
INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The HRM of the South African public sector is based on the implementation of progressive laws that were enacted with the intent to enhance efficiency and equity; however, the political interference, haphazard application and lack of accountability result in diminishing the effectiveness of HRM in this sector. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the HRM practices that are in place in South Africa's public sector and to identify any impediments to performance and transformation by conceptually reviewing HRM practices in the public sector. This study employs a non-empirical conceptual approach by using a systematic literature review to identify conceptual gaps and guide future research and practice, through an analysis of 20 or more peer-reviewed academic texts with regard to key areas of HRM practice, including recruitment and selection, training and development, equal opportunities and performance management, to evaluate the effectiveness of these HRM practices in the South African public sector. The results indicate that although the public sector has a number of solid legal frameworks in place governing HRM practices such as recruitment, training and development, equal opportunity and performance management, political interference, inadequate enforcement, ill-planning and inconsistent application continue to impede the implementation of those HRM practices and undermine professionalism, equity and service delivery. Consequently, there is an urgent need for strategic reforms in HRM so that HRM can be implemented more effectively and equitably in the South African public sector and thus create a high-performing, ethical and competent public sector in South Africa. The study concludes that to increase the effectiveness of HRM implementation in the public sector, strategic reform is needed and future empirical studies are needed to investigate differences in HRM effectiveness between regions and departments.

Keywords: HRM; Performance Management; Policy Implementation; Public Sector; South Africa;

INTRODUCTION

The functioning of public institutions is vital in providing services that facilitate social change and the economic growth and development of a nation. The public sector in South Africa plays a critical role in the achievement of South Africa's developmental goals, fighting inequality and improving the quality of life for its citizens. Many of the current challenges of inefficiency, opacity, corruption and poor service delivery bring into question the productivity of public institutions (Thusi and Selepe, 2023). A growing body of research points to the need to improve human resource management (HRM) practices to enhance the performance of the public sector and to promote sustainable reform of public sector institutions. Public sector HRM involves all the different functions of HRM such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, employee relations and retention strategies. In the public sector in South Africa, HRM has been influenced by historical legacies, political instability and legislative reform to redress past injustices, to promote equality and to improve representivity (Gegana and Phahlane, 2024). Even with the presence of progressive policy frameworks, there is limited implementation of

HRM practices in government departments and agencies due to implementation gaps and limited capacity.

The rationale for the study is that the changing policy landscape, changing workforce demographic and increasing demand from the public for accountability necessitate a thorough re-evaluation and rethinking about HRM practices in the South African public sector. HRM (Human Resource Management) practices are essential for the successful development of the country and also an important net they drop down onto the public sector when considering its relatedness and proximity to high- and low-quality workforces. If the HRM policies are not in line with the intended objectives, the result may be a mismatch of program implementation and/or lack of productivity gain in the process of executing public programmes. Dlamini and Zogli (2021) established that there is a continuing disparity between the two in South African public sector organisations. A significant amount of effort has been put into making HRM policies (e.g., performance management systems, capacity-building initiatives) more relevant for the current needs; yet there is still a persistent gap between HRM policy implementation and achievement of desired organisational-level outcomes. This study aims to analyse HRM policies based on their conceptual foundation and the relationship between HRM policies and their alignment with the realisation (or non-realisation) of institutional goals of all South African public sector agencies, thus reducing/eliminating the current gap.

This study is important in several ways. This study will first contribute to knowledge in this area by contributing to the growing body of empirical research on HRM in the public sector and African contexts. South Africa's sociopolitical context, with its vestiges of the past, unequal opportunity and efforts to develop equity and transformation, makes it relevant to the study of the relationship between HRM practice and the effective delivery of public services. The research study offers valuable insights into the issues of public sector reform, especially human resource management (HRM), and best practices for implementing effective HRM strategies through critical evaluation of current HRM practices. The study contributes to a better understanding of the problems and conceptual ambiguities in public sector HRM systems and thus provides guidance to officials, public administrators and legislators on how to develop effective HRM strategies in support of the establishment of capable and responsive national institutions. The positive contributions of the studies will be of great value to all persons responsible for developing and implementing HR policies that reflect the values of performance, equity and accountability and are consistent with national policy goals.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the development of a more ethical, professional and productive public sector in South Africa by exposing conceptual inconsistencies and by offering a rational and theoretically sound framework for understanding and improving HRM processes. Conceptual clarity is essential to convert fragmented or obsolete HRM systems into integrated and strategic HRM roles that enhance organisational performance. The theoretical model developed in this study could be used to guide capacity building and reform initiatives in the public sector by including theoretical principles based on international standards for contemporary HRM practices. As it is a conceptual research study, primary data collection was not a part of this research but was carried out by synthesising the available body of knowledge from scholarly literature, related policy documents, and generally accepted theoretical frameworks. The strategic roles of HRM in relation to achieving organisational objectives in the public sector will be primarily framed in terms of theoretical perspectives from institutional analysis, human capital theory and comparative public administration. Section 2 discusses theoretical literature and empirical research on public sector HRM; Section 3 describes the research method, Section 4 reports the findings, Section 5 discusses the findings and Section 6 concludes the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review section examined the conceptual underpinnings of Human Resource Management procedures in the South African public sector. With an emphasis on two key areas, it seeks to offer a critical overview of the organisation, management, and implementation of HRM in this industry. Initially, it looks at the types and traits of HRM procedures used in the South African public sector, such as hiring, performance reviews, training and development, and employee interactions. Second, it investigates how HRM policies are implemented, considering the legal and institutional frameworks that govern HRM in public service as well as the real-world difficulties in converting policy into efficient administrative action. When combined, these talks provide a thorough conceptual framework for comprehending HRM dynamics in the context of South Africa's public sector.

Human Resource Management Practices in the South African Public Service

Typically, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) sets many of the general HRM policies for the public service. Some other departments, agencies and parastatals have their own HRM policy units and specialists, allowing for a significant de-concentration of staffing policy decisions. The DPSA brief covers a wide range of policy, regulatory and application areas, as well as performing specialist executive and administrative functions as a central department. Departments led by relatively senior political office bearers, deputy ministers and director general have powers and capacities that go well beyond those of heads of departments (HoDs), which are common at provincial and local government levels. These portfolios are the primary executive and administrative arms of the national government, with substantial delegations of executive functions supported by relatively powerful core departments such as finance, human settlements, transport, and, of course, public service and administration (Sambo, 2022). A synopsis of the notable HRM policies in each government department organised around such portfolio superclusters as economic development and spatial planning; public works and infrastructure; education; health; safety and security; and corporate governance and traditional affairs, is now presented.

Recruitment and selection

Public services must implement reasonable recruitment and selection programmes to employ a workforce that mirrors the composition of the citizenry they serve to create an organisational environment that enhances employee performance and generates behaviours and outcomes consistent with reaching organisational objectives (Kahn, 2024). The adverse impact on certain groups of people of using specific hiring criteria, tests or selection instruments needs to be cancelled. To achieve representativeness, public services in South Africa endeavour to ensure that at least 75% of the workforce are in the lower occupational categories, while employees at the professional, administrative and management levels come from all-inclusive groups. Recruitment includes all activities necessary to attract applicants in sufficient numbers with the appropriate qualifications and offers them the opportunity to apply for jobs that are open or anticipated (Muduli and Trivedi, 2020). The selection process's objective is to choose the best applicant from the pool of candidates to fill the post. It impacts the long-term effectiveness of the organisation and its members, making it a crucial human resource function. Public service selection functions differ slightly from those in the private sector because laws, regulations, control mechanisms and oversight functions affect the way the public service manages its employees (Inayat and Jahanzeb Khan, 2021).

Training and development

Setting up a training and development (T&D) system does not happen automatically or in a haphazard manner. The DPSA, in its policy-making role, articulates national policies and sector priorities. Only when training and development align with the specific competency needs of individuals or teams can they make a significant contribution. This type of training is usually formally defined and initiated, stems from a T&D needs assessment and leads to specific training for identified needs. The importance of informal on-the-job training and development must not be overlooked (Feni, 2023). Strengthening employees' skills through training is a critical component of all human resource functions. Several actions in the South African government articulate and affect intergovernmental relations. Given its people-centric focus, the key function of HRM in operations is to ensure the application of HRM policies in a manner that prioritizes people. Identifying employees' training needs and ensuring optimal development and training are part of HRM's overarching task (Ochieng, 2023)

Public Service Implementation of HRM Policies

The Public Service Commission (PSC) refers to HRM policy formulation as strategic human resource management (SHRM). The PSC defines HRM strategy as that which links HRM policies and practices to organisational mission, vision, goals and objectives and emphasises the organisational dimension of managing people. Therefore, considering the PSC's evolutionary picture, the strategic level for formulating and implementing HRM policies should guarantee the efficient use of human resource, enabling both the public service to enhance its service delivery to the public and the democratic government to fulfil its objectives. This reflects the duality of the government as an employer and a provider of services to the nation (Chilunjika *et al.*, 2022). New management demands and attempts to establish transformational change in the public sector have resulted in drastic changes in the formulation and implementation of human resource management (HRM) policies in the South African public service. Broader public service policies which define the role of the state, the nature of public administration and the delivery of public services now shape HRM policies. The state, as an employer, is obliged to create conditions for rendering services impartially, equitably and fairly to all citizens, thereby upholding the values embedded in the Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic of South Africa (Vahdat, 2022).

Equal employment opportunity policies

Public-sector organisations have a social role in representing the diversity of the nation in which they are based. Equal employment opportunity policies are an important facet of internal employment policies, designed to ensure that the composition of the workforce at least broadly reflects the pluralist nature of South African society. Achieving representativeness in public sector organisations is crucial to safeguarding and strengthening the democratic process (Matotoka and Odeku, 2021). International HRM recognises equity as a principle and South Africa's Constitution includes specific provisions that guarantee the right to equal treatment and fair labour practices. In addition, South Africa is a signatory to several International Labour Organisation conventions that deal with discrimination. This means that international best practice for public services includes the promotion and achievement of equal employment opportunities via sound HRM policies and practices, as well as monitoring and control mechanisms (Fourie and Van Staden, 2020).

There is a great deal of evidence regarding South Africa's desired employee profile in the public sector. According to the Public Service Commission, public service should reflect the national and regional profiles in terms of gender, disability and race or ethnic group

(Supramaniam and Singaravelloo, 2021). The South African public service is committed to implementing and developing sound human resource management and policies that improve service and employment equity conditions for all employees (Malakoane *et al.*, 2020). The South African government is mandated by the country's constitution and several laws to guarantee that all citizens have access to government services and to uphold, defend and fulfil their human rights (Klaasen, 2020). Research indicates that the South African public service has implemented a variety of effective HRM practices and policies to enhance service delivery (Chilunjika *et al.*, 2022).

Performance Management Policies

These policies aim to inform employees about the expected performance output and the methods for measuring it. Employees must be given responsibility, authority and the chance to actively participate in their growth (Sibonde & Dassah, 2021). Performance management strategies should focus on the employees' job and work-related activities. Performance management policies should guide the development of beneficial practices. What is important is to recognize that performance management policies are at the core of good HRM practices and, when properly developed and implemented, set conditions for all to achieve quality service delivery in the public sector (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Performance management policies predominantly inform performance appraisal systems in public service. These policies offer mechanisms for continuous management, measurement and appraisal of employee performance, along with regular revisions (Khang, 2024). They establish the type and structure of a mechanism for assessing employees' performance and teams, leading to the development of effective appraisal methods. Such policies also intend to direct how all employees contribute and work towards achieving service delivery objectives, other organizational objectives and standards and values (Makapela and Mtshelwane, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review was the main methodological approach used in this study since it was thought to be the most suitable for accomplishing the goals of the investigation. A systematic review is an organised, reproducible and transparent approach to the identification, evaluation and synthesis of the body of research on a given topic. This research aims to assess HRM practices and their effectiveness in the South African public sector. Through the use of this systematic review process, our aim is to identify existing conceptual contradictions, develop a cohesive understanding of the current body of knowledge and identify new opportunities for research. Ensuring that every relevant source has been evaluated structurally and represented accurately will result in a strong and valid conceptual framework that will provide insights as to how to design and operationalise HRM practices across public organisations. Rather than doing this through empirical evidence collected through traditional methods (i.e., fieldwork), this research seeks to explore conceptual HRM issues; this is achieved through using a theoretical approach to develop an understanding of HRM practices. According to Snyder (2019), the conceptual approach is about reviewing and analysing theoretical frameworks, concepts and academic debates concerning a research topic, and this type of assessment relies on existing literature that will help provide an understanding of how HRM practices have been conceptualised, articulated and challenged, rather than obtaining newly developed empirical data via fieldwork. With the increased flexibility that comes with the use of a non-empirical approach, the researcher has been able to draw upon a wide variety of sources to examine several dimensions of HRM practices in the South African public service.

The literature review serves as a critical and integrative base for the researcher to gain theoretical and analytical depth. Reading diverse literature allows researchers to construct

arguments based on multiple theoretical perspectives, as suggested by Jaakkola (2020). In this sense, this literature review supports a deeper understanding of the concepts underlying human resource management (HRM) and will allow for a more critical evaluation of the prevailing paradigms and assumptions surrounding HRM practice. The present paper is a review and synthesis of theoretical and conceptual literature, in addition to exploring the contextualisation of HRM practice in the South African public sector. In addition to integrating existing knowledge, this review will also allow an evaluation of the relevance, limitations and applicability of the reviewed theories and concepts in the present study. Finally, a review of a sample of peer-reviewed journal articles was conducted with the aim of identifying common themes related to HRM effectiveness. Conceptual studies can demonstrate patterns of theory in the literature using different techniques (e.g., thematic or content analysis) (Humble & Mozelius, 2022). Therefore, this study selected and analysed a purposive sample of more than twenty peer-reviewed articles based on the key dimensions of HRM (recruitment, training, performance management and policy implementation). The process led to a thorough synthesis of the literature, which was evidence-based and informed the study's conclusions and recommendations.

.RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in this section, with particular attention to important facets of HRM procedures in the South African public sector. It specifically addresses results pertaining to recruiting and selection procedures, training and development programs, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and performance management policies. Understanding the efficacy and difficulties of HRM procedures in the public sector requires knowledge of each of these areas. By looking at each of these elements separately, the study hopes to show the impact of the HRM frameworks in use today and provide light on how these practices affect the general effectiveness, fairness, and professionalism of the public sector.

Results of Recruitment and Selection

Human resource management is based on recruitment and selection, especially in the public sector where meritocracy, equity, and transparency are crucial. According to Shikokola (2024), these methods entail the methodical process of luring, selecting, and assigning people who have the necessary abilities, credentials, and values to meet organisational goals. Legislative frameworks like the Employment Equity Act and the Public Service Act, which seek to guarantee fairness, nondiscrimination, and representativeness in hiring decisions, serve as guidelines for recruitment and selection in the South African public sector. However, issues including nepotism, political meddling, and procedural irregularities still compromise the integrity of hiring procedures in spite of these legal protections (Shikokola, 2024). Merit-based hiring undermines the public sector's capacity to draw in qualified workers, which has an impact on institutional performance and service delivery.

The professionalism and general efficacy of the public service are greatly impacted by efficient and equitable recruitment and selection procedures. Appointing competent people through fair and open procedures promotes morale, organisational trust, and an accountable culture (Masilela and Nel, 2021). The quality of services can be negatively impacted by inefficiencies, talent mismatches, and staff demotivation brought on by biased or badly managed hiring. Furthermore, maintaining fairness in selection procedures upholds the ideals of transformation and equity, particularly in a multicultural nation like South Africa where past injustices need to be remedied. The public sector can create a competent, moral, and performance-driven staff by instituting professional hiring standards and reducing political or personal influence (Jarbandhan, 2022). Therefore, enhancing hiring and selection procedures

is not just a technical HR task but also a strategic necessity for promoting professionalism and governance in the public sector.

Results of Training and Development

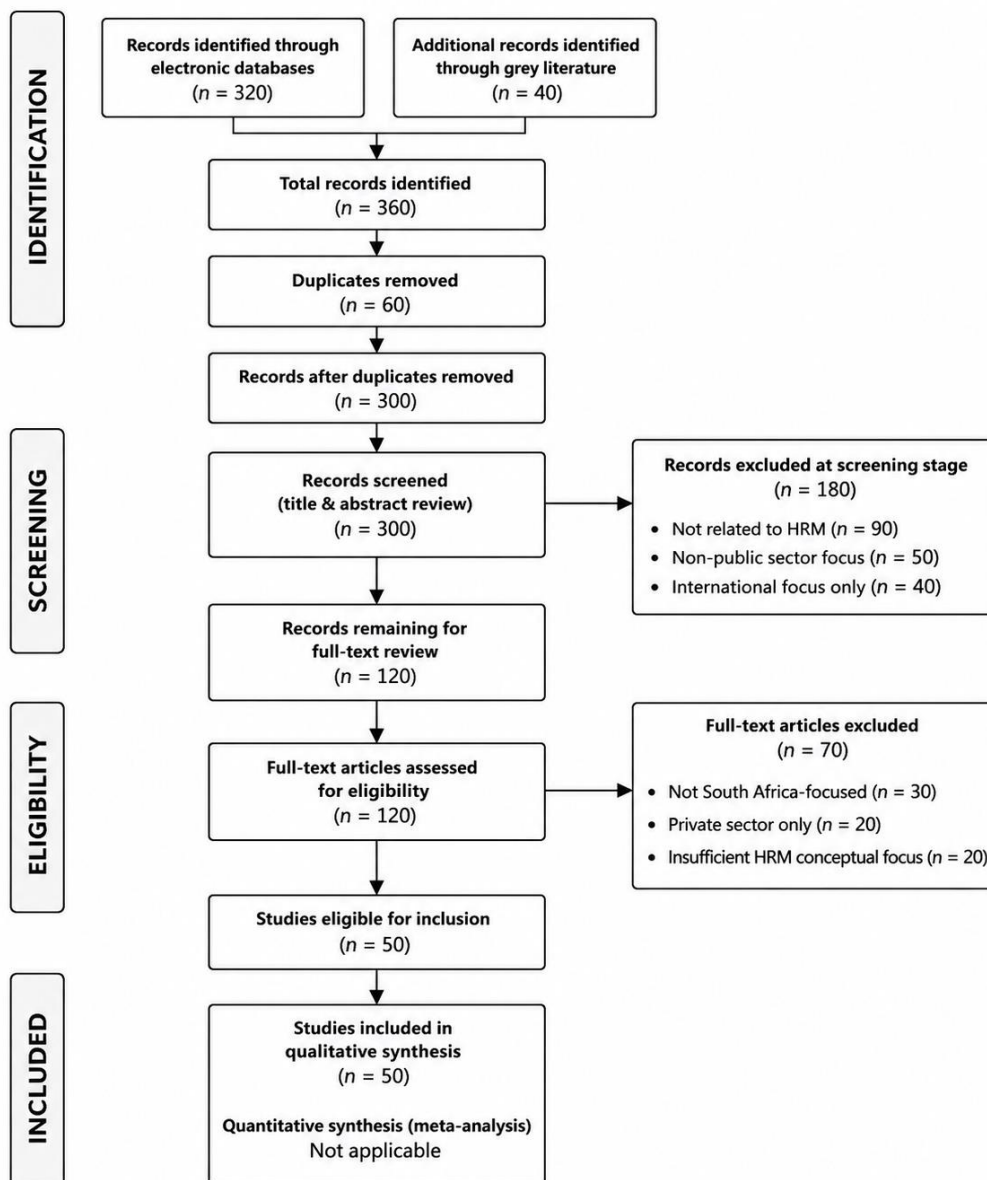
Human resource management which focusses on improving employees' knowledge, skills, and competences to satisfy both personal career goals and organisational objectives, includes training and development as essential components. These procedures are essential for enhancing service delivery, adjusting to policy changes, and guaranteeing adherence to changing regulatory frameworks in the public sector. Initiatives like the National School of Government and the Public Service Education and Training Authority (PSETA) oversee public service training in South Africa with the goal of fostering lifelong learning and professional growth (McCandless *et al.*, 2022). But even with these structures in place, problems like inadequate money, bad planning, and insufficient monitoring can make training programs less effective (Nikolaou, 2021). Public employees can better address the demands of the public, manage resources, and maintain institutional integrity when training and development programs are appropriately executed.

More broadly, well-thought-out training and development programs improve the public sector's professionalism, efficacy, and equity. They provide equal possibilities for professional growth, particularly when training is granted based on impartial standards rather than political affiliation or personal preference (Khumalo, 2020). This promotes a meritocratic culture, which is necessary to increase employee motivation and trust. Furthermore, by providing employees with modern skills, ethical standards, and leadership potential, steady investment in workforce development helps to professionalise the public sector (Jarbandhan, 2022). Employees are more likely to exhibit greater job satisfaction, better performance, and a stronger commitment to public service principles when they feel appreciated and empowered through learning opportunities. As a result, giving fair and needs-based training and development top priority is not just a strategy for increasing capacity but also a major force behind the reform of the public sector.

Research methodology

A total of 360 records (320 through database searches and 40 from grey literature) were identified. After removing 60 duplicate records, 300 were screened at the title and abstract levels. During screening, 180 records were classified as ineligible for inclusion due to lack of inclusion criteria, leaving 120 articles to assess full-text eligibility. Of the 70 excluded for lack of sufficient inclusion in the South African public service (n=30), a solely private sector focus (n=20) or inadequate conceptual examination of HRM practices (n=20). Ultimately, 50 studies formed the basis of this conceptual research synthesis.

Table 1: PRISMA Flow Summary for the Systematic Review



Results of Equal Employment Opportunity Policies

Human Resources’ policies on equal employment opportunity (EEO) are important to promote fairness, inclusivity and non-discrimination in the workplace. This is particularly so in the public sector, where democratic principles of justice and representativeness are used to guide governance practices. The two legislative frameworks that deal with EEO in South Africa are the following: 1. The Employment Equity Act (Act No. 55 of 1998) 2. The Labour Relations Act (Act No. 66 of 1995) Public institutions are required by law to eliminate unequal discrimination and provide equal representation regardless of race/gender/disability. The EEO programme is also to remove the systemic injustice created by apartheid by providing access to employment and growth opportunities for historically under-represented groups. Despite the remarkable progress made through equity legislation, many agencies still bear the burden of poor enforcement, slow progress and weak compliance (Sheng et al., 2021).

The successful implementation of EEO policies has a direct impact on the public sector's reputation as a fair, efficient and professional organisation. EEO policies also lead to better employee morale, job satisfaction and less workplace conflict by creating a more diverse and representative workforce. These are elements that are important to a positive ethical work environment (Choi & Rainey, 2014). The credibility of government is improved by equitable access to opportunities for work through hiring and promotion. Institutions in the eyes of the citizens who want a government to represent their demographics and to promote social justice. The representative & diverse workforce is more extensive, providing the government with a broader spectrum of perspectives and capabilities; thus, a more innovative and flexible public service (Omar & Kiley, 2022). EEO regulations ultimately serve to professionalise the public sector by ensuring that recruitment and promotion are based on merit, potential and fairness and not bias or favouritism.

Results of Performance Management Policies

Performance management (PM) policies are an integral part of Human Resource Management (HRM) in that they link the organisational and individual goals of an employee into a model that will promote accountability, productivity and service delivery. Public sector PM includes establishing standards or benchmarks for performance, periodically assessing employee performance against those benchmarks, providing feedback to the employee, and rewarding or correcting performance based on predetermined criteria. In South Africa, all of the PM policies as described above are standardised for the various national, provincial and municipal governmental departments through the Public Service Regulations of 2016 and frameworks such as the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) (Thusi et al., 2023). The final aim of a PM in the public sector should be to foster a culture of flexibility and continuing professional development. Although there are regulatory and other frameworks that define and standardise PM in the public sector, many public sector organisations and departments still experience difficulties with PM implementation due to several challenges like variation in implementation, lack of managerial capability and limited integration with other HR systems (Mokoele et al., 2018). These challenges limit the ability of departments to hold individuals accountable and evaluate performance in an objective manner.

PM policies (systems) when properly implemented produce a more effective, professional and equitable public sector. A well-functioning PM system will ensure that all employees know what their role is within an organisation and will allow for objective evaluation of their performance using open standards that will promote equity and motivation among employees (Tweedie et al., 2019). Some of the benefits of a well-established PM system include employee morale, commitment to the organisation and improved service to customers. Moreover, regular and fair performance evaluations promote a professional work culture where an employee's progress and recognition (promotions and bonuses) depend on merit rather than bias or political influence (Mone et al., 2018). PM policies identify training and development needs by identifying performance gaps and providing performance feedback subsequently to provide employees with the skills needed to effectively perform their job responsibilities. Effective PM is both an administrative function and a strategic HR functional requirement to help build a public sector that is capable, ethical and high performing.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated some key HRM practices in the South African public sector with a focus on recruitment and selection, training and development, equal opportunity policies, and performance management systems. The findings provided evidence of ongoing challenges with HRM function implementation, despite the existence of progressive legislation/policy

frameworks. The most common problems found in all regions were inconsistent enforcement of these policies, poor planning, inadequate monitoring (of implementation) and political interference, which impedes professionalism, equity and organisational effectiveness.

Results of this investigation show that the weakness of HRM is not because of the lack of policy but because of the lack of effective implementation and weak accountability mechanisms. While reporting merit-based recruitment and selection, nepotism and political patronage continued to undermine recruitment and selection, thereby bringing about inappropriate appointments, thereby eroding both institutional efficiency and public trust/faith. Similarly, institutions such as the PSETA and the National School of Government provide spaces for training and development but their effectiveness is undermined by poor funding and lack of coordination. EEO policies are guided by the Employment Equity Act and Labour Relations Act, but low employee compliance and slow transformation remain barriers. Managerial inadequacies and excessive administrative compliance continue to provide barriers to effective implementation of performance management systems that were instituted partly to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

According to studies by Jarbandhan (2022) and Masilela and Nel (2021), political patronage affects how people are hired into South African public service immensely. The study also shows that public agencies see their training programmes as a means of merely complying with legal requirements and that there is wide variability between what agencies indicate are being done and what actually is being done. McCandless et al. (2022) argue that these programmes do offer more than compliance, a position supported by the study results in Sheng et al. (2021) and Nweke (2021), which indicate that EEO has little effectiveness with respect to gender equality or diversity. Public agencies, therefore, need to recognise the benefits of their training programmes in helping to make the workforce more equitable and diverse.

Mokoele et al. (2018) and Tweedie et al. (2019) noted the persistent weaknesses in terms of the consistency of performance evaluation and feedback processes in the case of performance management systems. This led to low levels of employee motivation and poor delivery of services. The study argues that there is an urgent need to strategically re-align HRM processes in South African public institutions to improve the overall performance of these institutions, create greater public confidence and increase equity in public service delivery. Some of the major reforms needed to achieve these goals are tackling political influence in the hiring of personnel, closing the training opportunity gap, improving the implementation of EEO, and reducing the administrative burden associated with performance management systems. Strengthening HRM functions in public institutions is critical to achieve the desired effectiveness and to improve governance, service delivery and public confidence in government.

A major strength of this study is the integrated appraisal of the core HRM functions in public institutions. This research integrates the conceptual, legislative and operational dimensions of HRM systems and advances understanding of the impact of HRM systems on public sector institutions' performance, particularly in the context of South Africa, which is undergoing extensive reform. This study also contributes to the growing body of literature on public HRM in developing countries, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, which is still characterised by policies of transformation, accountability and equity. It is important to note that there are several issues related to this study. The conceptual nature and absence of primary data limit the generalisability of this study's findings across departments and provinces. Furthermore, reliance on secondary literature and legislative documents may not reflect the accurate picture of the experiences of public employees subject to HRM policies. The study also doesn't take into account the contextual differences

that exist across different levels of government and geographic locations adequately. Further research utilising methods such as case studies, interviews and surveys of public and HR professionals would yield valid and reliable empirical data on HRM practices and their effectiveness in the public sector.

CONCLUSION

The study considered key HRM practices in the South African public sector, namely performance management, training and development, equal employment opportunity (EEO) regulations and recruitment and selection. The results indicate that these HRM activities are governed by legislative and policy frameworks that are well established and have a progressive goal, but there are still serious problems with their implementation. Common problems such as political interference, poor planning, weak enforcement and administrative inefficiency continue to impede the realisation of an effective, equitable and professional public service. These systemic issues impede the civil service's progress toward reform and equity, erode public confidence; and threaten institutional performance and service delivery. This research contributes to the understanding of human resource management in the public sector by addressing discrepancies between human resource management implementation and policy development, particularly in developing and post-apartheid countries like South Africa. In addition, it indicates that true transformation cannot be achieved if institutional and governance issues are not taken into consideration, as they are at the foundation of any technical solution to such issues. The implementation of human resource management policies could be improved by increased accountability, strategic capacity development and inclusive policy development. Although the conceptual analysis offers valuable insights, empirical research is further required to investigate the lived experiences of public servants and to assess the effectiveness of reform initiatives being implemented.

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