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Methodological Validation of an HRM–Performance Measurement Instrument: A Pilot Study in Malaysian Local Government

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ABSTRACT

The role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in impacting public sector performance is recognised globally; however, only a small number of empirical research tools exist to measure HRM practice within Malaysian local governments. This study investigates the reliability, validity, and usability of context-based performance measurement for HRM through a new assessment tool. The performance measurement tool was developed using the JD-R model and informed by the following theories: Transfer of Training, Person-Job Fit, Career Anchor and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, with application to Training, Job Fit, Career Development and Satisfaction. In this study, a cross-sectional survey was administered to 30 employees at MPKL in Malaysia. Content validity was assessed through expert reviews and participant feedback regarding the clarity and relevance of each item. Reliability of internal consistency was determined by Cronbach's alpha; feasibility was assessed based on completion rates, average response time, and univariate normality of item distributions. Results indicated high internal consistency (α = 0.75–0.98) and content validity (S-CVI/Ave = 0.98). All scales met normality criteria, with a 100% completion rate and an average response time of 17 minutes. These results support the appropriateness of the instrument as a research tool for future studies within Malaysian local governments contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local governments have a vital role in the national development process because they are responsible for delivering public services (Zakaria et al., 2025). This is supported by the national development plans of Malaysia (The Twelfth and Thirteenth Malaysia Plans), which highlight the significance of local governments in ensuring efficient delivery of public services (EPU, 2023; EPU, 2025). However, there seems to be a disconnect between the strategic objectives and the actual situation in the local governments. Many local governments in Malaysia are facing challenges in terms of the structural issues in the training process, the mismatch between the competencies of employees and the requirements of the job, as well as the opportunities for career progression (KPKT, 2022; MPKL, 2021). Low employee morale can affect how well they provide services to the public (Bahardin et al., 2019). Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are considered a key contributor to an organisation's overall performance (Romaiha et al., 2022). The Job-Demands Resources Model (JD-R Model) highlights former, current and future organisational resources (training opportunities, job roles and career paths). Many researchers believe that these resources will lead to enhanced well-being and productivity among employees (Demerouti et al., 2001). Much of the empirical evidence supporting these theoretical frameworks has been conducted in either the private sector or a global context (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). Given that the majority of empirical studies thus far were conducted within the context of private sector employees and international employees, researchers tend to assume such frameworks can be applied directly to public sector employees, especially local governments, in Malaysia. Therefore, it is unknown whether existing measurement instruments will adequately capture the actual institutional and administrative realities of local governments in Malaysia (Mohamad et al., 2015; Ooh et al., 2020). To address this challenge, a still-to-be-piloted HRM-performance measurement instrument specific to Malaysia (the instrument) will be validated in this study. The objective of this initial validation process is to demonstrate that the instrument will be sufficiently reliable and usable for future use as part of evidence-based evaluation of HRM performance within the context of Malaysian local government operations (Mohd Noor & Mohamad Fuzi, 2025).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The JD-R Model has been widely viewed as a standard model in organisational studies. Researchers have, however, paid relatively less attention to its empirical validation in the public sector (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). One big obstacle is the unavailability of a set of measurement instruments that have been psychometrically validated for public administration in the context of developing countries like Malaysia (Sulaiman et al., 2021). Local governments in Malaysia operate within a political, administrative, and cultural framework that differs from that of other countries, and this is why the use of instruments developed for the international or private sector settings might not be quite accurate and might lead to a conceptual mismatch (Mohamad et al., 2015; Ooh et al., 2020). Researchers face significant challenges when they attempt to study empirical research within Malaysian local governments because there are no appropriate measurement tools for specific contexts, which they need to conduct their work (Mohamad Hadzar et al., 2026). The existence of institutional frameworks which include organisational hierarchies and employee development routes, and workforce dedication to public service, must be present to effectively measure how HRM practices impact organisational performance (Zakaria et al., 2025). The results of this research have become fragmented because local governments need evidence-based methods to evaluate their HRM programs, which has created challenges for their assessment processes (Romaiha et al., 2022). Prior psychometric validation efforts within the Malaysian public sector have tended to target single, narrowly defined constructs rather than integrated HRM-performance systems. For instance, Sulaiman et al. (2021) validated a public service motivation scale among Malaysian civil servants, while Ooh et al. (2020) established the psychometric properties of a Psychological Capital Scale for the Malaysian workforce; both instruments, though methodologically robust, isolate a single psychological construct rather than capturing the interplay of training, job suitability, and career development as joint antecedents of performance. Similarly, Zakaria et al. (2024) demonstrated strong content validity procedures for a technical competency framework in Malaysian local governments, but the instrument was domain-specific (building information modelling) rather than generalizable to

core HRM functions. Hashim and Ahmad (2020) come closest to the present study's scope, having validated scales measuring antecedents and consequences of evaluation implementation in the Malaysian public sector. However, their instrument did not incorporate career development or job suitability as distinct dimensions. The present instrument extends this body of work by consolidating training, job suitability, career development, and job satisfaction into a single validated measure specific to local government operations, addressing an integration gap that prior single-construct instruments have not resolved. The present research study supports its instrument development work more than its hypothesis testing process (Bujang et al., 2024). The research study includes a methodological pilot study, which aims to develop and test measurement instruments through rigorous processes to establish their reliability, validity and suitability for use in Malaysian local governments (Mohd Noor & Mohamad Fuzi, 2025).

3. THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The instrument was developed from established theoretical frameworks rather than assembled solely from survey items. The instrument is theoretically grounded in the JD-R model. The model serves as the structural foundation of the instrument. The model considers the motivational aspects specific to the local government context by conceptualising HRM practices as organisational resources. The instrument dimensions of the system base their functions on specialised theoretical knowledge. The training dimension tracks attendance records while using the Transfer of Training model to evaluate how employees implement their acquired skills in actual work situations. According to Person-Job Fit theory, which considers a person's capabilities, requirements, and values, employee role alignment is determined by how closely they align with the requirements of an employee role (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Long-term career paths and employee retention are measured through Schein's Career Anchor theory, which links employee career paths to their intrinsic motivation and values (Schein, 1978). Workplace satisfaction is measured, focusing on intrinsic factors, through Herzberg's Two-Factor theory (Herzberg, 1959). This multi-theory grounding distinguishes the instrument from prior public-sector HRM measurement models, which have typically relied on a single theoretical lens. Demo et al. (2024), for example, developed an HRM practices measurement model for Brazilian public service grounded primarily in strategic HRM theory, without incorporating motivational or career-stage frameworks. Likewise, Zolak Poljašević et al. (2025) applied the JD-R model to examine HRM in public administration but did not extend the framework to career development or person-job fit constructs, leaving those dimensions theoretically underspecified. Bryson and White (2021) examined high-performance work systems in British public sector workplaces using an organisational-outcomes perspective, again without integrating individual-level fit or career-anchor theory. By combining the JD-R model with the Transfer of Training model, Person-Job Fit theory, Career Anchor theory, and Herzberg's Two-Factor theory, the present instrument offers a more theoretically comprehensive basis for capturing the multidimensional nature of HRM practices than single-theory models used in comparable public-sector validation studies. The theories that the instrument is based on ensure that it is both relevant and sound, making it possible for it to measure the complex relationships between HRM practices, employee motivation, and organisational outcomes in Malaysian local governments.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PILOT FOCUS

The proposed research model focuses on the relationship between three HRM practices: training, job suitability, and career development. These three HRM practices are related to job performance (Mohamad Hadzar et al., 2026). Job satisfaction is also proposed as a moderating factor. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework, including the areas that this pilot study aims to cover.

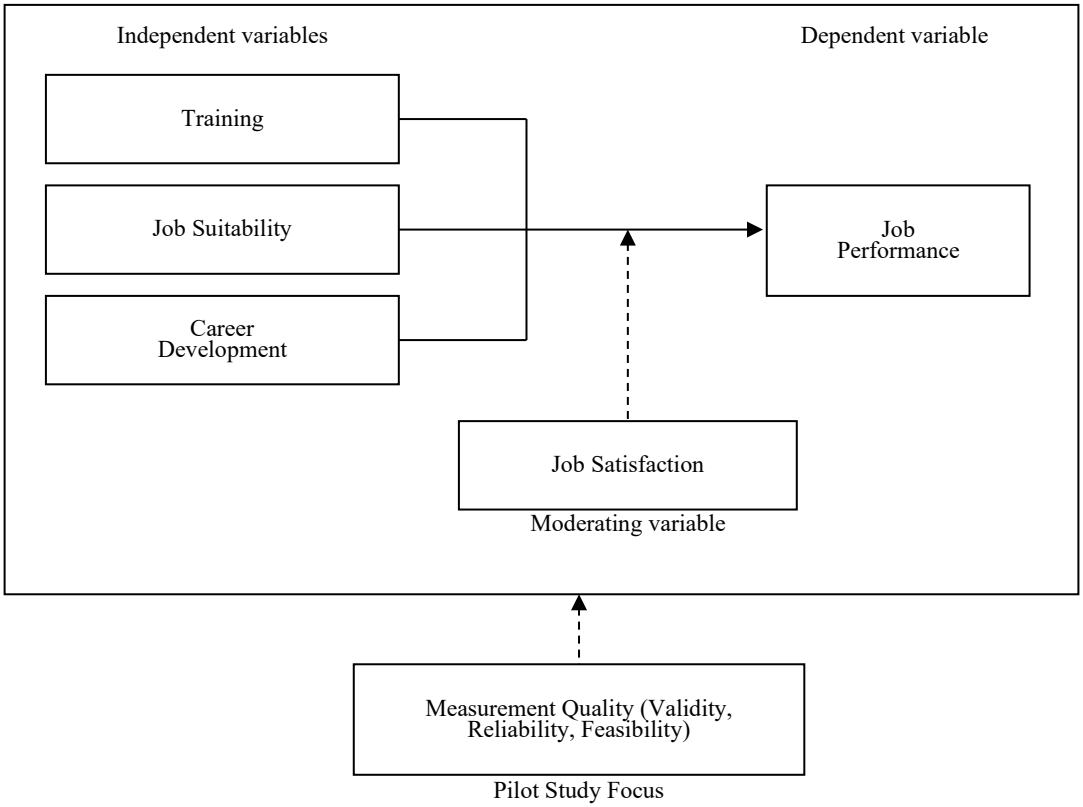


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework underpinning the HRM–performance instrument and scope of the pilot validation study

Source: Author

HRM practices can be conceptualised from the perspective of the JD-R model. HRM practices are not just administrative activities; rather, these are important organisational resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). HRM practices have specific functions. Training is important because it improves the skills and competencies of the workforce (Noe, 2017). Job suitability ensures that the capabilities and competencies of the workforce match the needs and demands of the workplace (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Career development helps retain the workforce by providing growth opportunities (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2012). Job satisfaction moderates the effectiveness of HRM practices (Herzberg, 1959). Employees who are satisfied with their work are more likely to respond positively to HRM practices. This study does not seek to test hypotheses, but rather focuses on validating the measurement instrument itself (Bujang et al., 2024). The establishment of reliability and validity in this pilot study will ensure the application of the tool in the future in Malaysian local governments (Mohd Noor & Mohamad Fuzi, 2025).

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research has three objectives. The first is to validate the HRM instrument that has been adapted by determining if it can produce accurate and appropriate results that can be relied upon throughout the study. The second objective is to determine if the HRM instrument also meets content validity requirements as well as being able to assess the accuracy of the results produced by the instrument. The third objective of this study will be to determine if the HRM instrument works well within Malaysian local governments. These objectives will provide proof to those examining the methodologically sound basis for the HRM instrument (A Rahman et al., 2021) and will pave the way for using it in large-scale research studies (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The initial study will establish trust that subsequent research will yield accurate and significant information that can be relied upon to support evidence-based HRM methods in local governments (Romaiha et al., 2022).

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Academically, this research contributes a valid and reliable instrument for measuring HRM practices within Malaysian local government (Sulaiman et al., 2021), establishing a foundation for future studies in this area (Bujang et al., 2024). Practically, the instrument offers local governments an initial diagnostic tool for assessing HRM strengths and weaknesses (Romaiha et al., 2022) and can inform interventions to improve workforce management and public service delivery (Zakaria et al., 2025). While this pilot study does not provide definitive answers, it takes a meaningful step toward supporting evidence-informed decision-making, positioning the instrument as a resource that connects theoretical research with practical HRM improvement in Malaysian local governments.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research design

This study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional pilot design to validate the HRM-performance instrument before full-scale implementation. The main aim of this research was to test the HRM-performance instrument before it is used in future research studies. Unlike other studies that use quantitative approaches with a focus on hypothesis testing, this research uses a diagnostic approach in testing whether the constructs are both psychometrically sound and practically applicable in the context of Malaysian local governments (Mohamad et al., 2015). The research analysis studies three main elements, which include technical rigour, instrument clarity, and instrument consistency, according to the standards of Hair et al. (2018), while testing for user accessibility to determine its future usability in different research studies, according to Fink (2013). The instrument achieves its reliable and valid status because it meets the requirements for upcoming data collection activities, which apply to Malaysian local governments, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) and Creswell and Creswell (2017).

7.2 Settings and participants

The pilot study site was *Majlis Perbandaran Kuala Langat* (MPKL), Selangor, Malaysia, as the local government was essentially involved human capital development programs (MPKL, 2021). In fact, the MPKL is an exemplary model to mirror the HRM practices among local governments in Malaysia. The sample frame was determined based on the *Jabatan Khidmat Pengurusan* (JKP) database, where the count of active employees who had their names registered was 496 as of December 2024. Nonetheless, the sample selection was limited to permanent or contract employees who have at least one year of work experience to make sure that the data collected from the employees of MPKL would be representative (Polit & Beck, 2017). Temporary interns and senior management posts such as the *Yang Dipertua*, *Timbalan Yang Dipertua*, and *Timbalan Setiausaha* were excluded from the study as their strategic role might have limited their involvement in the daily HRM practices, thus their data might not have been accurate (Babbie,

2020). Using a digital randomisation calculator, a simple random sample of 30 participants (n = 30) was selected from the sample frame. This sample size aligns with established pilot study conventions. Bujang et al. (2024) recommend a minimum of 30 respondents for reliability assessment in questionnaire pilot testing. The threshold consistent with Polit and Beck's (2017) guidance that pilot samples of 10% of the projected main study sample, or a minimum of 30 participants, are generally adequate to detect major instrument flaws prior to full-scale data collection. This is further supported by A Rahman et al. (2021), who applied a comparable pilot sample size in validating a Malaysian-context instrument for reliability and validity testing prior to large-scale deployment.

7.3 Procedures

Data collection activities were only officially authorised after receiving MPKL management's approval. Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) in order to provide voluntary participation and protect participants' confidentiality. Throughout the data collection process, the participants' anonymity was maintained to protect the integrity of the data (Babbie, 2020). Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent thorough content validation. A content validation panel comprised of three senior HRM and public administration professionals from MPKL rated each item using a structured format, which provided Content Validity Index (CVI). The panel's expertise regarding the instrument's content will help make it more contextually appropriate when using it in Malaysian local governments (Zakaria et al., 2024). The refined instrument was administered in two languages: English and *Bahasa Melayu*. The refined instrument contained a cover letter, which explained that participants' responses were confidential. The participants had one week to finish the survey and return it to JKP by using a secure collection box in order to ensure prompt completion while allowing for careful responses (Fink, 2013). During this time, the participants also completed a feedback form on the face validity and feasibility of the instrument to indicate any unclear language or issues regarding the length of the survey. This feedback is critical for the final phase of development for the instrument (Polit & Beck, 2017).

7.4 Instrument development and measures

The instrument was developed by modifying existing scales that had been previously researched instead of developing new scales from the ground up (Hair et al., 2018). This process allowed for ensuring that the instrument was not only appropriate for the Malaysian local government context but also based on developed theoretical frameworks. The forward and backward translation technique was employed to confirm that the instrument was linguistically appropriate. The forward and backward translation proved that the instrument was understood easily in both Bahasa Melayu and English (Masilamani et al., 2025). The instrument was designed to measure a variety of constructs (as indicated in Table 1), and each of these constructs had a theoretical basis.

Table 1. Constructs and Measurement Sources

Construct	Source of Items	Theoretical Basis	No. of Items
Training	Noe (2017)	Transfer of Training Model	5
Job Suitability	Kristof-Brown et al. (2005)	Person–Job Fit Theory	5
Career Development	Greenhaus & Callanan (2012)	Schein's Career Anchor Theory	5
Job Satisfaction	Spector (1997) – Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)	Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	5
Job Performance	Williams & Anderson (1991)	In-role and Extra-role Performance Model	5

Source: Author's compilation based on cited sources

The instrument consisted of items expressed in a five-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." The instrument also contained a demographic section with 8 types of demographics collected.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 29 and were guided by three objectives: assessing the reliability of the collected data, establishing its validity in representing the intended constructs, and determining its feasibility for use within Malaysian local governments.

8.1 Reliability and distribution assessments

As a first step, the instrument's internal consistency was assessed, which consists of five dimensions: Training, Job Suitability, Career Development, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance. In this respect, Cronbach's alpha was a significant criterion for determining the internal consistency of the variables; therefore, the minimum acceptable level was 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018). In addition to assessing Cronbach's alpha, item-total correlation was also used to identify items that did not significantly contribute to their dimension (Bahry et al., 2021). At the same time, all data were checked for normality, which would allow for additional analysis to be conducted. Determining the normality of the data involved the calculation of the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution; the results showed that the data met the acceptance criteria set forth for both of these variables. According to the conservative criteria set forth by Tabachnick and Fidell (2019), the data were normally distributed at the level of ±2.0 for skewness and ±7.0 for kurtosis. The knowledge of these characteristics in the data provides greater confidence in the validity of the research instrument to conduct more rigorous analyses, thus validating the research of local governments in Malaysia (Creswell &Creswell, 2017).

8.2 Validity assessments

The relevance of the instrument was determined using the Content Validity Index (CVI). Three top management staff members from MPKL made the ratings on the instrument to determine the performance of the CVI rating system and to calculate both the Item Level CVI (I-CVI) and the Scale Level CVI (S-CVI/Ave). To be considered acceptable, the established criteria for the I-CVI is 0.78; for each item and the S-CVI/Ave must be 0.90 for the entire scale (Polit & Beck, 2017). Expert judgments will be used to establish face validity in addition to the original users' input before the pilot study. Participants in the pilot study (30) received a feedback form and were asked to rate the instrument based on their feedback or rating comments about the instrument. The input of the participants is vital to understanding how usable and applicable the instrument will ultimately be to local governments in Malaysia. This pilot study evaluated content validity, face validity, and internal consistency as an initial phase of instrument validation. Construct validity, specifically the underlying factor structure of the adapted constructs, was not assessed at this stage due to the limited sample size (n = 30), and is designated for evaluation via EFA and CFA in the full-scale study.

8.3 Feasibility evaluation

Both logistical information and participant feedback were evaluated in order to assess the practicality of the survey. Successful completion of the survey, as well as how long it took, were two of the major success factors for this study (A Rahman et al., 2021). Participants used the Feasibility Indicator Assessment form to provide feedback on the feasibility of the survey, and this feedback was used to assess participants' comfort level with the survey and their ability to complete it (Mohamad et al., 2015). This provided insight into users' ability to understand the survey and determine if the length of the survey was appropriate given their local governments' working conditions (Mohamad et al., 2015).

9. RESULTS

9.1 Reliability and data normality

The trustworthiness of the assessment tool was examined utilising the internal consistency method (Cronbach's alpha) for five different constructs (Training, Job Suitability, Career Development, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance), with a total of 25 items. All constructs yielded values greater than the minimum number established as acceptable for reliability (0.70), with the Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.75 to 0.98 (Table 2). In addition, item-total correlations were measured between each item and its item-total composite in order to provide additional confirmatory evidence of component reliability. Item-total correlations for all corrected items were above the minimum threshold of 0.30; item-total correlations ranged between 0.41 and 0.97 (M= 0.80). Therefore, all items demonstrated adequate contribution to the internal consistency of their respective scales. No items were excluded at this point based on the item-total correlations.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis of Constructs (n = 30)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Training	5	0.752
Job Suitability	5	0.913
Career Development	5	0.971
Job Satisfaction	5	0.936
Job Performance	5	0.984

Source: Author's own data

Note: All values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good to excellent internal consistency for all constructs.

It is worth noting that the Job Performance construct yielded a notably high Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.984). While values exceeding 0.70 are generally desirable, coefficients approaching 1.00 may indicate item redundancy or a restricted range of item content within the construct, rather than solely reflecting superior reliability (Hair et al., 2018). This possibility is further examined in the Discussion section, alongside recommendations for item refinement in future studies.

Data was also assessed for suitability for parametric testing by examining univariate normality. Skewness and kurtosis fell within acceptable levels (skewness = ±2.00; kurtosis = ±7.00) across all five constructs; therefore, the data were appropriate for parametric analysis (Table 3). In summary, results indicate that the assessment tool utilised in this study is a reliable instrument, and the data are appropriate for additional statistical modelling.

Table 3. Tests of Univariate Normality for Study Constructs (n = 30)

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis
Training	-1.29	0.95
Job Suitability	-0.99	0.41
Career Development	-0.73	-0.82
Job Satisfaction	-0.87	-0.30
Job Performance	-0.65	-1.08

Source: Author's own data

Note: All values fall within the acceptable range of ±2.0 for Skewness and ±7.0 for Kurtosis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019), indicating no severe violation of univariate normality. Values represent construct-level averages calculated from individual item distributions.

9.2 Content validity

According to the first evaluation by experts, the Scale-Level Content Validity Index Average (S-CVI/Ave) score was identified as being equal to 0.94, and the individual Content Validity Index (I-CVI) ranged from 0.67 to 1.00 (see Table 4). Three of the constructs, which were Training, Career Development and Job Performance, had individual Content Validity Index (I-CVI) scores below the recommended minimum threshold of 0.78. However, based on the feedback from the experts, the items requiring revision were revised for better clarity and context. As a result, after the revisions, all items exceeded the established threshold. Specifically, as a result of the revisions, the Scale-Level Content Validity Index Average (S-CVI/Ave) score increased to 0.98, and all Content Validity Index (I-CVI) scores were above or equal to 0.80 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Content Validity Index (CVI) Scores for the Research Instrument

Construct	No of Items	Initial I-CVI range	Revised I-CVI range	Initial S-CVI/Ave	Revised S-CVI/Ave	Final Result
Training	5	0.67 - 1.00	0.80 - 1.00	0.90	0.96	Excellent
Job Suitability	5	1.00 - 1.00	1.00 - 1.00	1.00	1.00	Excellent
Career Development	5	0.67 - 1.00	0.80 - 1.00	0.90	0.96	Excellent
Job Satisfaction	5	1.00 - 1.00	1.00 - 1.00	1.00	1.00	Excellent
Job Performance	5	0.67 - 1.00	0.80 - 1.00	0.90	0.96	Excellent
Overall Average				0.94	0.98	Excellent

Source: Author's own data

Note: An I-CVI ≥ 0.78 and S-CVI/Ave ≥ 0.90 are considered acceptable (Polit & Beck, 2017). Items from the Training, Career Development, and Job Performance constructs were revised based on expert feedback, resulting in improved CVI scores.

The results demonstrated excellent content validity, indicating that the instrument items adequately represented the intended constructs. These findings provide preliminary evidence supporting the content adequacy of the instrument within the pilot-study context.

9.3 Face validity

The face validity of the instrument was ensured through the feedback received from the participants of the pilot study. Over 90% of the participants of the pilot study confirmed that the instrument's items were easy to understand, relevant, and easy to respond to (Table 5). The instrument was slightly changed to make it easier to understand, such as changing the complex sentences used in the instrument to make it easy to read, especially in its bilingual format. The changes were intended to ensure that the instrument was not only easy to respond to but also appropriate for the employees of the Malaysian local governments.

Table 5. Face Validity Assessment from Pilot Participants (n = 30)

Assessment Criteria	Positive Responses (n)	Positive Responses (%)	Qualitative Summary
Clarity	28	93	Bilingual format praised; minor suggestions on terms.
Relevance	29	97	Items deemed appropriate and aligned with job roles.
Ease of Response	27	90	A few suggested simplifying technical phrasing.
Appropriate Length	26	87	Mostly acceptable; two participants found it lengthy.

Assessment Criteria	Positive Responses (n)	Positive Responses (%)	Qualitative Summary
Clear Layout	30	100	Layout described as clean, user-friendly, and professional.

Source: Author's own data

Note: The instrument was generally well-received by pilot participants.

9.4 Feasibility indicators

The feasibility of the instrument was also evaluated using administrative and participant-based methods. Logistically, the pilot study had a 100% success rate in terms of recruitment and submission of the instrument. In addition, the time-tracking results showed that the survey had an average completion time of 17 minutes, with a range of completion times between 12 and 24 minutes (Table 6). Moreover, participant feedback also showed that the instrument is feasible for use in the Malaysian local governments. Results showed that 93% of the participants found the instructions clear, 90% found the content comfortable, and 87% found the length of the instrument manageable within their workday.

Table 6. Feasibility Indicators from Pilot Study (n = 30)

Feasibility Indicator	Metric	Result
Administrative Metrics	Recruitment Rate	100%
	Completion Rate	100%
	Average Completion Time	17 minutes
Participant Feedback	Clarity of Instructions	93%
	Question Comprehension	90%
	Comfort in Responding	97%
	Appropriate Length	87%

Source: Author's own data

10. DISCUSSION

The main goal of this pilot study was to carry out a quality control phase in which the psychometric qualities and practicality of the HRM-performance instrument were tested before a large-scale study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this discussion, emphasis has been placed on demonstrating the reliability, validity, and practicality of the instrument rather than theoretical links or effect sizes. The technical exercise demonstrates that the instrument meets the criteria for large-scale empirical surveys (Mohd Noor & Mohamad Fuzi, 2025) and informs best practice in using internationally derived measurement tools in the context of Malaysian local governments (Hashim & Ahmad, 2020).

10.1 Psychometric integrity and adaptation

The reliability coefficients of the instrument were maintained at a strong level throughout the translation process, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.98. Cross-cultural adaptation tends to lower reliability. As stated by Demo et al. (2024), public sector instruments tend to lose statistical precision during adaptation. However, the protocol used in this study maintained the specific meaning of each item. The Job Performance scale had $\alpha = 0.98$, while indicating a strong level of internal consistency, also approaches a range that warrants cautious interpretation. Alpha coefficients approaching 1.00 may reflect genuine internal coherence, but they can also signal item redundancy,

whereby items are excessively similar in wording or content, or a narrow item range that fails to capture the full breadth of the construct being measured (Hair et al., 2018). Given that the Job Performance scale contained only five items, both possibilities merit consideration. Future studies should employ Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), to examine the factor structure of this scale and determine whether item refinement, such as revising overlapping items or broadening item coverage, is warranted before the instrument's large-scale deployment. This construct validity assessment was not feasible in the current pilot due to the limited sample size (n = 30) and is designated as a necessary next step in establishing the instrument's full psychometric validity. Content and face validity were also established. This was confirmed through the Scale-Level Content Validity Index (S-CVI/Ave), which was 0.98, showing the level of agreement among the experts regarding the items' relevance to the study. At the item level, the I-CVI results revealed some ambiguous items, which were then revised based on the feedback provided by the experts. Moreover, the feedback provided by the pilot participants revealed that more than 90% found the survey instructions clear and the content understandable. This is an example of the effectiveness of the use of the combined approach for cultural adaptation, as this can be used to adapt the instrument for use in the local government setting in Malaysia.

10.2 Bridging theory and practice

Beyond its statistical contribution, this validation process also bridges theory and practice. Prior public-sector research has identified a persistent "theory-practice gap," whereby academic constructs and measures do not always translate effectively to workplace realities (Bryson & White, 2021). By involving expert practitioners in content validation and pilot-testing items directly with employees, this study helped ground abstract constructs, such as career development support, in the lived experience of MPKL staff. This approach aligns with the culturally sensitive measurement practices recommended for Malaysian-based research (Hashim & Ahmad, 2020).

10.3 Foundations for theoretical testing

Univariate normality must be verified in methodologies used while performing analyses. The examination of skewness and kurtosis in this study supports the assumption generally found in the JD-R model of measuring HRM practices objectively using organisational resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). As well as establishing an empirical base for future research investigating other more complex relationships (e.g., the moderating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between HRM practices and job performance in Malaysian local governments) (Mohamad Hadzar et al., 2026). These findings indicate that the data are suitable for parametric statistical testing and further multivariate analyses. This strengthens confidence in the robustness of the measurement model and its applicability in similar Malaysian local government contexts.

10.4 Operational viability

The feasibility assessment indicates that the instrument places minimal burden on participants. The pilot study achieved a 100% response rate, and completion times averaged 17 minutes (range: 12–24 minutes), suggesting low risk of respondent fatigue. Participant feedback further supports this conclusion: 93% rated the instructions as clear, 90% found the content comfortable, and 87% considered the length acceptable. Collectively, these results suggest the instrument can be administered without disrupting local government operations.

11. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Nonetheless, this pilot study also has some limitations. Although the sample size of 30 participants is consistent with established pilot study conventions (Bujang et al., 2024; Polit & Beck, 2017), the sample was drawn exclusively from a single local government, MPKL, which constrains the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of local governments in Malaysia. Local governments in Malaysia vary considerably in organisational size, urban-rural

context, resource availability, and administrative capacity (Bahardin et al., 2019; Harding, 2022), and these structural differences may influence how employees perceive and respond to HRM practices such as training access, job suitability, and career development opportunities. Consequently, the psychometric properties established in this pilot study should be interpreted as specific to the MPKL context and may not directly generalize to local governments with differing organisational profiles, such as larger city councils or rural district authorities. Future studies should replicate this validation process across a stratified sample of local governments representing varying sizes, states, and urban-rural classifications (Matthews, 2024) to establish whether the instrument's reliability and validity hold across the diversity of local government contexts in Malaysia.

Moreover, the small sample size did not permit an assessment of construct validity through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), as factor analytic procedures generally require substantially larger samples to produce stable and interpretable factor structures (Hair et al., 2018). Accordingly, the validation presented in this paper should be regarded as an initial step in a multi-phase instrument validation process, encompassing content validity, face validity, and internal consistency, rather than a complete psychometric validation. EFA and, subsequently, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) are necessary next steps to establish the underlying factor structure of the adapted constructs and to confirm that items load onto their intended dimensions as theoretically specified. In addition, using self-reported data may pose a threat of common method variance. Although procedures like anonymity and separation of items were taken to minimise this problem (Podsakoff et al., 2003), future studies may include multiple sources to further minimize the variance. Future studies should continue to test the instrument in various local governments in Malaysia to ensure that the reliability and validity of the instrument are maintained on a larger scale, with EFA and CFA required at each stage to verify the structure of the adapted constructs and further enhance the robustness of the instrument.

12. CONCLUSION

This research offers more than a validated instrument. It contributes methodologically, theoretically, and practically. Methodologically, it presents a replicable protocol for adapting international HRM models to local government settings. Theoretically, it demonstrates that internationally developed HRM frameworks can be meaningfully applied within the Malaysian local government context. Practically, it delivers a diagnostic tool that HRM practitioners can use to support initiatives such as the *Dasar Pembangunan Bakat Perkhidmatan Awam* (DPBPA) 2025 (JPA, 2025). Together, these contributions provide a foundation for strengthening local government workforce development and public service delivery in Malaysia, and establish a sound basis for future research examining the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance in this context.

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14. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this paper.

15. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Mazlan Che Soh, as the main supervisor, provided primary guidance in shaping the research framework, refining the methodology, and reviewing the overall content. **Dr. Radduan Yusof**, as the co-supervisor, contributed to refining the conceptual structure, enhancing the clarity of the arguments, and reviewing drafts of the manuscript. The **first author** conducted the research, and wrote the manuscript under their supervision.

16. DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Anthropic Claude to assist with drafting and refining portions of the manuscript and OpenAI ChatGPT to assist with manuscript formatting and journal template compliance. The author(s) critically reviewed, verified, and edited all AI-assisted content and take(s) full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the publication.

17. DATA AVAILABILITY/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

18. ETHICS STATEMENT

This pilot instrument validation formed part of the first author's broader Master's research project approved by the UiTM Research Ethics Committee, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) (Approval No.: REC/04/2026 (PG/MR/179)). All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the 1964 Helsinki Declaration. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

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