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Sustainable Human Resource Practices and Framework in the Selected Philippine State Universities and Colleges (SUCs): A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Despite the significance of Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM), there is a dearth of academic literature on this subject in the context of Philippine State Universities and Colleges (SUCs). The goal of this research is to analyze current human resource practices, look at the key underlying factors that affect them, and develop a comprehensive and integrated model of human resource management that considers shifting social and economic conditions as well as the demographics of the workforce in SUCs. The proposed model can be used as a roadmap to enhance human resource practices, develop human capital, and create more sustainable human resource planning in the Philippine public sector. For this case study, information was gathered through in-depth interviews with 30 key respondents from selected SUCs who held managerial, supervisory, and rank-and-file positions. The study's findings will offer advice to academic HR managers on how to improve HR procedures and administration to be more employeefocused. Thus, the proposed framework is useful for making decisions about how to sustain employees in the Philippine SUCs.

RESUMO

Apesar da importância da Gestão Sustentável de Recursos Humanos (SHRM), há uma escassez de literatura acadêmica sobre este assunto no contexto das Universidades e Faculdades Estaduais das Filipinas (SUCs). O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar as práticas atuais de recursos humanos, observar os principais fatores subjacentes que as afetam e desenvolver um modelo abrangente e integrado de gestão de recursos humanos que considere as mudanças nas condições sociais e econômicas, bem como a demografia da força de trabalho em SUCs. O modelo proposto pode ser usado como um roteiro para melhorar as práticas de recursos humanos, desenvolver o capital humano e criar um planeamento de recursos humanos mais sustentável no sector público filipino. Para este estudo de caso, as informações foram recolhidas através de entrevistas aprofundadas com 30 entrevistados principais de SUCs selecionados que ocupavam cargos de gestão, supervisão e de base. As conclusões do estudo oferecerão conselhos aos gestores académicos de RH sobre como melhorar os procedimentos e a administração de RH para se concentrarem mais nos funcionários. Assim, a estrutura proposta é útil para a tomada de decisões sobre como sustentar os funcionários nas SUCs filipinas..

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Introduction

In today's competitive economy, everyone knows how important resources are, and right now, the most important resources are people. Human resources, often known as "human capital," are an indisputable asset in every organization, whether in industry or the public sector (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Organizational human resource management is important because it helps figure out what needs to be done to make the company's values and sustainability plan. HR must also make sure that all employees adopt sustainability initiatives. According to Cohen, Taylor, and Muller-Carmen (2015), human resource management is the process of applying methods to people who have the trust, beliefs, skills, and drive that are very important for creating successful organizations.

When it comes to labor, the concept of sustainability is becoming increasingly important, and it is being used as inspiration for the development of a new strategy known as Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM). For example, it's important to remember that long-term employee development is an SHRM concept that should be used consistently with other SHRM principles, such as the idea that employees' personal and professional development should be worked on at the same time that advancements in human resources are made with the help of so-called "future skills," which are needed for the development of organizations (Piwowar-Sulej, 2020).

On the other hand, there are humanistic and sustainable human resource (HR) practices that encourage and foster employee happiness, organizational commitment, and an organization's long-term viability that are essential in today's HR environment. When making these policies, the well-being and sense of worth of employees are taken into account. When workers' skills match the needs of a job well and they are given an equal chance during the hiring process, they may feel like they have accomplished something. It also includes training that helps employees think creatively and critically, which makes it easier for people to share information. When employees and employers trust each other and talk to each other openly, it can lead to good working relationships. In addition, employees will have more time to spend with their families due to this policy. Asis-Castro and Edralin (2018) say that it also offers enough pay and a large pension plan to make sure that employees can have a comfortable retirement when they leave their jobs.

SHRM is a concept in the industry emphasizing a person-centered approach. The long-term engagement of employees and a sense of loyalty to one's employer are critical components of this approach to human resources management. The goal of human resource management using the "soft approach" is to get good financial results while also building a good "employer-employee relationship." Research has found that a soft approach is effective in keeping employees for a longer period of time and inspiring them to share knowledge, operate more effectively, act with passion and devotion, as well as provide innovative solutions that help the company achieve its objectives (Ogbeibu et al., 2018; Kim and Shin, 2019; Meier et al., 2019).

At the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Growth Summit, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formally adopted. The SDGs is a set of 17 objectives that, among other things, aim to combat climate change and eradicate poverty by 2030. Only the eighth Sustainable Development Goal (decent work and job creation) talks about workers and the places where they work. Still, many of the other goals, particularly those affecting the public sector and educational institutions, are likely to impact employees and work environments in some way. (Baum et al., 2016; Aminudin, 2013; App & Büttgen, 2016).

Researchers noted a dearth of literature on sustainable human resource practices in the Philippine context, particularly in the public sector at State Universities and Colleges, despite the growing recognition of the significance of Sustainable Human Resource Management. As such, this paper is a pioneering study with the goals of understanding HR practices as they currently exist, analyzing the critical underlying factors that influence them, and creating an integrated model of HR management that accounts for shifts in the social and economic environment and the demographic profile of the workforce in SUCs. Human resource planning in the public sector of the Philippines can be improved by following the advice of the proposed model. This will help the country's public servants better invest in their people and grow their human capital.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted in recent years that have focused on sustainability and human resource management, both on individual and system levels. There are other studies on the interdependencies between societal, corporate, human resource management, and individual level of analysis that have been recognized by several sustainability researchers (Randev & Jha, 2019). A number of different resources about sustainability are highlighted in current viewpoints on Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) and associated literature. Human resource management is a dynamic and ever-changing area that requires constant attention. Incorporating human resource management with environmental concerns increases sustainability and has ushered in an entirely new paradigm for the field of human resource management (Chan, Stephen & Andi Kele, 2021.)

Sustainability is a concept that is frequently used in many different fields in the twenty-first century and has many further implications. Corporate strategy researchers, ecologists, and the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development, better known as the 'Brundtland Commission,' have identified a significant impact of sustainability (WCED, 1987). This approach is founded on three pillars, together referred to as the Triple Bottom Line. Environmental development is the first pillar, economic development is the second, and social development is the third. (Arowoshegbe, Emmanuel, & Gina, 2016).

From a corporate perspective, Chan (2017) and Ahmad and Ibrahim (2014) emphasized that it is vital for an organization's human resources department to establish an

enterprise-wide culture of sustainable growth. When managing human resources, SHRM considers the organization's goals from several angles, including the social, economic, and environmental. Organizational stakeholders can be persuaded to embrace more sustainable attitudes and behaviors by SHRM's leadership and innovation. SHRM has the potential to help businesses adopt a more sustainable mindset.

According to Mazur (2015), using value-enhancing practices that are difficult to replicate and set firms apart from their rivals, SHRM gives a long-term competitive advantage, according to a resource-based approach. If an organization's competitive advantage is built on resource availability and efficient utilization, then this perspective is called resource-based. And to achieve long-term competitive advantage through human resources, Ehnert & Wes (2012) pointed out that employees must be highly qualified and motivated. Workers of the highest caliber are essential. Organizations that rely heavily on their personnel, particularly in the service organizations (including educational institutions), may find this strategy helpful. SHRM also allows for the implementation of HR practices in a manner that does not put the interests of future generations of workers at risk (Rowley & Abdul-Rahman 2007).

Human Resource Management Practices in State Universities and Colleges

(SUCs). The term "State Universities and Colleges" (SUCs) refers to any public university or college established by an act of the Philippine Congress. The government provides complete funding for these institutions, which can be viewed as corporate entities. Congress has set government funding for SUCs following the national policy (Guadalquiver, 2004).

As with any organization, SUCs must collaborate to accomplish shared aims and objectives that assist in the process of developing a generation of competitive professionals capable of meeting modern-day difficulties. Academic institutions prioritize human resources above all other resources because they deal with people, which is crucial for creating high-quality graduates and running educational programs (Morphet, 1982).

Academic institutions comprise three interdependent groups: administrators, professors, and support workers. While their responsibilities are diverse, their tasks and expectations complement one another to accomplish the same aims. They are seen as the composite agents responsible for the educational system's effectiveness. The SUCs in the Philippines are required by their charters to concentrate on four tasks: education, research and extension, and development. The Constitution charges them to foster the human potential for production and self-actualization to contribute to societal progress. Additionally, they are tasked with promoting the morale of its stakeholders, notably students and staff (Gaac, 2014).

Administrators at academic institutions have traditionally been in charge of things like planning, coordinating, helping staff come up with goals or objectives that can be reached, and leading teaching and support staff (Miranda, 2004). But leaders can change their management strategies from transactional to transformative over time by "learning together" and

"developing learning communities." These strategies make it easier for people to share their knowledge and best practices, which is an important part of the education system in the twenty-first century. In the same way, highly motivated faculty members should make direct contact with students to encourage them to work hard on different tasks during the teaching and learning process. This will help create professionals who are competitive and aggressive in their efforts to help build the country (Gaac, 2014).

Faculty members are an important part of any educational institution. Their jobs are to act as guides and facilitators, create an environment that is good for learning, and give students tools that encourage them to explore, look into, and look for answers to questions. Assurance of high-quality graduates mostly depends on the faculty members who polished their abilities over time. Thus, the institution requires that faculty maintain their competitive advantages to stay current with the rapidly changing world (Aquino, 2003).

Thus, administrators must preserve faculty enthusiasm and dedication by agreeing on standards, policies, and programs that will assist them in growing and enhancing their knowledge, awareness, and practice. Even though the support staff is not as important as the faculty, they are still very important to achieving academic goals and objectives (Nieto, 2009).

Additionally, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which is the main personnel agency of the Philippine government, is in charge of the arrangements for human resources within that government; as a result, SUCs are required to abide by CSC rules. The CSC is also in charge of rendering final arbitration on Civil Service disputes and personnel actions as a constitutional commissioner with adjudicative authority within the framework of the national government. The CSC establishes policies, standards, and guidelines for the Civil Service and adopts plans and programs to ensure that the government's personnel administration is practical, efficient, and effective, often cascaded to agency-level human resource divisions (Executive Order No. 292; CSC, 2017).

For this study, the researchers followed the classification of employment prescribed by the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) and Department of Finance (DOF), which apply to both the private and public sectors. This includes managerial, supervisory, and rank-and-file employees as the tranches to represent the level of employment (RA 6971, DOLE, and DOF).

Issues Affecting Sustainable Human Resource Management. The emergence of this concept has increased stakeholders' awareness of Sustainable Development (SD) and the advantages of Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM). Mazur and Walczyna wrote an article (2020) that focuses on human resource management and the efforts of HR departments to achieve sustainable development in the workplace. Sustainable HRM is mentioned in particular, which has been hailed as a new paradigm in HRM by several scholars.

Both academics and practitioners are gaining a greater understanding of the connection between human resource management and sustainability. The negative impact of human resource management on human resources is one of the many causes for the emergence of a new concept, sustainable human resource management. Several models of sustainable human resource management have been proposed as a result of the varying definitions of SHRM (Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2014). Alternatively, a number of issues associated with human resource management threaten sustainability. Sandage (2020) listed Amenability to Laws and Regulations, Recruitment, Employee Retention, Workplace Diversity, Technology Overcome, Training, and Compensation & Benefits as some of the most prevalent human resource management issues that organizations face today.

To understand the obstacles encountered by professional institutions, Tripathi et al. (2011) looked at the variables that may help them overcome such issues, such as private and government organizations. This study looked at both public and private universities and looked at tenure, working conditions, hours worked, job changes and why they happened, faculty loyalty, length of service, and strategies for keeping faculty. According to the study, faculty members leave their present positions and keep them in their current jobs. Faculty members' perceptions of their institutions are influenced by a variety of factors, including their dissatisfaction with their pay, the lack of opportunities for advancement, a stressful work environment, and a job in which they lack complete trust.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework. The researchers adopted Mazur's model of sustainable human resource management (2017). Mazur's model shows that sustainable human resource management needs to focus on both the individual and the organization as a whole. Figure 1 shows that sustainable human resource management looks at things from two different points of view: the individual and the organizational. From the business's point of view, sustainable human resource management includes tools, techniques, procedures, structures, goals, objectives, culture, attitude, and values. On the other hand, employability, individual responsibility, and work-life balance are considered individual characteristics. Employability is a term for how a company helps its employees plan and grow in their careers. Individual accountability is a term that describes the employer's perspective on employee management. Work-life balance takes into account the employee's personal and social well-being. This perspective that a company's consideration should be concentrated toward both the organization and the well-being of its human resources is also reinforced by the paper of Mazur (2015) as well as the study of Asis-Castro & Edralin (2018) emphasizing humanistic sustainability in HRM practices in the Philippines.

Figure 1.Dimensions of Sustainable Human Resource Management

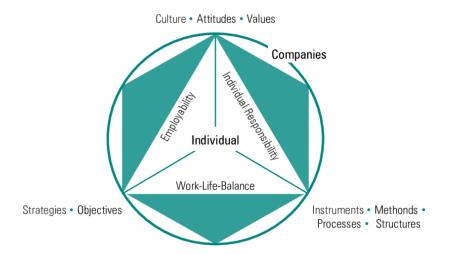


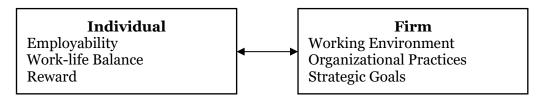
Image Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Dimensions-of-sustainable-HRM-Source-Mazur-Barbara-2017-Sustainable-Human-Resource fig1 351523635

Furthermore, the conceptual framework for this research was also derived from Chan, Stephen, and Andi Kele (2021), who created an approach based on Mazur's (2017) model, which stressed the interaction between an organization and its individual employees. The conceptual framework implies that for a company's human resources to be sustainable, the organization (working environment, organizational practices, and strategic objectives) and the person (career development, work-life balance, and rewards) must coexist. The alignment of the components under the aspect of the organization was also emphasized by Nawak (2020) on his research about employees' understanding of the organization's strategic objectives and their effects on culture and performance. On the other hand, Maalik (2015) reinforced the association of career development, work-life balance, and their impact on employee performance. As a result, each component should be fully used to achieve sustainability and competitiveness.

Figure 2.

Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Human Resource Management

Source: Chan, Stephen & Kele, 2021



Development

The researchers used a qualitative approach to investigate how employees felt about the important new issues surrounding HR management and practices in the Philippine SUCs. The researchers also did this exploratory research to find out what HR practices were being used in the SUCs and what factors affected employee retention. According to the informants' profile in terms of age, gender, employment status, type of work, and number of years spent working for the SUC, the key informants were purposefully chosen. Thirty qualified key informants who held managerial, supervisory, and rank-and-file positions at certain SUCs gave the necessary information for this study (see Table 1). Based on what the key informants wanted and how available they were, the researchers did a mix of in-depth interviews with them in person and online. Some key informants were also able to fill out the interview guide on their own, and questions and clarifications were taken into account when needed. The research instrument was adapted from Chan, Stephen, and Kele (2021).

In-depth interviews, according to Boyce and Neale (2006), are adaptable in that there is no set format to follow and they can be presented in a variety of ways. It was chosen as a research tool for this study because it gave each participant more time and opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions, and attitudes. Since the informants tend to express themselves more freely during interviews, the interviewer was able to elicit detailed responses by probing them. The study's research objectives were achieved through the design of the interview questions.

After introducing the informants to the purpose of the study, the researcher posed questions according to the employees' functions, which were either rank-and-file, supervisory, or managerial. Each function has a different question that addresses the objectives of this research. For the managerial level, the questions asked about the retention and recruitment methods that were used by their organizations. It was also asked for a practical way of retaining the employee in order to reduce turnover for their organizations.

The question for supervisory level discusses the factor that attracts and recruits job applicants to a state college or university. In addition, they were asked what problems they were having with human resource management in their particular department. In addition, they were asked if they had any recommendations or opinions on how the college's or university's current human resources procedures could be made better or altered.

For rank-and-file members, the question is primarily why they joined the state college or university and what keeps them there. They were asked if they were aware of their benefits and any legal issues within their company. In addition, the researchers inquired as to whether they would leave their current organization if they were offered a higher salary by a competing organization. The reason why the interviewer asks this question is to determine what motivates the candidate and what factors will cause them to remain.

Results

Background of the Respondents. The informants to this research were 30 teaching and non-teaching personnel in one state university and one state college in the Philippines, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.Profile of Key Informants

Profile	Managerial (n=10)	Supervisory (n=10)	Rank and File (n= 10)
Age			
Mean	50.2	37.1	28.9
Range	38-63	27-59	26-37
Gender			
Male	1	3	4
Female	9	7	6
Employment Status			
Temporary	0	3	5
Permanent	10	7	5
Nature of Work			
Teaching	7	10	5
Non-Teaching	3	0	5
Number of Years			
Working in SUC			
Mean	24.5	12.3	5.4
Range	11-40	3-38	2-15

Key Emerging Issues Affecting HR practices and management in Philippine State Universities and Colleges (SUCs).

The next table presents the key emerging issues related to HRM practices and management according to the perception of employees in the managerial and supervisory functions of SUCs. In the managerial level, it shows that the emerging key issues are in terms of career advancement, career development, and working environment. On the other hand, the emerging key issues in the supervisory level were career advancement, career development, and productivity. Comparing the two functions, the researchers can presume that the issues on work environment is more of a concern of the managers while productivity is more considered as an issue by the supervisors.

Table 2.

Emerging Key Issues from Managerial and Supervisory Functions

Function	Key Emerging Issues		
Managerial	Career Advancement/Development		
	-Faculty members unable to advance in career due to inability to conduct		
	research and produce publication		
	-Vacant higher positions are kept/reserved for favored individuals		
	-Lack of/unclear transition/succession planning for faculty		
	-Designation of employees not in line with their expertise/field of		
	specialization		
	-Lack of plantilla position for technical/hard disciplines		
	Working Environment		
	-Faculty members are becoming stressful due to heavy workload and task		
	distribution		
	-Tedious protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs)		
	-High level of bureaucracy/politics		
Supervisory	Career Advancement/Development		
	-Low entry level position		
	-Merits not focused on the academic degree related to priority programs		
	-Merits not focused on research capability and academic standing		
	-Merits according to seniority not capability/qualification		
	-Hidden/not transparent institutional promotion of employees		
	-Obsolete HR related standards as mandated by the Philippine Civil Service		
	Commission (CS)		
	• Productivity		
	-Affected by mental health concerns of the employees		
	-Related with the stressful working environment		
	-Work-from-home arrangement versus on-site		

Proposed HRM Framework for Philippine SUCS. The researchers developed a proposed HRM framework for Philippine SUCs by determining the themes based on our research objectives. Major themes were extracted and coded to come am with the final variables in the model or framework. The finalized themes were used to develop a new sustainable HRM framework that is employee and organization-focused (resource-based) and is not according to HRM functions and roles. The proposed framework supports both the perception of the employees and the organization which makes it relevant to the human resource demographics of the SUCs.

Based from the empirical data the researchers collected from the employees of the selected SUCs, the variable items in the framework are considered reliable which will be of great importance in the decision-making related to HR in the Philippine SUCs.

Figure 3.

Proposed Sustainable Human Resource Framework
Source: Ambong & Estrellado, 2021

New HRM Practices · Objective Selection and Promotion Scheme · Professional Development Program · Employee Engagement and Participation to Planning and Decision-Making Embedded in Retention Factor Key Success Factor of Retention · Security of Tenure **HRM Policy** · Reward and Promotion · Security of Tenure · Recruitment and Selection · Career Development · Compensation and Benefits Performance Evaluation · Compensation and Benefits · Commitment and Loyalty · Culture/Work Environment Retention and Separation Culture/Work Environment Good Employee Relationship Rewards and Recognition · Reward and Promotion Professional Development Good Employee Relationship · Compensation and Benefits · Employee Relation Organization Employee Security of Tenure HRM Practices · Compensation and Benefits and Policies · Commitment and Lovalty Culture/Work Environment Reward and Promotion Good Employee Relationship Objective Selection and Promotion Scheme · Professional Development Program Employee Engagement and Participation to Planning and Decision-Making Sustainable HRM Framework

Final Considerations/ Conclusions

In this research, the researchers achieved their objectives of determining the emerging key issues affecting HR practices and management and of proposing a sustainable HR framework for the Philippine SUCs. The emerging issues were identified from the managerial and supervisory functions in one state university and one state college in the Philippines. The researchers found in the managerial level that career advancement, career development, and work environment were the key emerging issues while in the supervisory level, the key issues that emerged were career advancement, career development, and productivity. With that, the researchers conclude that managers are more concerned about work environment while supervisors give more importance to productivity.

According to the themes that emerged in the conduct of interviews, COVID-19 pandemic which started during the last quarter of the year 2019, affected the work situation of the employees which eventually manifested by their work productivity. The key informants mentioned that the physical and mental health risks of the pandemic threatened the HR practices and management in the current employment condition. Moreover, the key informants confessed that they become more anxious and stressed during the pandemic even when they are in a work-from-home work arrangement. Before the pandemic, they were already burdened by heavy workload and the need to multitask. In terms of career advancement and development, the tedious process and high level of bureaucracy and politics in the academe were the concerns of the employees.

They also mentioned that some decision-making in the academe are influenced by political figures. There were also no concrete transition and succession plans for some designations and administrative positions which leads to designating an employee who is not fit in terms of expertise or field of specialization. According to Asis-Castro and Edralin (2018), if the abilities of the employees are effectively matched to the needs of a position and when they are given an equitable opportunity during the recruitment process, they may experience a feeling of purpose and achievement. It also includes training that encourages employees to think creatively and critically, enabling the interchange of knowledge and the development of new ideas. Likewise, common to the SUCs is the lack of plantilla positions for technical personnel making it hard to recruit a qualified or experienced technical professional especially those that can handle funded R&D projects and programs. Related to that, the researchers also found that hiring of faculty is not strict in terms of selecting a candidate that has the potential to contribute in the research productivity of the college or university.

According to Morphet (1982, academic institutions should put human resource first above all other resources because they deal with people crucial for creating high-quality graduates and running educational programs. However, in Philippine SUCs, the entry level for

teaching personnel is Instructor I with appropriate master's degree. However, in the selection and placement process, a respondent pointed out that the merits are not focused on the academic degree aligned to the program to be handled, research capabilities, and academic standing. Some vacant positions are also kept or reserved for the others and there is no transparent promotion procedure. Another most important retention factor that the researchers identified is the security of tenure aimed by employees in the government service. Employees aim for enough compensation and pension plan to ensure that they will be able to have a comfortable retirement when their employment is completed (Asis-Castro & Edralin, 2018).

The study revealed some potential improvement suggestions both from the managerial and supervisory perspective. As part of the new HRM policies, a more transparent and fair selection and promotion scheme should be considered as it affects employee motivation and retention in the SUCs. If already existing, professional development programs may further be enhanced or innovated to provide more opportunities for career advancement and development. It is also good that employees are well-represented in the organization by engaging and allowing them to participate in planning and decision making process. It is very important to have a humanistic and sustainable HR practices that will encourage and foster employee happiness, organizational commitment, and an organization's long-term viability that are essential in today's HR environment. Hence, concerns for the well-being and dignity of employees should be taken into consideration in crafting HR policies. Moreover, it is important to ensure that HRM practices are embedded in the policy of the organization as it will include employees and resources. This will allow organizations to utilize resource-based theory (Chan, Stephen & Kele, 2021). Likewise, Mazur (2015) mentioned that if an organization's competitive advantage is built on resource availability and efficient utilization, then this perspective is called resource-based. According to the resource-based approach, using value-enhancing practices that are difficult to replicate and set firms apart from their rivals, sustainable HRM is able to provide long-term competitive advantage.

The authors acknowledge some limitations of this research such that it was conducted in only two academic institutions: One in a state university and another one in a state college. Hence, a research in the future may be conducted considering other SUCs in the Philippines and categorizing them according to the SUC level as determined by the SUC leveling metrics by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). Our method which is qualitative was also time-consuming and the data analysis and interpretation were also complex. Despite these limitations, the authors posit that this framework will still be relevant in the decision-making related to employee retention in the SUCs in the Philippines. It will give insights to HR managers in the academe on how to enhance HR practices and management that is more employee-focused.

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