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Human Resource Management Model Under Downsizing Conditions in the Social Security Organization: A Thematic Analysis Approach

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ABSTRACT

Downsizing in contemporary organizations requires a human-centered and strategic approach to ensure that, in addition to cost reduction, employees' psychological well-being and performance are maintained. The use of emerging technologies, process reengineering, and transparent communication can assist organizations in balancing economic demands with social responsibilities under downsizing conditions. The present study aimed to design a human resource management model under downsizing conditions in the Social Security Organization using a qualitative content analysis approach. This study employed a qualitative content analysis method using semi-structured interviews with 20 research experts to design the proposed model. Based on the research approach, 22 main categories, 46 concepts, and 140 codes were extracted. Accordingly, managers should first obtain a comprehensive understanding and accurate awareness of the dimensions of human resource management under downsizing conditions and then implement effective strategies based on the identified dimensions in order to act consciously and systematically. In this study, a human resource management model under downsizing conditions was developed. Since no comprehensive model has yet been presented in this field, the findings of this study are useful for organizational managers and leaders in designing downsizing strategies in a manner that preserves employees' health and well-being. Furthermore, human resource management specialists can utilize these findings to improve managerial processes and reduce the negative consequences of downsizing. In addition, policymakers and regulatory institutions may benefit from these results in formulating supportive regulations and improving working conditions.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Downsizing, Social Security Organization, Qualitative Content Analysis

Introduction

In today's highly competitive and turbulent business environment, organizations are continuously compelled to adapt their structures, strategies, and human resource systems in order to maintain sustainability and improve organizational effectiveness. Economic instability, technological transformation, globalization, demographic changes, and increasing pressure to reduce operational costs have encouraged many organizations to adopt restructuring and downsizing strategies as mechanisms for survival and competitiveness [1, 2]. Organizational downsizing has become one of the most widely used managerial approaches in both private and public sectors, particularly during periods of economic recession, financial crisis, institutional reform, and technological transition [3, 4]. Downsizing generally refers to the intentional reduction of workforce size and organizational layers in order to improve efficiency, productivity, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness [5, 6]. However, contemporary studies increasingly emphasize that downsizing is not merely a numerical reduction of employees but rather a multidimensional organizational transformation process that profoundly affects organizational culture, employee morale, social relationships, psychological well-being, and managerial systems [7, 8].

The emergence of downsizing strategies has significantly transformed the role and responsibilities of human resource management. Traditional administrative approaches to human resource management are no longer sufficient to address the complex consequences of organizational downsizing. Instead, organizations require strategic and human-centered human resource management systems capable of balancing organizational efficiency with employee well-being and social responsibility [4, 9]. Human resource management under downsizing conditions involves a broad range of activities, including workforce restructuring, psychological support, talent retention, organizational communication, redesign of jobs and processes, compensation restructuring, training and reskilling, and management of organizational change [10, 11]. In this regard, researchers have argued that successful downsizing depends not only on economic calculations but also on the organization's capacity to effectively manage the human dimensions of change [12, 13].

Despite the intended benefits of downsizing, numerous studies have demonstrated that poorly managed downsizing can produce severe negative consequences for both organizations and employees. Research findings indicate that downsizing often leads to decreased employee commitment, lower organizational trust, increased job insecurity, reduced morale, emotional exhaustion, psychological stress, and declines in organizational performance [12, 14]. Survivors of downsizing frequently experience uncertainty, anxiety, and fear regarding their future career stability, which can negatively influence their productivity and engagement [15, 16]. Moreover, organizational downsizing can disrupt social networks and interpersonal relationships within the workplace, thereby weakening organizational cohesion and collaboration [17, 18]. Such outcomes demonstrate that downsizing is not merely an operational adjustment but a critical organizational event with long-term psychological, social, and strategic implications.

One of the most important challenges associated with downsizing is the deterioration of employee psychological well-being. Employees who remain in the organization after workforce reduction often experience "survivor syndrome," characterized by stress, guilt, reduced motivation, emotional fatigue, and distrust toward management [5, 7]. Recent studies have shown that organizational downsizing is significantly associated with depressive symptoms, mental health deterioration, and psychosocial risks among employees [14, 16]. Similarly, research conducted in the petroleum industry revealed that organizational restructuring and downsizing negatively affect psychosocial work environments and safety climates [19]. These findings highlight the necessity of designing human resource management models that prioritize employee support, resilience, communication, and psychological stability during downsizing processes.

Communication strategies represent another critical component in successful downsizing management. Employees' perceptions regarding fairness, transparency, and managerial honesty substantially shape their reactions toward downsizing initiatives [10, 20]. Inadequate communication can intensify uncertainty, rumors, distrust, and resistance to change, whereas transparent and participatory communication can reduce fear and facilitate adaptation to organizational restructuring [11, 13]. Researchers have emphasized that strategic communication during downsizing should involve continuous information sharing, employee participation, and psychological reassurance in order to maintain organizational trust and minimize negative outcomes [7, 17]. Consequently, communication management has become a central dimension of human resource management under downsizing conditions.

Another important issue concerns the relationship between downsizing and organizational performance. While many organizations adopt downsizing strategies with the expectation of improving efficiency and reducing costs, empirical findings regarding performance outcomes remain inconsistent. Some studies suggest that downsizing may improve short-term financial indicators, whereas others indicate declines in productivity, innovation, organizational learning, and service quality [3, 8]. Research conducted in private universities demonstrated that downsizing negatively influences employee performance and organizational effectiveness when appropriate support mechanisms are absent [21]. Furthermore, downsizing can reduce employee engagement and weaken collaborative networks essential for organizational functioning [17, 18]. Therefore, organizations increasingly recognize that workforce reduction alone cannot guarantee long-term competitiveness unless accompanied by effective human resource management practices.

Modern approaches to downsizing emphasize alternatives and complementary strategies aimed at minimizing negative organizational consequences. Instead of relying exclusively on workforce reduction, organizations are increasingly adopting flexible work arrangements, outsourcing, technological integration, process reengineering, retraining programs, and talent management systems [4, 22]. Outsourcing human resource functions and operational processes has emerged as one strategy for reducing organizational size while maintaining operational effectiveness [22]. Similarly, the integration of digital technologies, enterprise resource planning systems, and intelligent management platforms enables organizations to improve efficiency while reducing dependence on traditional administrative structures [2]. Such approaches reflect the transition from traditional downsizing models toward more adaptive and strategically integrated organizational systems.

Human resource management also plays a fundamental role in maintaining employee commitment and organizational identity during periods of restructuring. Employee perceptions regarding justice, managerial support, and organizational ethics substantially influence their willingness to cooperate with downsizing initiatives [10, 20]. Research indicates that employees are more likely to accept organizational changes when they perceive downsizing procedures as fair, transparent, and professionally managed [12, 13]. Conversely, perceptions of unfairness or managerial opportunism may lead to distrust, resistance, reduced organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover intentions [8, 15]. Therefore, ethical leadership and employee-centered human resource practices are essential for sustainable organizational restructuring.

The public sector and social service organizations face particularly complex challenges regarding downsizing due to their social responsibilities and service-oriented missions. Organizations such as the Social Security Organization are expected not only to maintain efficiency and financial sustainability but also to preserve service quality, social equity, and employee welfare. Downsizing within such organizations may therefore generate broader social consequences affecting both employees and service recipients [6, 23]. Public organizations often encounter additional bureaucratic, legal, and institutional constraints that complicate workforce restructuring processes [1]. Consequently, designing an effective human resource management model tailored to downsizing conditions in public institutions requires a comprehensive understanding of organizational, psychological, technological, and social dimensions.

Although previous studies have investigated various aspects of organizational downsizing, many of them have primarily focused on economic outcomes, employee attitudes, or psychological consequences separately. Less attention has been devoted to developing comprehensive and integrated human resource management models specifically designed for downsizing conditions, particularly within large public service organizations [24, 25]. Moreover, existing studies have often employed quantitative approaches that may not fully capture the complexity and contextual nature of downsizing experiences and managerial practices [26]. Qualitative research approaches, especially qualitative content analysis, provide deeper insights into managerial perceptions, organizational experiences, and contextual dimensions of downsizing processes. Such approaches enable researchers to identify hidden patterns, conceptual relationships, and strategic dimensions that may remain overlooked in purely quantitative investigations [26].

Furthermore, contemporary organizational environments require downsizing models that integrate human resource flexibility, technological innovation, strategic communication, psychological support, organizational learning, and process optimization into a coherent managerial framework [4, 9]. The increasing complexity of modern organizations necessitates multidimensional approaches capable of simultaneously addressing efficiency, employee well-being, service quality, and organizational adaptability. This issue is particularly important in large governmental and insurance organizations where workforce reduction may directly influence organizational legitimacy and public trust.

Accordingly, considering the increasing prevalence of organizational downsizing, the multidimensional consequences associated with workforce reduction, the strategic importance of human resource management during organizational restructuring, and the lack of comprehensive qualitative models in the context of the Social Security Organization, the present study aimed to design a human resource management model under downsizing conditions using a qualitative content analysis approach.

Methodology

The present study was applied in terms of objective, exploratory in terms of data collection method, qualitative in terms of research methodology, and interpretive from the perspective of research philosophy. The research strategy adopted in this study was qualitative content analysis. Data collection was conducted through a combination of previous studies and semi-structured interviews. The statistical population included specialists in organizational behavior management, human resource management, and public administration who had authored scientific publications and/or supervised theses in the relevant field, as well as senior managers and experts of the Social Security Organization possessing the necessary experience and expertise related to the research topic. The sample was selected using purposive and theoretical sampling methods. The sample size was determined during the research process, and sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new codes emerged. Snowball sampling was used to access additional participants. In this study, interviews were conducted with 20 university professors and senior managers. From the nineteenth interview onward, no new factors were identified and repetitive information was observed; however, the interviews continued until the twentieth participant to ensure data saturation.

The first stage consisted of open coding. At this stage, numerous open codes embedded within the interview texts were extracted. As the data were repeatedly reviewed, new codes and final codes gradually emerged.

The second stage involved inferential coding. Compared with initial coding, this stage was characterized by a higher level of abstraction, resulting in the extraction of concepts and, ultimately, categories through the aggregation of these concepts. During this phase, internal relationships among the open codes developed in the first stage were identified.

Subsequently, based on the results of the previous two stages, final coding was conducted, representing the principal stage of content analysis. In this stage, the core category was systematically linked to other categories, and these relationships were presented within a narrative framework. Categories requiring further refinement and development were revised accordingly. At this stage, the researcher, based on their interpretation of the text related to the studied phenomenon, either presented the paradigm model narratively or reconstructed the paradigm model and illustrated the final theory diagrammatically. In fact, selective coding was carried out in the final stage of qualitative research analysis. During this stage, the axial codes obtained from the previous stage were categorized, and the final table of variables and indicators associated with each category was developed based on the perspectives of experts and specialists.

Credibility refers to the extent to which the final results accurately reflect the experiences and knowledge of respondents and researchers regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Researchers have introduced ten indicators for assessing credibility, including methodological coherence, researcher sensitivity, appropriateness of the sample, utilization of feedback, and repetition of findings. The final research findings and the process used to develop the diagram were provided to five experts in the field for examination and analysis. The Lincoln and Guba method, which is based on four criteria—transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability—was used to confirm the validity of the instrument.

In addition, interview reliability was confirmed using the inter-coder agreement method. For this purpose, after providing the necessary coding training, two experts external to the research topic were selected as coders. In this process, these individuals were asked to code the interviews of five randomly selected participants. Validity and credibility based on the Lincoln and Guba method are presented in Table 1, and the inter-coder agreement reliability results are shown in Table 2.

Table 1

Research Validity Based on the Lincoln and Guba Method

Indicator	Process
Transferability	Obtaining evaluations from experts who did not participate in the study
Credibility	Allocating sufficient time for the research and confirming interview data by interviewees
Confirmability	Documentation and observance of all research procedures and documentation throughout the research process
Dependability	Recording all details and note-taking during interviews and throughout the implementation process

Table 2

Research Reliability Based on the Inter-Coder Agreement Method

No.	Interview	Total Codes	Agreements	Test–Retest Reliability
1	Second	38	31	81%
2	Sixth	31	25	80%
3	Ninth	28	22	75%
4	Eleventh	32	27	84%
5	Fourteenth	34	24	70%

Based on the obtained agreements, the level of inter-coder agreement exceeded 70%, indicating acceptable reliability for the conducted interviews and the present study.

Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the interview participants are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

Gender	Education	Occupation	Work Experience	Gender	Education	Occupation	Work Experience
Male	PhD	Faculty Member	15	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Manager	11
Male	Master's Degree	Manager	10	Male	PhD	Faculty Member	8
Male	Bachelor's Degree	Senior Manager	12	Female	PhD	Faculty Member	6
Female	PhD	Faculty Member	11	Male	Master's Degree	Manager	16
Male	PhD	Faculty Member	17	Male	PhD	Faculty Member	7
Male	Master's Degree	Senior Manager	7	Male	PhD	Senior Manager	11
Male	Master's Degree	Senior Manager	19	Male	PhD	Senior Manager	21
Female	PhD	Faculty Member	10	Male	PhD	Faculty Member	14
Male	Master's Degree	Senior Manager	16	Male	Master's Degree	Manager	15
Female	PhD	Faculty Member	12	Male	PhD	Faculty Member	10

Table 4

Inferential Coding

Initial Codes	Concepts	Categories
Reviewing successful projects, granting rewards, salary increases, granting leave, and promotions	Evaluation and encouragement of committed employees	Utilization of capable and committed human resources
Having academic degrees in related fields	High educational qualifications and experience of personnel	Utilization of capable and committed human resources
Having extensive employee experience	High educational qualifications and experience of personnel	Utilization of capable and committed human resources
Outstanding work experience	High educational qualifications and experience of personnel	Utilization of capable and committed human resources
Providing career growth opportunities, promotion, professional advancement, and continuous training for knowledge updating	Competency enhancement	Utilization of capable and committed human resources
Updating job descriptions based on new information	Revision of job descriptions	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Defining new duties and responsibilities	Revision of job descriptions	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Eliminating outdated tasks	Revision of job descriptions	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Identifying new skills	Determination of qualification requirements	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Identifying required knowledge and credentials for job qualification	Determination of qualification requirements	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Determining appropriate personality and behavioral characteristics for the job	Determination of qualification requirements	Reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements
Delegating management and maintenance of servers and IT infrastructure	Outsourcing technical support and information technology services	Outsourcing
Development and support of specialized organizational software	Outsourcing technical support and information technology services	Outsourcing
Delegating the establishment and management of cybersecurity systems	Outsourcing technical support and information technology services	Outsourcing
Establishing online communication systems	Outsourcing customer services and communications	Outsourcing
Managing complaints and requests of insured individuals	Outsourcing customer services and communications	Outsourcing
Delegating management of call centers for responsiveness	Outsourcing customer services and communications	Outsourcing
Processing and management of insured individuals' data	Outsourcing data processing and administrative affairs	Outsourcing
Delegating issuance of insurance policies and insurance cards	Outsourcing data processing and administrative affairs	Outsourcing
Designing roles with the possibility of performing diverse duties	Creation of multifaceted jobs	Job flexibility
Possibility of transferring employees between different departments	Internal mobility opportunities	Job flexibility
Identifying current jobs and processes	Job and process analysis and evaluation	Reengineering of jobs and processes
Identifying weaknesses, redundant activities, and inefficiencies	Job and process analysis and evaluation	Reengineering of jobs and processes
Redefining roles and integrating duties	Job redefinition	Reengineering of jobs and processes
Process optimization	Job redefinition	Reengineering of jobs and processes
Creating new jobs	Job redefinition	Reengineering of jobs and processes
Establishing a dynamic and flexible process for continuous activity improvement	Continuous feedback	Continuous feedback loops
Performance analysis	Periodic feedback sessions	Continuous feedback loops
Reviewing completed projects and outcomes	Periodic feedback sessions	Continuous feedback loops
Delegating decision-making authority to lower organizational levels	Decentralized decision-making	Horizontal management
Granting authority to operational managers	Decentralized decision-making	Horizontal management
Mutual accountability among departments	Horizontal accountability	Horizontal management

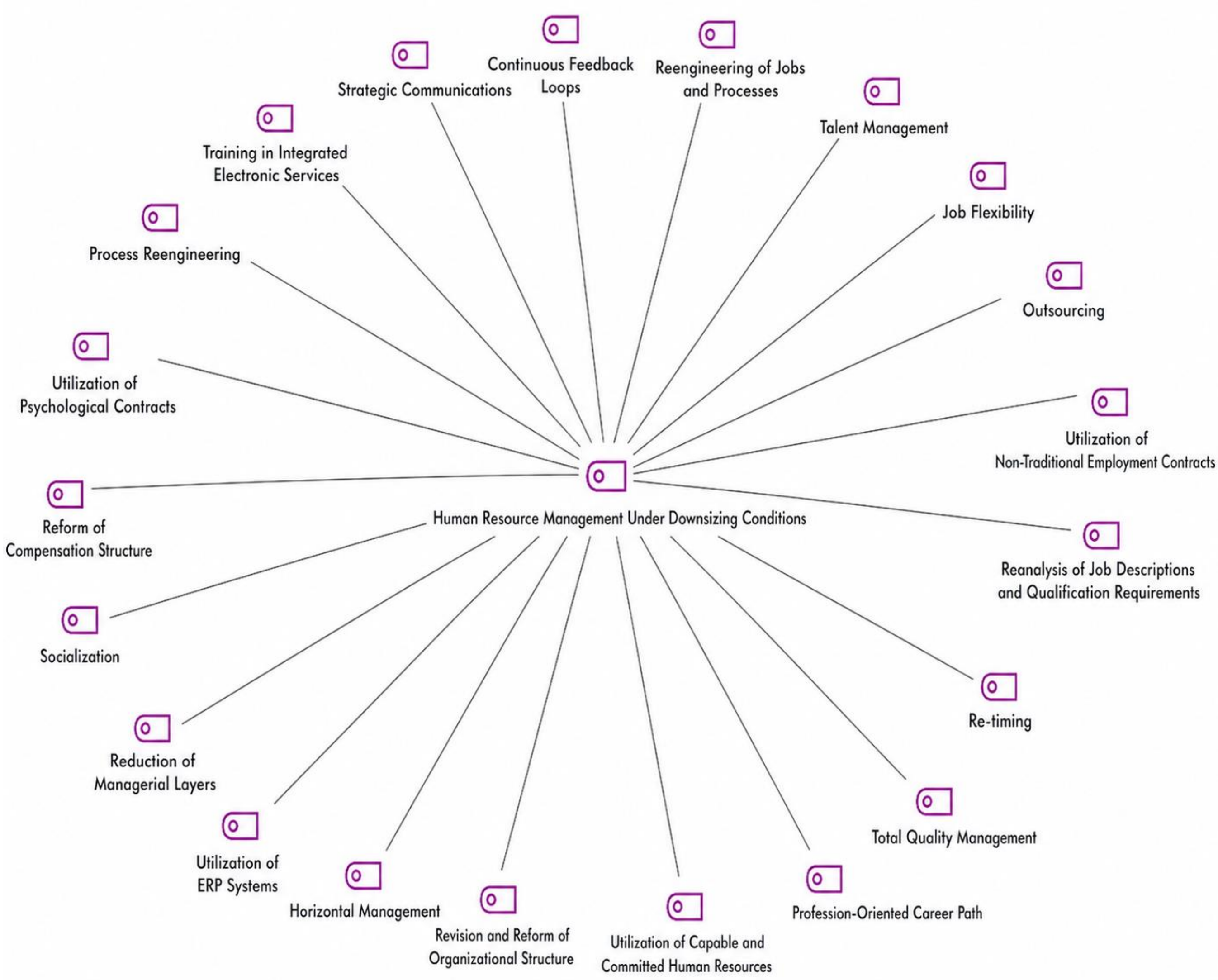
Accountability of individuals at the same level toward one another	Horizontal accountability	Horizontal management
Accountability regarding performance and decision-making	Horizontal accountability	Horizontal management
Balanced and two-way communication	Symmetrical communication	Horizontal management
Two-way exchange of information between the organization and stakeholders	Symmetrical communication	Horizontal management
Reducing the number of levels	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Elimination and integration of some levels	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Flattening the hierarchy	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Eliminating middle management layers	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Transferring supervisory responsibilities to senior managers	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Direct communication of employees with senior managers	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Downsizing the organization	Reduction of hierarchical layers	Reduction of managerial layers
Training, communication, and participation of remaining employees in new processes	Integration of remaining employees into new culture and processes	Socialization
Adapting employees to new changes	Integration of remaining employees into new culture and processes	Socialization
Job security	Attention to employees' informal expectations	Utilization of psychological contracts
Promotion opportunities	Attention to employees' informal expectations	Utilization of psychological contracts
Mutual respect	Attention to employees' informal expectations	Utilization of psychological contracts
Ethical commitments	Attention to employees' informal expectations	Utilization of psychological contracts
Enhancing psychological skills	Attention to employees' informal expectations	Utilization of psychological contracts
Providing services to reduce stress and anxiety	Providing psychological counseling services	Utilization of psychological contracts
Improving resilience	Providing psychological counseling services	Utilization of psychological contracts
Establishing internal support groups for remaining and departed employees	Providing psychological counseling services	Utilization of psychological contracts
Reducing administrative stages and eliminating repetitive processes	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Establishing an integrated system	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Launching a quality monitoring system for healthcare services	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Establishing a comprehensive insured individuals information management system	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Simplification of processes	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Reducing process complexity	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Creating coordination and integration among organizational departments	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Eliminating unnecessary stages	Optimization of organizational processes	Process reengineering
Familiarity with integrated electronic systems	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Training in the use of portals and systems	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Conducting workshops and training courses within the organization	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Using e-learning platforms (LMS)	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Providing practical training using real systems	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Utilizing appropriate training methods (face-to-face, online, self-learning, etc.)	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Training on effective use of integrated electronic systems and services in the organization	Facilitating adoption and utilization of new technologies	Training in integrated electronic services
Identifying high-potential employees for key roles	Talent identification	Talent management
Identifying knowledgeable and intelligent employees	Talent identification	Talent management
Holding regular meetings, encouraging constructive feedback, and promoting collaborative culture	Continuous collaboration and interaction with talents	Talent management
Preparing employees for future key positions	Succession planning design	Talent management
Hiring for a specified period	Part-time and temporary contracts	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Working fewer than standard working hours	Part-time and temporary contracts	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Remote and off-site work arrangements	Remote work	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Freelancing or teleworking	Remote work	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Hiring without fixed working hours and based on need	Shared employment contracts	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Joint employment by two or more employers	Shared employment contracts	Utilization of non-traditional employment contracts
Recording the duration of each activity	Re-measurement and analysis of required time	Re-timing
Identifying stages and activities causing delays	Re-measurement and analysis of required time	Re-timing
Identifying bottlenecks	Re-measurement and analysis of required time	Re-timing
Work sampling	Re-measurement and analysis of required time	Re-timing
Using digital tools to determine task duration	Utilization of time management software	Re-timing
Activity tracking systems	Utilization of time management software	Re-timing
Using Internet of Things devices for data collection	Utilization of time management software	Re-timing
Full support of senior managers for programs	Senior management commitment	Total quality management

Active participation of the CEO in quality improvement meetings	Senior management commitment	Total quality management
Root-cause identification of problems	Use of cause-and-effect diagrams	Total quality management
Using diagrams to analyze reasons for quality decline	Use of cause-and-effect diagrams	Total quality management
Focusing on customer problems (clients)	Use of cause-and-effect diagrams	Total quality management
Comparing organizational performance with international insurance organizations	Benchmarking	Total quality management
Benchmarking best practices of competitors	Benchmarking	Total quality management
Reducing unnecessary positions	Elimination and integration of positions	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Integrating similar duties	Elimination and integration of positions	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Eliminating unnecessary positions	Elimination and integration of positions	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Combining duties of multiple positions into a new position	Elimination and integration of positions	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Designing new positions for emerging activities	Elimination and integration of positions	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Creating a more agile structure	Designing a new structure	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Improving the responsiveness structure of the organization	Designing a new structure	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Multifunctional and flexible structure with emphasis on skills	Designing a new structure	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Simplifying the organizational structure	Designing a new structure	Revision and reform of organizational structure
Experience in using technologies applied in installation and configuration	Mastery of utilized technology	Profession-oriented career path
Conducting required tests and resolving problems	Mastery of utilized technology	Profession-oriented career path
Providing flexible career paths	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Protean career path	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Emphasis on employee expertise and skills	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Employee advancement in specialized fields	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Development of technical and professional skills	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Designing attractive career paths	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Providing opportunities for professional advancement	Designing and managing career advancement paths	Profession-oriented career path
Software development methods such as Agile and DevOps	Creating a clear career advancement path	Profession-oriented career path
Utilizing intelligent and integrated enterprise resource management systems for rapid and accurate information management and better decision-making	Utilization of integrated and intelligent enterprise resource management software	Utilization of ERP systems
Using integrated software for insured individuals' information management	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Automatic issuance of insurance policies	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Automated management of medical records	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Information integration systems among different social security insurance departments	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Security and authentication systems	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Automated reporting systems	Utilization of information management software systems	Mechanization of operations
Electronic collection of insurance premiums and payment of benefits	Electronic payment and collection systems	Mechanization of operations
Using online payment gateways for premium payments by employers or insured individuals	Electronic payment and collection systems	Mechanization of operations
Electronic management of organizational assets	Electronic payment and collection systems	Mechanization of operations
Use of intelligent chatbots	Automated response systems (chatbots)	Mechanization of operations
Utilizing robots for intelligent responses	Automated response systems (chatbots)	Mechanization of operations
Request tracking and follow-up systems	Automated response systems (chatbots)	Mechanization of operations
Preventing unfair discrimination	Establishing fairness in employee compensation	Reform of compensation structure
Maintaining justice and fairness in the compensation system	Establishing fairness in employee compensation	Reform of compensation structure
Ensuring equal pay for similar work	Establishing fairness in employee compensation	Reform of compensation structure
Reviewing payment systems to identify inequalities	Establishing fairness in employee compensation	Reform of compensation structure
Identifying and eliminating discriminatory factors	Establishing fairness in employee compensation	Reform of compensation structure
Increasing interactions and coordination among members	Purposeful interactions	Strategic communications
Increasing decision-making speed and performance	Purposeful interactions	Strategic communications
Close collaboration with customers and colleagues to formulate optimal strategies	Strengthening communication in development and participatory management processes	Strategic communications
Organizing multifunctional teams	Strengthening communication in development and participatory management processes	Strategic communications

In this section, the model extracted from the research based on the conducted interviews and qualitative content analysis is presented. The output generated by the MaxQDA software is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Output Model Generated by MaxQDA Software



Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to design a human resource management model under downsizing conditions in the Social Security Organization using a qualitative content analysis approach. The findings revealed that effective human resource management under downsizing conditions requires a multidimensional and integrated framework consisting of strategic communications, process reengineering, reengineering of jobs and processes, talent management, job flexibility, outsourcing, utilization of non-traditional employment contracts, reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements, re-timing, total quality management, profession-oriented career paths, utilization of capable and committed human resources, revision and reform of organizational structure, horizontal management, ERP systems utilization, reduction of managerial layers, mechanization of operations, socialization, reform of compensation structures, utilization of psychological contracts, training in integrated electronic services, and continuous feedback loops. The extracted model demonstrated that downsizing cannot be viewed merely as a quantitative reduction of workforce size, but rather as a comprehensive organizational transformation process requiring coordinated managerial, technological, psychological, and structural interventions.

One of the most significant findings of the study was the emphasis on the utilization of capable and committed human resources. Participants highlighted the importance of employee competencies, professional expertise, work experience, continuous learning, and commitment as critical factors for maintaining organizational effectiveness during downsizing. This finding is consistent with the perspectives presented by [24], who argued that human capital quality substantially influences organizational resilience during workforce reduction. Similarly, [7] emphasized that organizations capable of retaining high-performing employees and supporting their well-being are more likely to preserve operational stability during restructuring. The findings also align with [17], who found that organizational relationships and employee competencies significantly influence post-downsizing performance. In downsizing environments, organizations increasingly depend on multi-skilled and adaptable employees capable of handling broader responsibilities due to workforce reductions. Therefore, investment in employee development and competency enhancement becomes strategically essential.

Another important finding concerned the reanalysis of job descriptions and qualification requirements. The results showed that downsizing necessitates substantial redesign of roles, responsibilities, and competency frameworks. Participants emphasized that organizations must redefine tasks, eliminate redundant duties, and identify new competencies aligned with evolving organizational needs. This finding supports the arguments of [2], who noted that organizational restructuring often requires redesign of formal structures and work systems. Similarly, [4] argued that organizations facing economic and structural crises increasingly adopt flexible role designs and alternative staffing arrangements instead of relying solely on layoffs. The findings also confirm the position of [1], who emphasized that modern organizations require dynamic job structures capable of adapting to environmental uncertainties and technological transformations.

The study also identified outsourcing as a central dimension of downsizing-oriented human resource management. Participants referred to outsourcing technical support, information technology services, customer communication systems, and administrative processes as strategies for improving flexibility and reducing operational burdens. These findings are highly consistent with the study conducted by [22], which demonstrated that outsourcing human resource functions can contribute to organizational downsizing while preserving service quality in healthcare organizations. Outsourcing enables organizations to concentrate on core strategic activities while transferring specialized or operational tasks to external providers. Furthermore, outsourcing may reduce administrative complexity and improve organizational agility under conditions of financial pressure and workforce limitations.

Job flexibility and utilization of non-traditional employment contracts emerged as another major theme in the findings. Participants emphasized internal mobility opportunities, multifunctional job roles, remote work arrangements, temporary contracts, freelancing, and shared employment structures. These findings reflect contemporary changes in workforce management and support the arguments presented by [6], who described downsizing as increasingly associated with flexible employment systems and alternative labor arrangements. The findings also align with [4], who argued that organizations increasingly adopt flexible work models to minimize the negative social consequences of layoffs. Flexible employment structures can improve organizational adaptability and reduce fixed labor costs while simultaneously enabling organizations to retain access to specialized expertise.

The findings further revealed the importance of strategic communications and continuous feedback loops during downsizing processes. Participants highlighted transparent communication, reciprocal information exchange, employee participation, and continuous performance evaluation as essential mechanisms for reducing uncertainty and preserving organizational trust. This result strongly corresponds with the findings of [10], who demonstrated that trust and communication significantly influence employee engagement during downsizing. Similarly, [11] emphasized that communication strategies and human resource management practices play a central role in reducing organizational risks and human errors during restructuring processes. Employees who receive transparent information and constructive feedback are more likely to adapt positively to organizational change and maintain psychological stability. The findings also support the conclusions of [13], who argued that organizations actively attempt to manage employee and public perceptions during downsizing announcements through strategic impression management and communication strategies.

Another notable finding involved the utilization of psychological contracts and psychological support systems. Participants stressed the necessity of preserving employee dignity, fairness, job security perceptions, emotional support, and resilience enhancement during downsizing. These findings are highly consistent with research conducted by [14], which demonstrated that downsizing significantly influences employee psychosocial well-being. Likewise, [16] found a positive association between organizational downsizing and depressive symptoms among employees. The present findings also align with [15], who argued that interventions targeting workplace conditions and employee support systems are essential for protecting survivors of downsizing from negative psychological outcomes. Human resource management practices that prioritize psychological support can reduce emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and organizational distrust while strengthening employee resilience and commitment.

The study additionally identified reduction of managerial layers and horizontal management as critical organizational restructuring strategies. Participants emphasized flattening hierarchical structures, delegating authority, reducing bureaucratic layers, and enhancing cross-functional accountability. These findings support the perspectives of [2], who argued that flatter organizational structures improve responsiveness, communication, and adaptability in dynamic environments. Furthermore, [1] emphasized that decentralized decision-making systems enhance organizational flexibility and employee participation. In downsizing conditions, excessive bureaucracy may intensify operational inefficiencies and slow organizational adaptation. Therefore, reducing hierarchical complexity becomes an important mechanism for maintaining organizational effectiveness.

Process reengineering and mechanization of operations were also identified as major dimensions of the proposed model. Participants emphasized integrated electronic systems, ERP systems, automation of insurance services, digital reporting systems, online payment systems, and intelligent response systems such as chatbots. These findings indicate that technological integration has become inseparable from downsizing strategies in contemporary organizations. This observation aligns with the arguments of [2], who highlighted the transformative role of information technology in organizational redesign and efficiency enhancement. Mechanization and digitalization can compensate for workforce reductions by improving speed, accuracy, integration, and operational coordination. Furthermore, technological systems may reduce repetitive administrative tasks and facilitate more efficient allocation of human resources.

Another important finding concerned total quality management and continuous organizational improvement during downsizing. Participants emphasized benchmarking, root-cause analysis, quality monitoring systems, and continuous process evaluation. These findings demonstrate that downsizing should not compromise organizational service quality or customer satisfaction. This result corresponds with the findings of [8], who argued that poorly managed downsizing can undermine team effectiveness and organizational performance. Similarly, [21] found that downsizing negatively affects employee performance when organizations fail to implement effective quality management and support mechanisms. The present findings therefore reinforce the necessity of integrating quality management systems into downsizing strategies.

The findings also emphasized talent management and profession-oriented career paths as mechanisms for sustaining organizational capability after workforce reduction. Participants highlighted succession planning, identification of high-potential employees, continuous interaction with talented personnel, and creation of flexible career advancement paths. These findings are consistent with the arguments of [7], who emphasized that employee retention and development play a buffering role against the negative consequences of restructuring. Similarly, [18] demonstrated that downsizing significantly reshapes organizational advice networks and knowledge-sharing relationships. Effective talent management may therefore reduce the loss of organizational knowledge and preserve institutional memory during restructuring processes.

The present findings further demonstrated that downsizing requires comprehensive organizational reform rather than isolated workforce reduction measures. The identified dimensions collectively suggest that successful downsizing depends on strategic alignment among organizational structures, technological systems, employee support mechanisms, communication strategies, and managerial practices. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptual framework proposed by [3], who argued that downsizing is influenced by multiple organizational, institutional, and environmental factors. Likewise, [5] emphasized that downsizing represents one of the most difficult managerial tests because of its multidimensional organizational consequences. The current study contributes to this literature by proposing an integrated qualitative model specifically tailored to the context of the Social Security Organization.

One of the important contributions of the present study lies in its qualitative and context-based approach. Unlike many previous studies that primarily relied on quantitative analyses of employee attitudes or financial outcomes, this study explored managerial and expert perspectives regarding the multidimensional requirements of human resource management under downsizing conditions. The use of qualitative content analysis enabled the identification of conceptual relationships and strategic dimensions that may not be adequately captured through quantitative methods. This methodological approach is consistent with the recommendations of [26], who emphasized the value of qualitative methodologies in exploring complex organizational phenomena and contextual managerial experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that human resource management under downsizing conditions requires a balanced approach integrating economic efficiency, technological innovation, organizational flexibility, employee well-being, and strategic communication. Organizations that adopt purely cost-oriented downsizing strategies without addressing psychological, structural, and relational dimensions are more likely to encounter reduced employee commitment, lower productivity, organizational distrust, and long-term instability. Conversely, organizations that implement integrated and employee-centered downsizing models may improve adaptability, maintain service quality, and preserve organizational resilience during periods of structural transformation.

One limitation of the present study concerns the qualitative nature of the research design and the limited sample size of experts and managers, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to all organizations and sectors. In addition, the study focused specifically on the Social Security Organization, and therefore some extracted dimensions may reflect contextual characteristics unique to public service and insurance institutions. Furthermore, data collection relied primarily on interviews, which may involve subjective interpretations and response biases among participants.

Future studies are recommended to examine the proposed model quantitatively and test the relationships among the identified dimensions using structural equation modeling or other advanced statistical techniques. Comparative studies across private and public organizations may also provide broader insights regarding contextual differences in downsizing management practices. Additionally, future researchers may investigate the long-term effectiveness of technological integration, psychological support systems, and flexible employment structures in improving employee adaptation and organizational performance after downsizing.

From a practical perspective, organizational managers should adopt integrated and human-centered approaches when implementing downsizing strategies. Greater attention should be devoted to transparent communication, employee participation, psychological support, competency development, and technological modernization in order to reduce resistance and preserve organizational trust. Organizations should also redesign jobs and processes systematically, strengthen talent management systems, and develop flexible organizational structures capable of responding to environmental changes. Finally, policymakers and senior executives should ensure that downsizing initiatives are aligned with ethical principles, employee well-being, and long-term organizational sustainability rather than focusing solely on short-term financial reductions.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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