the data, generating initial codes, collating codes into potential themes, and reviewing and refining these themes. This process aimed to identify patterns of meaning related to the research questions. To enhance the rigor of the qualitative analysis, techniques such as investigator triangulation (where multiple researchers coded the transcripts independently before comparing results) and peer debriefing were employed to ensure the credibility and confirmability of the emergent themes.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by strict ethical principles. Prior to participation, all schools and individuals were provided with a detailed information sheet explaining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all survey

respondents and interview participants. To ensure confidentiality, all data were anonymized. School names were replaced with codes (e.g., School-L1 for a large school), and any identifying information in the interview transcripts was removed. The collected data have been stored securely on an encrypted server and will be used solely for the purposes of this research.

3.0 RESULTS

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of the survey data and the thematic analysis of the interviews. The results are organized around the study's primary hypotheses, beginning with a profile of the participating institutions, followed by an examination of their HRM practices, HRIS adoption, and the perceived associations with organizational outcomes.

3.1. Profile of Participating Schools and Respondents

Of the 38 participating schools, 10 (26.3%) were classified as small (<500 students), 18 (47.4%) as medium (501-1500 students), and 10 (26.3%) as large (>1500 students), indicating a balanced representation. The majority of the schools (68.4%) have been in operation for over 20 years, suggesting a sample of established institutions. The 112 survey respondents were predominantly female (78.6%), with 54.5% holding a formal title of HR Manager or Officer, while the remaining 45.5% were School Principals or Administrative Heads who also handled HR duties. This latter finding is particularly salient, indicating that in nearly half of the surveyed institutions, HRM is not a specialized function but is subsumed within a broader administrative role.

Qualitative interviews further illuminated this structural reality. An interviewee from a medium-sized school (School-M7) explained:

"HR is essentially one part of my role as the Administrative Head. I handle recruitment, payroll, and contracts, but I also manage facilities and procurement. There's no time for the 'strategic' part of HR they talk about in books. My day is about putting out fires, not planning for three years from now."

3.2. The State of HRM Practices (Hypothesis 1)

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the implementation of administrative HRM practices would be significantly higher than that of strategic HRM practices. The survey results strongly support this hypothesis.

Table 1: Mean Scores for Implementation of HRM Practices (N=112)
(Scale: 1=Never, 5=Always)

HRM Practice Area & Type	Mean	Std. Deviation
Administrative / Operational		
Salaries are compliant with government regulations.	4.95	0.22
An annual performance appraisal is conducted.	4.75	0.45
Formal job descriptions exist for all positions.	4.65	0.55
A formal orientation is provided for new hires.	4.55	0.62
Strategic / Developmental		
An annual budget for teacher training exists.	3.45	1.15
Appraisal results are used for promotion decisions.	3.20	1.25
Salaries are benchmarked against other schools.	2.85	1.30
Individual development plans are created for teachers.	2.10	0.98
360-degree feedback is utilized.	1.50	0.65

As Table 1 shows, foundational practices classified as administrative or operational received very high mean scores, indicating near-universal implementation. In contrast, practices classified as strategic or

developmental received significantly lower scores. The gap is substantial; for example, while nearly every school ensures salary compliance ($M=4.95$), very few create individual development plans ($M=2.10$).

The qualitative data provided context for these numbers. The focus on compliance was a recurring theme. The principal of a small school (School-S3) stated:

"Our main priority is to make sure we are following all the DOLE (Department of Labor and Employment) and DepEd (Department of Education) rules. We are a small school; we cannot afford to make mistakes there. The rest—the fancy training plans—are a 'nice to have,' not a 'must have'."

Regarding performance management, interviews revealed that while the annual appraisal was a fixture, its strategic value was often questioned. An HR manager from a large school (School-L2) commented:

"We have a comprehensive appraisal form, everyone fills it out. But does it really help teachers improve? I am not so sure. It's often seen as a bureaucratic exercise to justify contract renewal or a minor salary increase. The link to genuine professional development is weak. We tick the box for having an appraisal, but the strategic intent is missing."

3.3. HRIS Adoption and Strategic Utilization (Hypothesis 2)

Hypothesis 2 posited that HRIS utilization would be significantly higher for administrative functions compared to strategic ones. The data from the 73 respondents whose schools used an HRIS provide strong support for this hypothesis.

Figure 1: Utilization of HRIS Modules in Schools with an HRIS

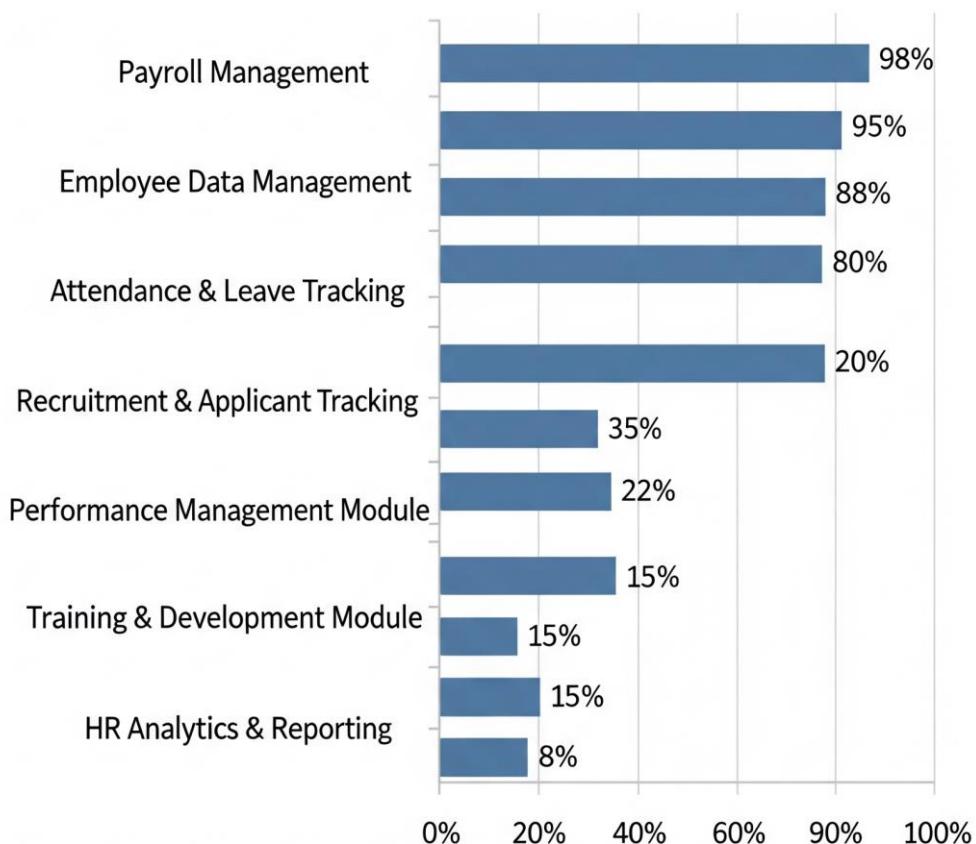


Figure 1: Utilization of HRIS Modules in Schools with an HRIS (n=73)

- Payroll Management: 98%
- Employee Data Management: 95%
- Attendance & Leave Tracking: 88%
- Recruitment & Applicant Tracking: 35%
- Performance Management Module: 22%
- Training & Development Module: 15%

- HR Analytics & Reporting: 8%

The data clearly illustrates a dramatic drop-off in usage from administrative to strategic modules. For the vast majority of schools, the HRIS serves as a digital filing cabinet and payroll processor. Strategic modules related to performance, training, and analytics are severely underutilized.

Interviews with school leaders provided a rich narrative behind this trend. The decision to adopt an HRIS was almost universally driven by a desire to automate payroll and reduce paperwork. The principal of School-M11 shared her experience:

"We got the system five years ago, and honestly, the main selling point was automating payroll and managing leave credits. It has been a lifesaver for our accountant. We were shown the other modules, like performance management, but the implementation felt overwhelming. It required changing our entire appraisal process, and we weren't ready for that."

Another recurring theme was the lack of in-house expertise to maximize the system's potential. An HR

director from School-L5, one of the few using advanced modules, explained:

"The only reason we use the analytics module is because we were fortunate to hire an HR officer with a background in data analysis. Before she arrived, the system's reporting capabilities were a black box to us. The vendor gives you the tool, but they don't teach you how to think like an analyst. That's the real barrier." This sentiment points to a critical gap between acquiring technology and developing the human capability to use it strategically, a point also raised in other studies [18].

3.4. Association of HRM with Organizational Outcomes (Hypothesis 3)

Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive association between a strategic HRM orientation and desired organizational outcomes. To test this, a composite score for "Strategic HRM Orientation" was created by averaging the scores of the five strategic/developmental items from Table 1. Correlation analysis was then performed between this score and survey items related to perceived organizational outcomes.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations between Strategic HRM Orientation and Outcomes (N=112)

Variable	Perceived Teacher Motivation	Perceived Organizational Commitment	Low Turnover Intention
Strategic HRM Orientation	.52**	.48**	.41**
<i>**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</i>			

The analysis revealed a moderate to strong positive correlation between a school's strategic HRM orientation and its perceived levels of teacher motivation, commitment, and retention. Schools that invested in more sophisticated HR practices were significantly more likely to be perceived as having a more motivated and committed faculty who were less likely to leave. This finding supports H3.

This statistical association was strongly supported by the qualitative findings. Interviewees from schools with more developed HR systems consistently linked these systems to their ability to create a positive work environment. The director of School-L5 stated:

"Our teachers know that we invest in them. We have a clear career path, we use the appraisal system to identify their training needs, and we fund that training. It's not just about the salary. They feel valued, and because of that, they stay. Our turnover rate is less than 5%, which is very low for this city."

In contrast, an administrator from a school with a less strategic approach (School-M4) lamented:

"We lose good teachers every year to the bigger schools. We can't compete on salary alone, and we haven't figured out what else we can offer. We do the basics—we pay on time, we follow the law—but we lack a system to really nurture our talent. It's a constant

struggle."

These findings collectively paint a picture of a sector in transition. While the administrative foundations of HRM are in place, the strategic potential of human resource management remains largely untapped, yet it is this strategic dimension that appears to be strongly associated with the creation of a thriving and stable educational workforce.

4.0 DISCUSSION

This study set out to investigate the landscape of Human Resource Management within the private education sector of Cebu City. The results, derived from a mixed-methods approach, offer a nuanced perspective, revealing a sector that is proficient in the administrative aspects of HRM but is still nascent in its adoption of strategic practices. This section will interpret these findings in the context of the existing literature, discuss their theoretical and practical implications, and acknowledge the study's limitations before suggesting avenues for future research.

4.1. The Administrative-Strategic Divide in HRM

The strong support for H1 confirms the existence of a significant divide between the implementation of administrative and strategic HR tasks. The data suggest that for many schools, HRM is viewed primarily through a lens of operational necessity and risk management, rather than as a driver of organizational value. This "administrative trap" is a common challenge that has been noted in the literature [49], but it appears particularly pronounced in the educational context observed. The qualitative data confirm that resource constraints and a lack of specialized HR expertise compel administrators to prioritize legally mandated functions over those that foster long-term human capital development.

This finding aligns with the systems perspective of HRM [34], but it shows an imbalanced system. The "maintenance" subsystems (payroll, compliance) are functioning effectively, but the "developmental" subsystems (training, career planning) are weak, preventing the overall system from achieving its full potential. The significant correlation found between a strategic HRM orientation and positive outcomes (supporting H3) underscores what is being lost due to this imbalance. It provides empirical weight to the argument that strategic HRM is not a luxury but a necessity for achieving organizational goals, a cornerstone of the SHRM framework [53]. The schools that have successfully moved beyond the administrative baseline appear to be realizing tangible benefits in the form of a more stable and committed faculty, which is a significant competitive advantage in the education market.

4.2. HRIS: Technology Acquired but Potential Unrealized

The study's findings regarding H2 present a classic case of the gap between technology acquisition and its strategic implementation. The high adoption rate (65%) is initially encouraging, suggesting that schools are embracing digital transformation. However, the overwhelming concentration of use on payroll and basic employee data is a critical caveat. The technology's capacity for sophisticated talent management, performance analytics, and workforce planning remains largely dormant. This phenomenon resonates deeply with the literature. While information systems have been described as a "quiet revolution" [41], these findings suggest that for many Cebu schools, the revolution has stalled at the first stage of automating routine tasks. The powerful analytical and strategic capabilities highlighted by other researchers [20, 37] are not being realized.

The reasons for this underutilization, as revealed in the interviews, are multifaceted. They are not merely technical but deeply organizational. The lack of in-house expertise, the perceived complexity of advanced modules, and a resistance to changing established processes (like performance appraisals) are significant barriers. This points to a failure in change management [40]. Schools appear to be adept at the "changing" phase (i.e., buying the software) but struggle with "unfreezing" old habits and "refreezing" new, more strategic workflows. While industry reports often emphasize user experience and vendor support [50], this study suggests the internal organizational readiness and capability development are the more critical success factors. Simply installing a new system does not automatically instill a new way of thinking about human resources.

4.3. The Association with Performance: Investing in People Pays Off

The strong, positive correlations identified in support of H3 are arguably the most critical finding of this study from a practical standpoint. This provides clear, context-specific evidence for the central thesis of the human capital perspective: that investments in people-centric practices are associated with tangible organizational returns [43]. While this link is well-accepted in the corporate world [33], this study confirms its potent applicability within the educational sector of Cebu City.

The qualitative data powerfully illustrated the mechanism behind this statistical association. School leaders who could articulate a clear philosophy of investing in their teachers also reported a more positive school culture and lower turnover. Their approach

aligns with more participative and employee-centered management systems [51]. In contrast, leaders who focused primarily on compliance and administrative efficiency often described a more transactional, less engaged workforce. This suggests that while a fair salary is a necessary baseline, it is the developmental opportunities, the sense of being valued, and the presence of a supportive performance management system that are strongly linked to loyalty and commitment. This finding has profound implications, suggesting that even schools with limited financial resources can enhance their competitive position by shifting their focus towards more strategic, development-oriented HR practices.

Interestingly, this echoes findings from vastly different sectors, such as healthcare, where workforce planning and employee development are seen as central to achieving mission-critical goals [16, 19]. The challenges of retaining skilled professionals, whether they be teachers or nurses, share common underlying principles of motivation and organizational support, suggesting a rich opportunity for cross-sector learning.

4.4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by providing a detailed empirical account of HRM in a non-Western, non-corporate setting. It validates the applicability of mainstream HRM theories like the systems perspective and SHRM in the context of private education in the Philippines. Furthermore, it highlights the critical mediating role of organizational capacity and change management in determining the success of technological interventions like HRIS, adding a practical layer to existing adoption models.

The practical implications for school administrators in Cebu City and similar contexts are clear and actionable:

1. Move Beyond Compliance: School leaders must consciously evolve their view of HR from a purely administrative function to a strategic one. This requires dedicating resources—whether through hiring specialized personnel or training existing staff—to develop capabilities in areas like talent development and organizational design.

2. Conduct an HRIS Audit: Schools currently using an HRIS should conduct an audit to assess the utilization of its strategic modules. A phased plan for rolling out and training staff on performance, training, and recruitment modules could unlock significant value. Choosing the right consultant or vendor is a critical first step [35].

3. Focus on High-Impact, Low-Cost Practices: While salary increases may be difficult, schools can

focus on other high-impact areas. Implementing a structured mentoring program, creating individual development plans based on performance reviews, and fostering a culture of constructive feedback are relatively low-cost initiatives that can significantly boost morale and retention.

4. Invest in Leadership Training: The effectiveness of any HR system is dependent on the line managers who implement it—in this case, school principals and department heads. Training them in performance coaching, effective communication [48], and change leadership is essential.

4.5. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study, while comprehensive, has several limitations. First, its reliance on self-reported data, particularly for organizational outcomes, is subject to perception bias. Future studies could incorporate more objective metrics, such as actual turnover rates, student performance data, and teacher promotion records. Second, the cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time; a longitudinal study could track the evolution of HRM practices and their impact over several academic years. Third, the study was confined to Cebu City, and its findings may not be generalizable to all private schools in the Philippines, particularly those in rural areas with different resource constraints and cultural contexts.

These limitations point to several promising avenues for future research. A comparative study between private and public schools could yield valuable insights into how different governance and funding models affect HRM. Research focusing specifically on the ROI of HRIS implementation in schools could provide a powerful business case for greater investment in technology. Finally, borrowing further from the health human resources literature [25, 32], research could explore systematic workforce planning models for the education sector to better anticipate and address teacher shortages and surpluses.

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