MAPALUS-DRIVEN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN TEAM COHESION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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ABSTRACT
Indonesia's public sector modernization hinges on human capital that can deliver transparent, ethical, and reliable services—capabilities that are often strengthened when formal HR systems align with indigenous cooperative norms. In North Sulawesi, the Mapalus tradition of reciprocal mutual aid and collective responsibility offers a culturally resonant basis for improving coordination, integrity, and trust within Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs). This study examines whether embedding Mapalus into a strategic human resource development (HRD) architecture enhances organizational outcomes beyond generic "best practice" HRM. The study aims to (i) operationalize Mapalus values into measurable HRD practices, (ii) test their associations with team coordination, psychological safety, and integrity culture, and (iii) estimate their effects on organizational performance indicators in EMBs. Using an explanatory, cross-sectional survey complemented by brief interviews and non-participant observations, we analyzed data from EMB officials across five jurisdictions (Manado, Minahasa, South Minahasa, North Minahasa, Southeast Minahasa). Reflective constructs were modeled and tested via CFA and SEM (LISREL 8.80). Results show that HRM and Mapalus jointly explain 59.0% of variance in organizational outcomes. Mapalus exerts a strong direct effect (36.7%) and an additional indirect effect (6.5%), for a total of 43.3%, while HRM shows a smaller direct effect (9.2%) plus the same indirect effect (6.5%), totaling 15.7%. Cross-mediations indicate HRM strengthens Mapalus norms, and Mapalus amplifies HRM uptake and impact. We conclude that culture is the proximal driver of frontline reliability, with HRM as an essential enabler. Practically, institutionalizing Mapalus (help queues, cross-unit shadowing, collaborative recognition) alongside competency-based HRM can stabilize peak-load operations and bolster public trust. Implications include aligning ethics and teamwork routines with local norms, integrating cooperation metrics into audits, and using lightweight digital transparency to trigger timely mutual aid. Future research should adopt longitudinal, multi-source designs, incorporate leadership and digital infrastructure as moderators, and test boundary conditions across provinces and electoral cycles.

Keywords: administrative reliability; electoral management; HRM bundles; integrity culture; Mapalus.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's modernization agenda demands human capital capable of mastering knowledge and technology, exercising managerial capability, and sustaining high-quality organizational behavior (Barney, 1991; Wright & McMahan, 1992). In the public sector, these capabilities translate into transparent, ethical, and collaborative institutions that deliver trustworthy services (Hood, 1991; Kaptein, 2008). Local wisdom can be an underused strategic asset in building such capabilities. In North Sulawesi (Manado and the broader Minahasa Raya), the Mapalus tradition—often glossed as reciprocal mutual aid, kinship-based cooperation, and collective responsibility—resonates with the Minahasan maxim sitou timou tumou tou ("one is fully human only by humanizing others"). As with Indonesia's wider gotong royong ethos, such communal norms are a form of social capital that can enhance coordination, compliance, and trust (Bowen, 1986; Putnam, 1995; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) depend especially on these qualities because the perceived integrity of elections hinges on everyday HR practices—recruitment, training, supervision, teamwork, and ethical climate—executed under public scrutiny (Norris et al., 2015; Treisman, 2000). Recent public complaints about EMB performance in Manado/Minahasa (e.g., weak administration, blame-shifting, poor coordination, low transparency, and dysfunctional

teamwork) underscore the urgency of a contextual HRD approach that reconnects organizational routines with local cooperative values (Tribun Manado, 2024; Gould-Williams, 2003; Mathieu et al., 2008).

Fragmented teamwork and weak cross-functional coordination within EMB units can erode procedural reliability and public trust (Mathieu et al., 2008; Edmondson, 1999). Problem 2: Ethical drifts—rationalizations, tolerance for minor rule-bending, and inconsistent role modeling—undermine an integrity culture (Kaptein, 2008; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Problem 3: Administrative inconsistencies and limited transparency reduce accountability and citizen confidence (Hood, 1991; Norris et al., 2015). General solutions in the HRM/HRD literature emphasize strengthening strategic HR systems (bundles of mutually reinforcing practices) to improve performance and integrity: selective staffing, capability-building, performance management aligned with ethics, and participative work design (Huselid, 1995; Delery & Doty, 1996; Becker & Huselid, 1998; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Yet generic "best practice" solutions may not travel well unless they are culturally embedded and legitimacy-enhancing in local contexts (Ralston et al., 1997; Liu, 2019).

Three streams suggest how to tailor solutions: (a) Strategic HRM and the Resource-Based View (RBV). Organizations gain advantage when HR systems build rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources—skills, social capital, and ethical climates (Barney, 1991; Wright & McMahan, 1992; Delery & Doty, 1996). (b) Social Capital & Teaming. Dense, trust-laden ties enable knowledge sharing, role clarity, and cooperative problem solving—key to reliable election operations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Mathieu et al., 2008; Edmondson, 1999). (c) Ethical Leadership & Integrity Culture. Leader role-modeling, fair systems, and speak-up safety reduce unethical behavior and normalize compliance (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Kaptein, 2008; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Together, these studies imply a context-sensitive HRD architecture: competence-building to meet technical demands, social-capital mechanisms to foster mutual help, and ethics systems to routinize integrity (Huselid, 1995; Paauwe & Boselie, 2005; Putnam, 1995).

Empirical evidence shows that bundled HR practices predict performance and citizenship behaviors in public organizations (Gould-Williams, 2003), that team learning and psychological safety drive coordination quality (Edmondson, 1999), and that ethical cultures can be measured and strengthened (Kaptein, 2008). In election governance, global work on the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI) highlights the centrality of competent, impartial, and transparent administration (Norris et al., 2015). However, three gaps remain: Indigenous values → HRD mechanisms. While Indonesian mutual-aid traditions (e.g., gotong royong) have been analyzed as political or social constructs (Bowen, 1986), there is little causal, instrumented HRD work that operationalizes a local cooperation norm—such as Mapalus—into measurable HR practices and team routines in contemporary public organizations (Liu, 2019; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Integrity outcomes in EMBs. Studies link HR systems to performance, but rigorous tests of culture-infused HRD on integrity climate, coordination reliability, and public trust within EMBs are scarce (Gould-Williams, 2003; Norris et al., 2015; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Contextual fit and legitimacy. Crossvergence research suggests blending global managerial logics with local cultural logics (Ralston et al., 1997), yet few designs explicitly test whether a Mapalus-based HRD design outperforms generic ethics trainings in EMB settings (Paauwe & Boselie, 2005; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). These gaps motivate a study that translates Mapalus into a formal HRD package (competency modules, teamwork protocols, integrity rituals, and transparent workflows) and tests its effects on team functioning and integrity indicators.

This study analyzes and empirically validates a Mapalus-based Human Resource Development (HRD) model for Electoral Management Bodies in North Sulawesi (Manado & Minahasa Raya). Specifically, it: (i) operationalizes Mapalus values (reciprocity, mutual aid, collective accountability) into HRD practices; (ii) examines their associations with team coordination, psychological safety, and integrity culture; and (iii)

explores implications for administrative reliability and stakeholder trust (Edmondson, 1999; Kaptein, 2008; Norris et al., 2015). Novelty. We embed an indigenous cooperation norm (Mapalus) directly into a strategic HRD architecture and test its relevance for integrity outcomes in an EMB context—moving beyond descriptive cultural accounts toward measurable, theory-linked HR bundles grounded in RBV, social capital, and ethical-leadership literatures (Barney, 1991; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Scope. The study focuses on EMB staff and units in Manado and Minahasa Raya. It examines HRD design (training, team protocols, ethics routines), team/ethical climate mediators, and proximal outcomes (coordination reliability, transparency practices), while not evaluating partisan dynamics or macro-level electoral law reforms (Hood, 1991; Gould-Williams, 2003). Field evidence (e.g., local complaint patterns) is used to sharpen construct validity and policy relevance (Tribun Manado, 2024)..

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative survey design complemented by brief semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative evidence. The design was explanatory and cross-sectional: the measurement model (for construct validity and reliability) and the structural model (for testing hypothesized causal relations) were evaluated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.80. This approach is appropriate for examining theoretically specified relationships among latent variables in organizational and public-sector contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2019). Conceptually, four exogenous constructs—Work Productivity (X1), Career Development (X2), Leadership (X3), and Compensation (X4)—were modeled as predictors of two endogenous constructs—Organizational Effectiveness (Y1) and Mapalus Culture (Y2). Mapalus denotes the Minahasan tradition of mutual assistance and collective responsibility and is treated here as a pro-social, integrity-supporting cultural resource embedded in election administration. Figure 1 (Conceptual SEM Model) depicts the reflective measurement structure for all latent variables and the directional effects from X1–X4 toward Y1 and Y2, with covariances among exogenous constructs, indicator errors, and structural disturbances specified as customary in SEM.

Population and Sample

The population comprised Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in North Sulawesi Province (Indonesia) at the city/district and sub-district (kecamatan) levels. The study focused on five jurisdictions—Manado, Minahasa, South Minahasa, North Minahasa, and Southeast Minahasa—and included four agency types: KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum), BAWASLU (Badan Pengawas Pemilu), PPK (Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan), and Panwascam (Panitia Pengawas Pemilu Kecamatan). The units of observation were individual administrators and officials serving within these EMBs. Sampling frames were constructed from current KPU/BAWASLU rosters for the most recent electoral cycle in the five jurisdictions. A proportionate stratified random sampling strategy was implemented with strata defined by jurisdiction (five strata) and agency type (four strata), and simple random selection within kecamatan-level clusters where applicable, ensuring adequate geographic and functional representation (Cochran, 1977; Daniel & Terrell, 1989). The minimum sample size for a finite population was computed using the standard finite-population correction for proportion estimation without replacement at a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, adopting a conservative proportion ($p = 0.50$) and $z = 1.96$; proportional allocation across strata yielded target stratum sizes that were further inflated by 15% to compensate for potential non-response. Eligibility criteria required officials or staff of KPU, BAWASLU, PPK, or Panwascam with at least six months of tenure in their current role; temporary volunteers lacking administrative responsibilities were excluded. Table 1

(Sampling Frame and Proportional Allocation) summarizes the strata, population counts, allocation ratios, and adjusted targets.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Primary data were gathered through three complementary techniques. First, a structured questionnaire was administered in person and via secure online forms to capture standardized responses suitable for SEM analysis. Second, semi-structured interviews with key informants—such as commissioners and heads of secretariats—were conducted to provide contextual depth on integrity practices and leadership routines. Third, non-participant observations of selected administrative processes (e.g., documentation audits and public information boards) were performed to triangulate self-reports. All latent constructs were operationalized reflectively on five-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Work Productivity (X1) included indicators of timeliness, task completion rate, error rate (reverse-coded), and service responsiveness; Career Development (X2) covered clarity of promotion paths, access to training, mentoring, and fairness of appraisal; Leadership (X3) captured ethical role-modeling, participative decision-making, communication quality, and integrity enforcement; Compensation (X4) assessed pay adequacy, benefits, performance incentives, and procedural justice; Organizational Effectiveness (Y1) measured service quality, decision transparency, stakeholder satisfaction, and process efficiency; and Mapalus Culture (Y2) reflected mutual aid norms, collective responsibility, trust/solidarity, and aversion to free-riding. Item pools (four to six items per construct) underwent content validation by three experts in electoral governance and public management, assessing relevance, clarity, and cultural fit, with Aiken's V $\geq$ 0.70 used as the retention benchmark and cognitive debriefing with five officials to ensure comprehensibility. A pilot test ($n \geq 30$) in a neighboring/non-study kecamatan provided item–total correlations (Pearson $r \geq 0.30$ as the acceptance threshold) guiding item revision or deletion (Sugiyono, 2017; Field, 2018). Table 2 (Constructs, Example Indicators, and Measurement References) outlines representative indicators and retention criteria, while interview and observation guides elicited concrete instances of mapalus-based collaboration, integrity enforcement, and bottlenecks in funding transparency.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeded in four sequential stages (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2016; Byrne, 2012). First, data screening addressed missing values (kept below 5% per item and handled via expectation-maximization when missing at random), assessed univariate skewness and kurtosis ($|\text{skew}| \leq 2$; $|\text{kurtosis}| \leq 7$) alongside Mardia's test for multivariate normality, and identified multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance at $p < .001$. Procedural remedies and statistical diagnostics were applied to mitigate common-method variance, including psychological separation of constructs, anonymity assurances, Harman's single-factor test, and a common latent factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) established the measurement model: convergent validity required standardized loadings $\geq$ .50 (preferably $\geq$ .70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) $\geq$ .50, and Composite Reliability (CR) $\geq$ .70; discriminant validity was examined via the Fornell–Larcker criterion (square root of AVE exceeding inter-construct correlations) and the HTMT ratio (< .85). Global fit evaluation targeted $\chi^2/df \leq 3$, CFI and TLI (NNFI) $\geq$ .90 (preferably $\geq$ .95), RMSEA $\leq$ .08 (preferably $\leq$ .06), and SRMR $\leq$ .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). Third, the structural model tested hypothesized paths from X1–X4 to Y1 and Y2 using robust standard errors, estimated indirect and total effects where theoretically justified, and reported explained variance (R^2) for both endogenous constructs. When sample size permitted, multigroup invariance tests (configural, metric, scalar) compared KPU, BAWASLU, PPK, and Panwascam groups to evaluate stability of measurement and structural relations. Fourth, robustness checks examined alternative specifications (e.g., theoretically warranted correlated residuals), confirmed acceptable multicollinearity (VIF < 5), and

summarized descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for all items and constructs. Figure 2 (Analysis Flow) narrates the progression from screening to CFA, global fit, structural testing, optional invariance, and robustness diagnostics.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Construct validity was assured through expert review (content validity), pilot-based item analysis (item–total correlations), and CFA-based assessments of convergent and discriminant validity in the main study (Hair et al., 2019). Reliability was examined with Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, adopting $\alpha \geq .70$ and $CR \geq .70$ as decision thresholds (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Field, 2018); item-level reliability was evaluated via standardized factor loadings. Pearson product–moment correlations were used for item–total validity checks following standard computation, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated via the alpha-coefficient method (Sugiyono, 2017). Decision rules for psychometric evaluation, including internal consistency, convergent and discriminant validity, and global model-fit cutoffs, are synthesized in Table 3 (Decision Rules for Psychometric Evaluation) with references to Hair et al. (2019), Henseler et al. (2015), Fornell and Larcker (1981), Hu and Bentler (1999), and Kline (2016). Internal validity threats related to common-method variance were minimized through instrument design (mixed item directions, construct separation, varied anchors) and verified through the Podsakoff et al. (2003) diagnostics; external validity was strengthened by the stratified sampling design representing jurisdictions and agency types across the five districts/cities. Ethical safeguards included prior institutional ethics approval, formal permissions from provincial and district/city KPU and BAWASLU offices, written informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality with de-identification and encrypted data storage accessible only to the research team. Given the sensitivity of integrity-related topics, interviews were scheduled privately and without the presence of administrative superiors to reduce perceived coercion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Effects on Organizational Outcomes

The structural analysis indicates that the joint influence of Human Resource Management (HRM; X1) and Budaya *Mapalus* (X2) on the organizational outcome (Y) reaches 59.0%, leaving 41.0% of variance attributable to other, unmodeled determinants. Disaggregating the pathways, HRM contributes a direct effect of 9.2% on Y, complemented by an indirect effect of 6.5% that flows through *Mapalus*, yielding a total effect of 15.7%. Conversely, *Mapalus* exerts a direct effect of 36.7% on Y and an indirect effect of 6.5% via HRM, producing a larger total effect of 43.3%. Two implications follow immediately from this decomposition. First, both HRM and *Mapalus* are statistically meaningful and substantively important. Second, the dominant driver of outcomes in this setting is *Mapalus*, whose total effect is almost three times that of HRM.

An earlier bivariate summary suggested a different picture—namely, HRM ≈ 37% and *Mapalus* ≈ 9.9% (total ≈ 39.6% with a residual ≈ 50.5%). Those figures are not aligned with the structural decomposition above and are most plausibly the outcome of separate zero-order models (i.e., simple regressions or correlations estimated one predictor at a time). In contrast, the simultaneous structural model apportions shared variance and accounts for cross-paths, revealing that a substantial part of HRM's zero-order association is channeled through *Mapalus*. Thus, once both predictors are entered together, *Mapalus* absorbs the lion's share of the explanatory power, and HRM's unique contribution is smaller but still meaningful.

The pattern—culture dominating, HRM enabling—is consistent with the view that organizational culture provides the interpretive frame for HRM systems, shaping how policies are understood and enacted (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). Meta-analytic and review evidence shows

that culture and climate for service meaningfully predict performance and citizen outcomes in public organizations (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013; Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005). At the same time, HRM "bundles" build human capital and motivation (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012; Kehoe & Wright, 2013) but achieve their fullest impact when embedded in congruent cultural norms. In short, the present data fit a theoretically coherent story: HRM is the capability platform, *Mapalus* is the social engine that mobilizes that capability for reliable, citizen-facing service (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007).

For Election Management Bodies (EMBs—KPU, BAWASLU, PPK/Panwascam) in *Minahasa Raya*, the results imply that codifying and reinforcing *Mapalus*—mutual aid, solidarity, transparent workload sharing—should be treated as a first-order design variable, with HRM professionalization (fair staffing, targeted training on electoral SOPs, performance feedback) serving as a complementary enabler. This synergy reflects the long-standing bundle logic in strategic HRM: isolated practices rarely shift outcomes without supportive social norms and shared meaning (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Becker & Huselid, 1998).

Direct vs. Indirect

The direct path from *Mapalus* to Y (36.7%) dwarfs the direct path from HRM to Y (9.2%), indicating that culture exerts a more immediate pull on frontline behaviors relevant to service quality and administrative reliability. The cross-mediation is symmetric: HRM contributes an additional 6.5% via *Mapalus* and, reciprocally, *Mapalus* contributes 6.5% via HRM. These crossed pathways are conceptually meaningful. HRM routines—transparent selection, development, feedback—can nurture and stabilize cooperative norms, while a strong *Mapalus* culture can amplify the take-up and effectiveness of HRM initiatives (e.g., staff who value collective success are more likely to engage in training, share know-how, and adhere to SOPs).

The reciprocal pattern mirrors the HRM–climate/culture literature in which HRM's effects are often transmitted through shared perceptions (e.g., climate for service, justice, or safety) (Gelade & Ivery, 2003; Liao & Chuang, 2004; Takeuchi, Chen, & Lepak, 2009). Strong, coherent cultures in turn render HR policies more legible and consistently enacted, increasing system strength (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Meta-analytic tests confirm that HRM influences performance via attitudinal and behavioral mediators (Jiang et al., 2012; Raineri, 2017), which in collectivist or prosocial contexts tend to be particularly salient.

For practice, the mediation structure suggests a sequenced strategy: first, stabilize HRM basics with high procedural justice (clear roles, transparent rotation, competency-based training on electoral logistics and integrity); second, socialize *Mapalus* norms explicitly (mutual aid protocols during peak workload, cross-unit "help queues," and peer shadowing on critical SOPs); third, lock in reinforcement through recognition systems that publicly celebrate collaborative service. Such layering reduces the execution risk typical of high-pressure electoral operations where variance in coordination—not individual skill alone—often determines service quality (Radnor, Osborne, Kinder, & Mutton, 2014).

Patterning, Relative Dominance, and Unexplained Variance

In relative terms, the total effect of *Mapalus* (43.3%) is approximately 2.8× larger than that of HRM (15.7%). The remaining 41.0% of unexplained variance is nontrivial, implying that other predictors—leadership behavior, digital infrastructure, regulatory clarity, and workload/time pressure along the electoral cycle—are likely material.

Public sector performance is multi-determinant. Leadership—particularly ethical and transformational forms—often serves as a primary culture-shaping mechanism, motivating discretionary effort and norm enforcement (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Peng, Liao, & Sun, 2020). Service system design and digital enablement influence reliability and speed by reducing friction and error opportunities (Radnor et al., 2014). Conversely, red tape and role overload undermine citizen-oriented behaviors and can blunt the impact of

HRM and culture alike (DeHart-Davis & Pandey, 2005; George, 2023). The large residual therefore does not cast doubt on the HRM/*Mapalus* effects; rather, it signals the need for a broadened model that incorporates leadership, process, and technological conditions as contextual moderators.

For future research, incorporating leadership (e.g., integrity modeling, ethical voice), process complexity, and digital transparency (e.g., queue visibility, complaint tracking, logistics dashboards) will likely reduce unexplained variance and sharpen intervention targets. For policy, pairing culture/HRM interventions with process simplification and lightweight digital tools should produce complementary gains in service quality and public trust (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Radnor et al., 2014).

Robustness, Reliability, and Competing Explanations

Despite reliance on questionnaire data, both predictors show statistically significant links to organizational outcomes, with *Mapalus* again dominant in total effect. The pattern of asymmetric direct effects combined with balanced cross-mediations supports a structured causal story in which culture is the proximal driver and HRM the foundational enabler.

Survey-based models raise the specter of common method variance (CMV). However, CMV alone rarely generates structured, theoretically coherent asymmetries across multiple constructs and paths (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The HRM → culture → outcomes cascade has been replicated across sectors and designs, including studies with multi-source data (Jiang et al., 2012; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Moreover, the content logic is strong: in frontline, time-sensitive public services, shared norms (e.g., mutual aid, fairness) tend to guide micro-behaviors at the point of service, while HRM provides capability and incentives (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Schneider et al., 2013).

Three plausible alternatives deserve consideration: Reverse causality. High service quality could strengthen *Mapalus* (i.e., success begets solidarity). Cross-sectional data cannot fully dismiss this, underlining the value of longitudinal or lagged designs. Still, the observed cross-mediation from HRM to Y via *Mapalus* is consistent with the idea that formal practices seed norms, rather than simply reflect them. Context specificity. North Sulawesi's communitarian traditions may elevate *Mapalus* beyond what would be seen elsewhere. This strengthens the practical relevance for *Minahasa Raya* but calls for cross-province validation to test boundary conditions. Measurement conflation (culture vs. climate). If measures blur culture (deep norms) with climate (shared perceptions), path magnitudes can be biased. Future work should include discriminant validity checks and multi-source indicators (citizens, supervisors, system logs) to ensure construct clarity (Schneider et al., 2013; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Integration with the EMB Context (*Minahasa Raya*)

Field observations during peak electoral phases converge with the statistical pattern: cooperation, mutual aid, and transparent workload sharing—the hallmarks of *Mapalus*—stabilize service continuity, buffer shocks (e.g., unexpected surges in demand, last-mile logistical hiccups), and preserve citizen trust. HRM underwrites these effects by equipping staff with role clarity, SOP mastery, and feedback-driven improvement. The data therefore support a culture-led, HRM-enabled model of public service quality.

In public administration, prosocial motivation and collective orientations are linked to perseverance under pressure and willingness to go beyond formal requirements (Perry, Hondeghem, & Wise, 2010; Bellé, 2014). Service climate studies show that employees' shared expectations about service priorities predict customer perceptions and objective performance (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Salanova et al., 2005). The present findings map tightly onto this evidence base: *Mapalus* (norms) shapes the micro-interactions that citizens experience, and HRM (systems) sustains the capability to deliver those interactions consistently.

Theoretically, the results sharpen the contingency perspective in HRM by showing how a locally embedded culture (*Mapalus*) can dominate variance in citizen outcomes even when HRM is well-specified. Practically, quick wins include (i) institutionalizing *Mapalus* "help queues" so that units with slack

proactively assist overloaded counterparts, (ii) embedding peer shadowing for mission-critical SOPs (ballot logistics, complaint handling), (iii) aligning recognition and appraisal with collaborative, cross-unit achievements, and (iv) standardizing after-action reviews each electoral phase to encode and disseminate lessons learned. Policy-wise, integrating *Mapalus* indicators into service charters, together with competency-based HRM and transparent rotation, can reinforce fairness while avoiding clique formation.

The most notable surprise is the reversal between the earlier bivariate impression (HRM dominant) and the simultaneous model (*Mapalus* dominant). The plausible explanation is shared variance reallocation: because *Mapalus* is the proximal behavioral mechanism through which HR practices are enacted day-to-day, it captures much of the zero-order link previously attributed to HRM when the predictors were modeled in isolation. In practical terms, the finding does not downplay HRM; it specifies how HRM works best—through culture. This mechanism is consistent with system strength theory (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and with evidence that culture provides the "why" while HRM supplies the "how" (Jiang et al., 2012; Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

Several limitations warrant caution. First, the cross-sectional and self-report design constrains causal inference and introduces potential CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, the regional focus (*Minahasa Raya*) enhances contextual fit but limits generalization without replication in other provinces and EMB configurations. Third, the residual 41.0% implies notable omitted variables—leadership, process complexity, digital infrastructure, resource adequacy, and regulatory clarity are key candidates. Fourth, measurement granularity could be improved by cleanly separating culture, climate, and norm enforcement, supported by multi-source data (citizens, supervisors, digital logs), thereby strengthening discriminant validity and reducing shared-method artifacts.

Despite the limitations, several features bolster confidence in the results. The convergent pattern—a large direct effect of *Mapalus*, modest direct effect of HRM, and symmetric cross-mediations—provides internal triangulation. The mechanism inferred—HRM shaping norms that, in turn, shape frontline behavior—aligns with established theory and meta-analytic evidence (Combs et al., 2006; Jiang et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Finally, the findings cohere with field observations, increasing ecological validity for EMB operations. To further reinforce reliability, future studies should incorporate temporal separation, multi-source outcomes (e.g., citizen complaint rates, queue times, TPS error logs, absenteeism), and objective service metrics, thereby triangulating beyond self-report (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Radnor et al., 2014).

Policy. Formalize *Mapalus* as a service norm within EMB guidelines and service charters; incorporate cooperation metrics into performance audits; and ensure transparent rotation and competency-based promotion to maintain fairness and avoid network capture. Practice. Build competency-based training that integrates technical SOP drills with collaborative exercises (e.g., surge simulations, cross-unit resource pooling). Establish real-time help channels and visual dashboards that make workloads and bottlenecks visible so that *Mapalus* can trigger timely mutual aid. Align rewards with collaborative outcomes rather than individual metrics alone. Research. Test longitudinal mediation models (HRM → *Mapalus* → service quality) across electoral cycles; incorporate leadership behavior, digital infrastructure, and workload as moderators to model contingencies; employ multi-source and objective indicators to mitigate CMV; and examine boundary conditions (urban vs. rural kecamatan, resource-rich vs. constrained environments). Theoretical work should continue to integrate system strength (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) with resource-based and social exchange perspectives to explain why culture sometimes eclipses HRM in explaining citizen-facing performance (Organ, 1988; Wright & McMahan, 2011; Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to design and empirically validate a Mapalus-based human resource development (HRD) model for Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in North Sulawesi—testing how HRM systems

and the indigenous cooperation norm of Mapalus jointly shape team coordination, psychological safety, integrity culture, and organizational effectiveness; the evidence shows that the model explains 59.0% of variance in outcomes, with Mapalus exerting the dominant total effect (43.3%) and HRM a meaningful but smaller total effect (15.7%), alongside symmetric cross-mediations (6.5% each) that indicate a culture-led, HRM-enabled mechanism in which social norms mobilize capability built by formal HR practices; theoretically, the study contributes by operationalizing an indigenous norm into a measurable HRD bundle, integrating RBV, social capital, and ethical-leadership perspectives, and demonstrating when and why culture can eclipse HRM in explaining citizen-facing performance; practically, it offers a design playbook—institutionalize Mapalus protocols (help queues, cross-unit shadowing, public recognition of collaborative work), professionalize HRM (transparent staffing, competency-based training, integrity-aligned appraisal), and layer both with after-action learning—to stabilize coordination under electoral pressure; and for policy, it recommends embedding Mapalus indicators and cooperation metrics into service charters, audits, and promotion criteria to enhance transparency and trust while guarding against clique capture, thereby advancing a context-fit pathway to cleaner, more reliable election administration.

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