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Fadi Sofi

**A Framework To Leverage Human Resources Information System for
Business Performance**

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**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of PhD.**

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ABSTRACT

Payroll is one of the earliest applications in the history of business information system. Despite the early start, Human Resources Information System (HRIS) is primarily perceived as an administration tool. Most business managers do not recognise the business potential of HRIS. This research is motivated to address this phenomenon by identifying key Information System (IS) factors and organisation characteristics and initiatives to enhance HRIS business potential. The study proposes that, with the appropriate skills and knowledge, Human Resource (HR) practitioners can effectively use HRIS data to contribute to greater business success. Similarly, through effective initiatives implemented by business line managers, HR practitioners would be more capable of unlocking the potential of HRIS. A qualitative approach is adopted in exploring the key IS success factors, assessing HR practitioners' skills, and understanding the initiatives that line managers could implement. The field data of this study were collected from HR practitioners and business line managers who worked for large companies in the UK. The field study confirmed that HRIS has been mainly used in an administrative context, with limited business impact. The two reasons suggested are: 1) there are shortfalls in HR practitioners' strategic, analytic, and business skills and knowledge; 2) deficiencies in the line managers' initiatives to maintain a productive HR-line relationship, empower HR practitioners, and adopt business expectations regarding the HR role. The research proposes a HRIS implementation framework that includes key IS success factors, required characteristics and initiatives that help HR practitioners to use HRIS effectively and unlock their potential to contribute to business success. The framework was developed into a Readiness Assessment Checklist (RAC) tool and used successfully in the implementation planning of a HRIS project. The research successfully applied information systems adoption research theories to develop a new model that captures the characteristics of Human Resource Management business practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACAS	Advisory Conciliation Arbitration Service
API	Application Programming Interface
AWS	Amazon Web Service
CEM	Customer Experience Management
CRUD	Create, Read, Update and Delete
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ESS	Employee Self Service
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HR	Human Resources
HRIS	Human Resources Information System
HRM	Human Resources Management
IS	Information System
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MIS	Management Information Systems
MEA	Maintain, Empower, Adopt
MS	Microsoft
QA	Quality Assurance
RAC	Readiness Assessment Checklist
SAAS	Software As A Service
SAB	Strategic, Analytic, business
SSL	Secure Sockets Layer
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TOE	Technology, Organisation, Environment

1. Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter starts by introducing the research background in relation to the UK's HR software market and its consistent problem. In response to this problem, the second section investigates the research context and the current HRIS studies to identify the gap. Mindful of this gap, the academic and personal motivation for conducting this study is presented in the third section. To respond to the research problem and the identified gap, the research question, aim, and objectives are specified. Finally, the research structure for this thesis is outlined. This chapter ends with a brief summary.

1.1 Research Background

This section is aimed to shed light on the UK HRIS software market and the problem that organisations are experiencing. Research shows that the UK HR software industry is growing rapidly due to the rising adoption of mobile and cloud-based solutions. Over the five years ending in 2022-23, publishers' revenue in the UK from HR and payroll software has surged at a compound annual rate of 7.5% to £1.4 billion, including a growth of 4.3% in the current year (IBIS World, 2020). This demand for HR software solutions has been attributed to many factors. For example, employee engagement is becoming a top agenda item for businesses in the UK (Loftus & Lawson, 2011; West & Dawson, 2012). HR software providers are responding to this request (employee engagement) by offering solutions that focus on areas such as employee feedback and recognition. In addition, this high demand in the aspect of digital transformation has been reflected in the number of programmers and software developers in the UK from 2011 till 2021 (Figure1). In 2021, approximately 466 thousand programmers and software development professionals were employed in the United Kingdom (Statista, 2022).

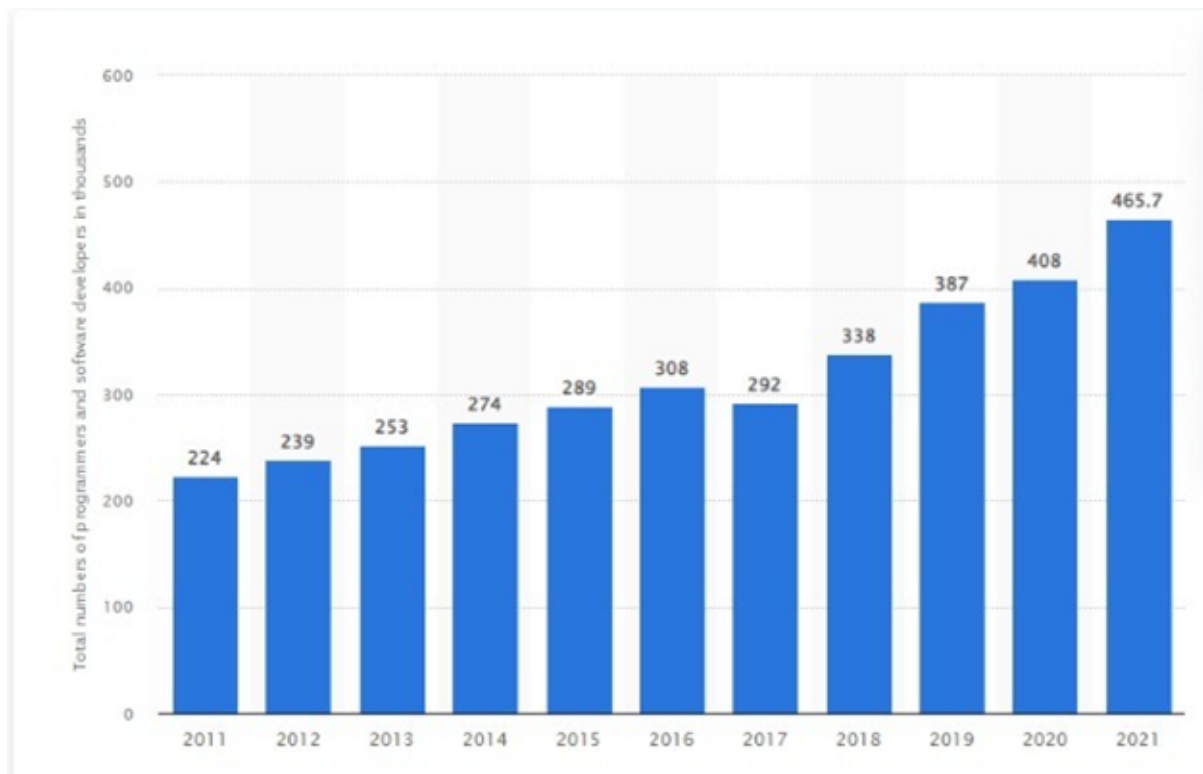


Figure 1: Numbers of programmers and software developers in the UK (Statista, 2021)

A survey of British SMEs to work out how many companies are using HR software shows that in 2019, 44% were interested in investing in new HR software or in updating their current program (Navarrete, 2019). According to Plimsoll's UK payroll & HR software analysis report, the 240 large HR software provider companies in the UK include Sage HR, BambooHR, Workday, HCM Cloud, ADP Workforce, People HR, SAP, BreatheHR, and Zoho People (Market Research, 2023). However, installing and using these HR solution entail challenges for professionals and organisations. Examples of such challenges include management reluctance, employee privacy issues, resistance to change, data security, software design, integration, and cost (Ferdous et al., 2015; Mohapatra & Patnaik, 2011). One of the greatest challenges lies in the impact of HRIS on business. Most of the business leaders agree that the full potential of HRIS to affect business has not hitherto been recognised (Burbach & Dundon, 2005; Hussain et al., 2007). This HRIS shortfall has been identified as a problem by most of

the organisations that have invested in HRIS systems (Kovach et al., 2002). The findings in HRIS studies show that the benefits from HRIS are insufficient to justify the business benefits for the organisations (Beadles et al., 2005; Krishna & Bhaskar, 2011; Marler & Fisher, 2013). Islam and Shuvro (2014) commented that, although organisations invest heavily in HRIS software and the cost of implementation (infrastructure costs, redesigned employee work schedules, and training), HRIS benefits at some organisations remain limited to the operational/transactional level. Similarly, Kavanagh and Johnson (2017, p.202-2003) refer that “statistics measuring the success of HRIS projects are not very encouraging” and find that only 13% of the completed system projects are considered successful. HRIS has certainly helped HR practitioners to effectively perform the HR routine daily transactional tasks and reduce their administrative workload, particularly in large organisations; yet, whether HRIS contributes to the delivery of business results and transforms HR practitioners into business partners is yet uncertain (Marler & Fisher, 2013). This problem has been discussed by Tansley et al. (2001, p.110), who indicate that the purpose of using HRIS is more to handle administrative activities “than for strategic management or to re-engineer the HR role”.

From the opposite viewpoint, according to some researchers, HRIS has achieved some strategic goals but is still not up to the desired outcomes (Ruel et al., 2007; Parry & Tyson, 2011). Some evidence of business/transformational effect of HRIS was realised when HR practitioners gain more time and information to act strategically (Parry & Tyson, 2011). Nonetheless, no significant evidence was seen on the actual increased involvement of HR practitioners in business decision-making and the achievement of business success after HRIS was implemented. Lawler and Mohrman (2003, p.21) discuss the potential of the HR practitioners to become strategic partners and business-oriented practitioners once HRIS is implemented. They note that in 46% of the companies that have a completely integrated HRIS system, their HR practitioners are not making full partnerships with business leaders. Practitioners in 18%

of companies with fully integrated HRIS, do not even have any input into strategy. The writers conclude that it is obvious that a sophisticated HRIS system is a valuable tool, but the truth is that some companies have invested in HRIS merely to reduce the admin work and the size of HR but not for any actual strategic purpose. Likewise, Ruel et al. (2007, p.282) state that “in nearly half of the companies with a fully integrated HRIS, HR was not viewed as a strategic partner”. Similarly, Parry and Tyson (2011, p.348) discuss HRIS implementation and content that “no organisation provided more than anecdotal evidence for a move to a more strategic role, or increased HR involvement in business strategy”. Therefore, if it is the case that the potential of HRIS is not recognised, let alone maximised yet, the problem statement of this research is stated as follows: there is a deficiency in the HRIS potential to contribute to the attainment of business success. However, what constitutes business success has been defined differently in the literature.

To summarise, the inadequate or limited use of HRIS is observed in HRIS research. This phenomenon, which demands further empirical research and investigation, has been documented as a problem due to the failure to fulfil the promises of HRIS software or take fullest advantage of its possible impact on business. Various studies have been carried out to examine HRIS implementation such as Al-Dmour, 2014; Aletaibi, 2016; Phahlane, 2017; and Kolatshi, 2017. The research context is discussed in the following section.

1.2 Research Context

This research proposes that more in-depth studies are needed to develop new approaches in responding to the problem of HRIS’s limited contribution to business performance. The discussion in this section suggests that current HRIS studies are not adequate to address the problem identified in this study, and accordingly a research gap. Since the 1960s, researchers have been investigating the usefulness, benefits, efficiency, effectiveness, and far-ranging

impact of HRIS on organisational performance (Arefin & Hosain, 2019). Various IS success factors that impact HRIS adoption have also been rigorously analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively in various contexts, leading to the development of well-noted and documented frameworks and findings (Ngai & Wat, 2006; Strohmeier, 2007; Al Shibly, 2011; Al-Mobaideen et al., 2013).

However, Bondarouk and Furtmueller (2017) say that: “despite the existence of a number of recent reviews of e-HRM research, we still lack a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting the adoption and consequences of e-HRM”. Although previous studies have identified various IS factors that impact on effectiveness and efficiency of HRIS, there is still a need to conduct more in-depth research that goes beyond the existing IS factors and reveals how organisations could utilise their HRIS to specifically contribute to business success. This research argues that considering the findings of the HRM studies in the HRIS research could form a response to this research call. In other words, limited consideration in the HRIS studies has been given to the aspects of HRM that could help organisations to use HRIS in a more business-like manner. These HRM characteristics are identified in the HRM studies in terms of the HR practitioners’ characteristics and line managers’ initiatives. This research argues that since the presence of those aspects is essential for helping HR practitioners to add business values (Long & Ismail, 2011), this could affect the use of HRIS to positively influence the business. Until now, these HRM characteristics have not been thoroughly considered in the HRIS studies; hence, the research gap could be identified as follows: “There is a gap that specifically investigates the impact of HRIS on business success, taking into consideration the HRM characteristics”. This gap can be bridged by conducting a study to examine HRM studies on what HRM characteristics could enhance the business impact of HRIS. Incorporating certain aspects of HRM studies in an HRIS context could bridge this gap. Having identified the

problem statement and the research gap, the research purpose is discussed further in the following section.

1.3 Research Purpose

The research background, problem statement, and research gap all point to the need to conduct an HRIS study that provides new insights into the requirements of HRIS implementation that are essential for contributing to business performance. To discuss the implementation of HRIS, IS researchers have adopted multiple theories/models. By considering factors such as "job satisfaction" and "user experience" in HRIS studies, researchers have made valuable enhancements to these existing theories (Maier et al., 2013; Maamari et al., 2021). Existing researches form the basis to develop the new framework and respond to the academic motivation, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.3.1 Academic Motivation

The academic motivation for conducting this research is to address an ongoing debate among scholars and professionals on why HR software applications have been used mostly within the transactional and administrative context, with limited contribution to business performance (Marler & Fisher, 2013; Sadiq et al., 2013; Kavanagh et al., 2015; and Khashman & Khashman, 2016). As mentioned above, UK is one of the biggest HR software markets in the world. This maturity in the UK HR software market provides researchers field data to search beyond automation and transactional/operational advantages and dig deeply in the transformational benefits that HRIS could deliver (Beadles et al., 2005; Islam and Shuvro, 2014; and Khashman & Khashman, 2016). The assumption that HRIS would transform HR practitioners into business partners and contribute to business success requires more empirical studies and investigation. According to Sadiq et al. (2013, p.82) only about one-third of the participants in

his study were satisfied with the HRIS, and all the participants agree that HRIS could be utilised “better”. This limitation in the use of HRIS has been attributed to many factors. Early in the 21st century, IS researchers started to compile lists of the IS success factors to consider, such as system security, information quality, trust, data accuracy and confidentiality, attitudes to technology data sharing, computer knowledge, cultural values, norms and habits, beliefs, legal and governmental requirements, enjoyment, user expectations, IT Infrastructure, etc. (Petter & McLean, 1992; Davarpanah & Mohamed, 2013; Nawaz, 2013; and Moussa, 2014).

Regardless of the overconcentration on the existing success factors, the debate about HRIS business impact still continues. In response to this gap in recognising the business impact of HRIS, researchers need to explore other aspects that might help to explain why the HRIS potential has not been fully used. The functionality and features of HRIS could be better considered in the present HRIS research.

1.3.2 Personal Motivation

There is an element of self-motivation in doing this research. I am very keen to understand how organisations can maximise the benefits of their HRIS investments. Most of the HRIS applications in the market nowadays are useful and helpful to HR practitioners in working effectively and efficiently. In March 2019, I set up an HR software solutions company with two senior software engineers (who had had more than 20 years’ experience). We developed a cloud HR application based on the SAAS model using enterprise framework (Angular 11 and Java Spring Data MongoDB). This practical experience enriched my knowledge about the various technical elements required to build an HR software application from scratch. I was lucky enough to combine the conceptual/theoretical concepts with the technical aspects in an actual professional environment (installation problems, compatibility, customisation, localisation, security concerns, and domain hosting). The HR Software (Screen HRM) enabled

me to experience the technical life of the coders and I am still enjoying the use of common technical terms employed in the software industry. This technical language, such as backend/frontend, 500 exception error, component libraries, load testing, server response time, lazy loading, QA testing, hot and cold data, pagination, etc, gave added value to my practical knowledge about HRIS. In addition, using other supportive software applications to test and debug my HR application (such as bug ticketing applications (Jira), Code scanners (Codeac), Automated API Testing Platforms (SmartBear)) has enhanced my communication skills with the software engineers (such as using “expected” and “actual” terms in bug templates). Besides, setting the mobile app for my HRIS platform has introduced me to the requirements and the process of opening an account with Android and IOS. All this experience showed me how difficult it was to position my offering among the mature systems in the market. Currently, the software is live and implemented at 5 UK companies, one company in Mauritius, and one large Telecom company (1300 employees) in Syria. To date, I am pleased to find the admin benefits of HRIS recognised, but less so to justify their contribution to business performance. The purpose of this research is then to go beyond the administrative discussion of HRIS and examine/understand the requirements that could cause it to impact upon business decisions. Various features of HRIS are discussed in this study to demonstrate (in the discussion chapter) how HRIS could contribute to business success. To fulfil the academic and personal intention in conducting this study, the research question, aim, and objectives are identified below.

1.4 Research Question, Aim and Objectives

Reflecting on the research background and context, the research question is identified in as follows: what are the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that contributes to business performance success?

This question response will provide insights into the constraints of HRIS and associated concerns. The answer will identify the business aspects and also outline the factors that impact on business success. An investigation of the multi-dimensional IS factors is required to answer this question, as well as an in-depth understanding of certain HRM characteristics. Understanding the relationship among HRM characteristics, IS factors, and business success elements will also help answer the research question.

Regarding the research aim, this study seeks to understand how the HRIS potential can be unlocked to maximise its business impact. The aim of this research could be described as follows:

“To develop a framework that relates key IS success factors and HRM characteristics that help organisations to use HRIS to contribute to business performance”.

To achieve this aim, the following four objectives are outlined:

1. To identify the success factors of the business performance.
2. To investigate the key existing IS factors that impact on HRIS usefulness.
3. To explore the HRM characteristics that bring the business impact.
4. To corollate the relationships between the key existing IS factors, HRM characteristics & business success aspects.

Achieving the first objective will reveal the aspects of business success that HRIS should contribute to. The second objective is to examine the existing IS dimensions/factors to understand how they will impact on HRIS usefulness. The third objective, to investigate certain HRM characteristics will teach us how such characteristics could enhance the ability of HR practitioners to add business value. Once those three objectives are fulfilled, the relationships between the factors and aspects will establish the research framework. This framework will define the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that could contribute to business

performance. Achieving the research aim and objectives will provide an answer to the research question. The next section discusses the structure of this thesis.

1.5 Research Structure

This study is structured into nine chapters, each covering a specific aspect of the research. Chapter One introduces the research, including the background, context, and rationale for conducting the study. It identifies the research problem, highlights a specific gap, and presents the research purpose, objectives, questions, and aim.

Chapter Two focuses on the challenges that HR practitioners face in adding business value and discusses whether HRIS has helped them to overcome these challenges. The chapter also provides a brief overview of IS theories and identifies the specific gap in the literature. Chapter Three develops the conceptual framework by identifying the aspects of business success, adopting the key IS factors, and exploring the HRM characteristics related to HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives. Chapter Four describes the research methodology, including the research paradigm, approach, and design. It also covers the data collection method, sampling, data analysis technique, research ethics, and trustworthiness of the data. Chapter Five presents the findings of the HR practitioners interviews. Chapter Six presents the findings of the business managers interviews and the research framework. Chapter Seven validates the research framework by implementing a Readiness Assessment Checklist tool (RAC), which empirically sets the factors and aspects of the research framework. Chapter Eight discusses the findings of the study and some professional implications. The Conclusion is the last chapter that defines the contribution to knowledge made by the thesis, its limitations, and its suggestions for future research.

1.6 Summary

This opening chapter provides an overview of the topic. It highlights the heavy demand for HRIS software in the UK market and the growth of the cloud business industry. However, many companies have not yet realised the business impact that HRIS might make. This has led to numerous academic studies aiming to identify the IS factors needed for successful HRIS implementation. However, there is still debate surrounding the HRIS potential to contribute to business performance, possibly due to the failure to consider aspects of HRM in previous HRIS studies. Certain HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives would be identified in this study as possible requirements for enhancing the business impact of HRIS. The research gap is then presented, justifying the purpose of this study in terms of academic and personal motivation. The aim of the research is defined and four objectives are outlined to achieve it. The research question is constructed and the nine chapters in the structure of the study are described. The next chapter contains the literature review.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to review the relevant literature. It begins by presenting the history of HRM evolution, which contextualises the challenges that HR practitioners currently face. The challenge identified in this study is the ability of HR practitioners to add business value to their organisations. The fourth section introduces HRIS as a tool that can meet this challenge. Section Five investigates the effectiveness of HRIS in relation to their business impact. The final section reviews the IS theories that have responded to various problems and challenges. The research gap is justified in this chapter.

2.1 HRM Evolution

The section discusses the historical evolution of HRM. The origins of managing people can be traced back to ancient times, as evidenced by its use in managing ancient armies (Rindova & Starbuck, 1997) and building the pyramids (Smith, 2018). Moving forward in time, the British Industrial Revolution in the 18th century marked the start of modern human resource management. It was during this period that business owners recognised the importance of employee satisfaction and commitment as critical elements for productivity (Haslinda, 2009). In the 1920s, the second rapid development of HRM occurred with the launch of Personnel Management (PM) as a defined term for accomplishing administrative people-related tasks (Rotich, 2015). The 1970s, saw Personnel Departments adopting some strategic and business focus approaches (Rotich, 2015). Several authors analyse the evolution of HRM from its predecessor, Personnel Management (PM), to its current form (HRM). Others take the critical perspective that views this shift as fluctuating between rhetoric and reality (Caldwell, 2003; Van et al., 2011; Ahammad, 2017). The uncertainty about the effectiveness of the new HRM label/term can be attributed to a multitude of challenges.

2.2 HRM Challenges

The HRM department should be effective in addressing business challenges. One such challenge is talent acquisition, which poses a significant hurdle for HR practitioners (Das & Sureshkrishna, 2019; Claus, 2019). To address this challenge, HR practitioners must develop effective recruitment strategies, create job postings that attract suitable candidates and screen and interview candidates to identify which ones will best fit their organisation (Sangeetha, 2010). They must also compete with other employers in a highly competitive job market to attract top talent, which can be a daunting task. Moreover, HR practitioners must be mindful of diversity, equity and inclusion in their recruitment efforts to ensure that they are attracting a diverse pool of candidates (Hangartner et al., 2019).

Employee engagement can be exemplified as another challenge in HRM. Achieving high levels of employee engagement can be difficult (Loftus & Lawson, 2011). HR practitioners, in creating a workplace culture that promotes engagement, must understand employees' needs, expectations and motivation (West & Dawson, 2012). They need to develop effective communication strategies, ensure that employees feel valued and appreciated and create opportunities for professional development and growth. For example, remote work and hybrid work arrangements have presented new challenges for employee engagement, which HR practitioners need to adapt to (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). HR practitioners must address factors that can negatively impact on employee engagement, such as poor leadership, lack of recognition, inadequate communication, and work-life balance issues (Kelloway et al., 2005; Parkes & Langford, 2008; and Ikäheimo, 2015).

Other examples of HRM challenges come from the need to embrace change (Alfes et al., 2010). Change is a constant in the workplace and, to remain competitive and successful, organisations must be able to adapt quickly. HR practitioners play a critical role in managing change by supporting organisational transformation while ensuring that employees are engaged and

motivated (Alfes et al., 2010). This may be difficult especially when it involves significant shifts in organisational culture, technology, or work processes. To deal with this challenge of resistance to change, HR practitioners should address any issues that arise during the change process by providing training and development opportunities to help employees acquire new skills and knowledge and by fostering open communication channels for employees to share feedback and ideas (Long, 2013).

Amongst the possible challenges, the most prominent for HR practitioners today is the increasing pressure to exert an impact on business decisions and add business value. In today's highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment, HRM is no longer acceptable as merely a support function but is expected to play a strategic role in driving organisational success (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003; Marler & Fisher, 2013; and Sadiq et al., 2013). It could be said that HR practitioners must demonstrate the value of their efforts in terms of measurable business outcomes. The relationship between HRM and business success/value is briefly discussed in the next section.

2.3 HRM & Business Value

The relationship between HRM and business success has been the subject of ongoing debate among HR practitioners and business leaders (Kovach et al., 2002; Cascio, 2005; Voermans et al., 2007; Ruel et al., 2007). On a positive note, Trace and Nathan (2002) have demonstrated the impact of HRM on business value through their research on the direct relationship between training, employee turnover and sales. The study collected data from 115 privately-owned hotels and franchises in the United States and measured training as the number of hours dedicated to skilled-based programmes. Employee turnover was measured monthly and net sales were used as a metric for business success. The results of the study showed that both training and employee turnover had a significant impact on net sales. HR decisions regarding

training and retention have a direct effect on net sales and long-term growth plans (Trace & Nathan, 2002).

Ulrich et al. (2009) tackled business success through satisfying customers, which can be achieved by implementing strategic HRM. The work suggested that practitioners' priority should be "getting to know business external customers and their needs, one of the best ways to broaden your strategic perspective and credibility". HR practitioners should focus on the external customer's needs, drivers and motives, and translate these requirements into relevant HR actions. This sets them apart from practitioners whose agenda is internally focused on employees only.

Although the impact of HRM on business success is seen in positive light in certain cases, it is not certain how much it contributes to business value (Ulrich et al., 2013). The emergence of HRIS has led to the promotion of ambitious ideas about their ability to transform HR practitioners into more business-oriented individuals. Many have hoped that HRIS would be a means of helping practitioners to become true business partners (Kovach et al., 2002). The new vision is that the future of HRM, in conjunction with technological advancements, will be business-friendly to the point of causing a new wave of changes in HR functions and even HR identity. In the next section, HRIS is defined and their emergence and history are explored.

2.4 HRIS Definition, Emergence and History

HR like other departments in an organisation has been impacted by the emergence of IS ever since 1960. The evolution of HRIS includes the combination of IS and HR, hence its name. HRIS is a database management software system applied to automate the functions of HR (Moussa, 2014). It is commonly used in large companies and has a range of popular modules such as recruiting, personnel data management, appraisal performance, training, employee's attendance tracking and succession planning (Sivasankaran & Suganya, 2021). HRIS was

introduced to provide online data entry, tracking management and all the operations related to human resources. It computerises and automates all HR functions to facilitate the delivery of HR services (Sivasankaran & Suganya, 2021).

Among the early definitions on HRIS is the one provided by Kinne and Arthurs (1996, p.3), who saw it as “composite of databases, computer applications, hardware, and software.... used to collect/record, store, manage, deliver, present and manipulate data for human resources”. HRIS is also defined as a “systematic way of storing data and information for each individual employee to aid planning, decision making” (Jahan, 2014, p.34). It is an integrated computerised system used to manipulate, acquire, analyse, store, distribute and retrieve details concerning human resources (Aggarwal & Kapoor, 2012). In most scenarios, HRIS is used to facilitate the recruitment of employees, promote learning and development, ensure performance and manage employees’ leaves and more. In some organisations, HRIS runs mainly on the organisation’s technical infrastructure and, more commonly, it is cloud-based, making it appropriate for running the organisation in the comfort of one’s home (Beadles et al., 2005). The information/data stored in HRIS applications is sensitive and confidential, since it belongs directly or indirectly to the employees, other stakeholders and clients. HRIS software includes functional capabilities and many features that are aimed at retaining, attracting and accurately ensuring the compensation of workers (Beadles et al., 2005).

The literature has no breakthrough related to HRIS definitions, because most of the authors define HRIS in a similar way; yet may differ about the details of functionality of the term. This may be attributed to the effects of time and new technological advancements.

Regarding the functionality of HRIS, it has dramatically improved from data entry and storage and come to be used more as a decision-making tool that helps both HR practitioners and business managers to retrieve data for business performance analysis and long-term HR decisions making (Islam & Shuvro, 2014). The kick off for HRIS was in 1960 when personnel

records proved to be important for organisations as regulations were introduced which organisations had to comply (Nawaz, 2013). Besides storing personnel records, the first form of HR software was payroll for the employees (Kawale et al., 2018). In the late 1980s, HRIS applications started to perform many different functions beyond simple record-keeping. After the 1980s, the HRIS evolved into to a complex analytical tool that can assist management in decision making (Dery et al., 2009). In the year 2000, HRIS grew significantly, leading to the development of the HR software industry as more companies became interested in implementing these products. It grew to include time management, compensation management, recruitment, payroll, expense reimbursement and reporting, benefits and training and learning management. While SMEs may still conduct their HR activities without HRIS, larger companies increasingly automated their personnel processes.

The HRIS literature reveals that HRIS has significantly enhanced the management of administrative tasks and has the potential for generating an impact on business decisions. Many line managers view HRIS usefulness in terms of administrative functions only. HR practitioners and HRIS providers have promoted HRIS as an analytical-machine learning and user-friendly tool for employee management and business impact. The section below explores the HRIS impact on business success.

2.5 HRIS & Business Performance

While it is generally accepted that HRIS can provide benefits that may contribute to an organisation's overall business success, there is still a long-standing debate about whether or not HRIS can contribute to business success in any practical sense. There is no simple answer to this question, for it is difficult to quantify or measure the strategic benefit or the business impact that HRIS could exert (Kovach et al., 2002; Burbach & Dundon, 2005; Beadles et al., 2005; Ruel et al., 2007; and Hussain et al., 2007).

From a theoretical standpoint, Shrivastava et al. (2004, cited in Ruel et al., 2007, p.282) state that “it appears that firms that undertake technology initiatives with a view to enable the HR function to focus more on value-added activities are the ones most likely to realise the full potential of technology”. Similarly, Kovach et al. (2002, p.45), in reference to HRIS, note that “through the proper management of HR data, firms are now able to perform calculations that have effects on the business as a whole”. In contrast, Sadiq et al. (2013, p.86) mention that “even though HRIS appears to have tremendous promise, it has not been fully utilised according to its potential”.

In a positive light, Islam and Shuvro (2014) introduce HRIS as a tool for cost analysis, which facilitates the calculation of various indicators such as “health-care costs per employee, pay benefits as a percentage of operating expense, cost per hire, return on training, turnover rates and costs, time required to fill certain jobs, return on human capital invested”. Beadles et al. (2005) note that HRIS allows companies to aggregate the HR data, conduct analysis, predict and prescribe, and make decisions. For example, online training reports help to present the number of hours or the amount that has been invested in courses related to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on such generated figures from HRIS, managers can measure the efficiency of such courses against the customer satisfaction/complaint surveys and improve their decisions.

Another example is related to the management of the skills pool, where through HRIS skills assessment reports can highlight which are the missing skills that high quality customer service depends on. Similarly, Kovach et al. (2002, p.45) discuss how HRIS reduces the cost and claim that “Merck & Co. has estimated a cost reduction of 86 percent per HR transaction when performed by the employee. That is, transaction costs were estimated to be \$16.96 when performed by HR staff, compared with \$2.32 when performed by the affected employee”. The reduction in time spent on administrative work as well as the decreased number of

administrative staff, is an outcome of HRIS implementation that should eventually bring about profitability (Parry & Tyson, 2011). HRIS modules like Training and Recruitment contribute to an organisation's profitability by reducing the cost and the expenses required for training and recruitment through launching interactive responsive interviews and uploading online training videos.

Despite these positive insights about the effectiveness of HRIS and their potential to impact on business performance, many line managers have not yet embraced the ambitious views of a possible business impact of HRIS in the workplace. Moreover, the contribution of HRIS to business performance through their analytic power and available reporting features is not yet recognised by many line managers. Line managers have not been able to fully grasp the HRIS as a business decision-making tool that contributes to business performance. To respond to the HRIS value problem, it is helpful to review the existing theories that have been developed to address IS implementation problems, questions and challenges. These theories have identified various IS success factors that have an impact on innovation/technology implementation.

2.6 Theoretical discussion

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) shows how users would accept and use technology in a more informative and systematic approach, assuming that users are rational decision-makers who assess the easiness and benefits of using a technology before deciding whether to adopt it or not. In contrast, the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory, by Bijker et al. (1989), argues that the use of technology is influenced by social and cultural factors, such as the values, interests and power relations of different groups involved in the technology's development and use.

This is different from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Al-Suqri & Al-Kharusi, 2015) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 2011). Both theories focus on individual

behaviour and propose that behaviour is determined by an individual's attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control of such behaviour.

From a different perspective, Wani and Ali (2015), in the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), proposed key factors that affect the diffusion of innovations, including the relative advantage, complexity, compatibility, trialability and observability. According to these writers, the characteristics of the innovation and the communication channels are used to spread an innovation around a society.

Based on the previous theories, Venkatesh et al. (2003) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which synthesises several existing theories and models of technology adoption into a single, comprehensive framework. They proposed that four key factors influence the acceptance and use of technology: Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions. Performance Expectancy is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will help them to accomplish their tasks more efficiently or effectively. Effort Expectancy is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will be easy and require minimal effort. Social Influence is the degree to which an individual perceives that important others (such as colleagues or friends) think they should use a particular technology. Facilitating Conditions sum up the degree to which an individual believes that their organisation and technical infrastructure support the use of a particular technology.

Comparing with the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework developed by Tornatzky and Chakrabarti (1990), UTAUT is more focused on micro-level factors; while the TOE framework accommodates both micro and macro-level factors. UTAUT is primarily used to understand and predict technology adoption and use at the individual and organisational level, while TOE theory is used to understand the broader context in which technology is adopted and used. The TOE framework considers a broader range of factors related to

technological characteristics (complexity and compatibility), organisational context (such as culture, structure and resources) and external factors (such as market competition and regulatory environment). According to the TOE framework, the adoption and implementation of new technologies are influenced by the interplay between these three factors.

DeLone and McLean (2003) through their Information System Success Model adopted similar factors in the frameworks discussed above. The model focuses on the success of an information system along six dimensions, namely: system quality, information quality, use, user satisfaction, individual impact and organisational impact. It proposes that these dimensions have direct or indirect effects on each other and ultimately on system success. Compared to the DeLone and McLean model, UTAUT is more focused on user behaviour and attitudes to technology. It also has a narrower focus than the TOE framework, which considers technological, organisational and environmental factors. However, all three frameworks have the common goal of understanding the factors that influence the success of information systems.

Overall, each framework offers a unique perspective and set of factors to consider when evaluating the success of information systems. Researchers and practitioners can use these frameworks to identify the factors that are most relevant to their specific context and tailor their approach accordingly. Moreover, McKinley et al. (1999, cited in Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007, p.7) remarked that “scientific schools of thought are established and maintained by a mix of continuity, reflecting theory testing, novelty, reflecting new constructs, relationships, and research directions. Continuity is needed for scholars to understand how to work within a given school of thought, whereas novelty is needed to attract attention to and interest in the school”. The existing IS theories have covered areas related to individuals, organisations, markets, psychology, economics and social science. The dominance of the existing IS factors has to be considered in today’s IS research where the scope of technology is growing rapidly and

problems are emerging. New theoretical insights, contributions, perceptions and knowledge are addressing specific gaps in IS studies.

2.7 Research Gap

Ruel et al. (2007, p.281), declared that since the 1990s, “researchers are still searching for relevant and adequate theory that can fully grasp the concept of e-HRM”. Vogelsang et al. (2013, p.3) talked about the variances in the technologies and their associated problems and stated that “for analysing these specific kinds of software, existing acceptance models are only to a limited degree applicable”. Despite various studies examining the IS dimensions and factors related to HRIS implementation, the debate regarding the potential of HRIS and their effective use in business is ongoing. This doctoral research argues that the HRM dimension has not been specifically discussed among writers on HRIS implementation. The HRM dimension includes the characteristics related to both HR practitioners and line managers. Considering the HRM characteristics together with other key IS success factors could help the business to unlock the HRIS potential and use it effectively to contribute to business performance. In a nutshell, the research gap is identified as: “the HRIS impact on business performance taking into consideration the HRM characteristics”.

2.8 Summary

This chapter introduces the evolution of HRM and the challenges faced by HR practitioners to add business value. HRIS can help, but there is no consensus on whether HRIS is yet effective in addressing this challenge. The chapter reviews existing theories and IS factors that have been adopted in IS research. Current HRIS studies shows minimal consideration for the HR dimension and its related HRM characteristics, which has been identified as a gap. To plug this gap, HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives are collated as possible

requirements for the successful implementation of HRIS to impact business decisions and performance. An initial framework (Figure 2) was designed drawing on the TAM model. It incorporated the two factors of perceived usefulness and ease of use. In addition, this initial framework includes HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives that might affect the business performance of the company. Other external dimensions that might have an impact on the perceived usefulness are also considered. This initial framework was established to consider the perception of both HR practitioners and the line managers. It summarizes the theoretical discussion in literature above and addresses the identified gap. The far-right box of the framework is "Business performance", rather than "Actual System Use" in the classical TAM model. This extends the end user view of HRIS usefulness to the business performance impact of HRIS. The attitude and behaviour intent factors of the classical TAM model are replaced by the contribution of HR practitioners and business line managers. The initial framework provides a foundational structure for this research. Further development will identify specific factors and aspects related to the successful implementation of HRIS and its impact on business performance, drawing upon input from both the HR practitioners and line managers communities.

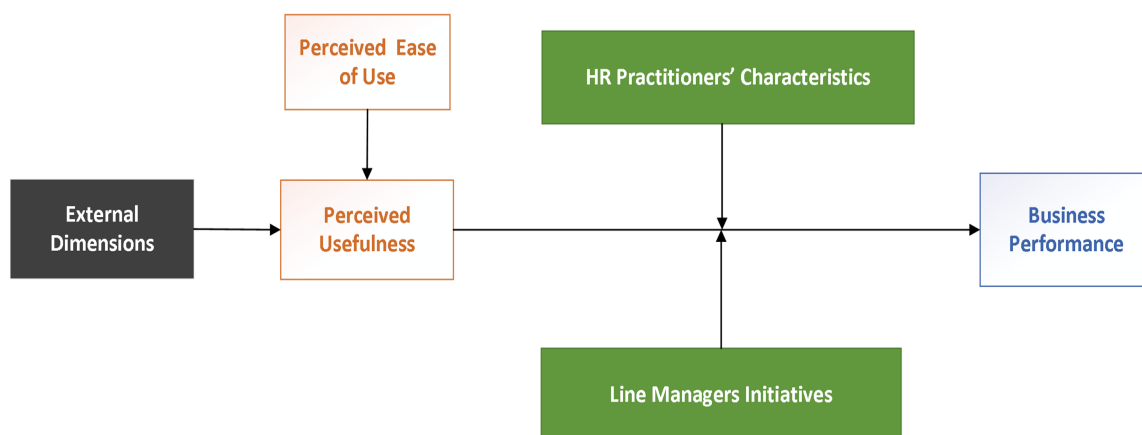


Figure 2: Initial Framework

3. Chapter Three: HRIS Conceptual Framework Development

This chapter develops the conceptual framework in this research. From the initial framework, these major areas are investigated: business performance, HR characteristics and line managers initiatives, IS success factors (easy to use, usefulness, and other external dimensions). The discussion in this chapter will have three major sections. The first section defines the business performance aspects. The second section focuses on key IS factors that are crucial to the study. The third section focuses on the HRM characteristics and considers two key areas: line managers' initiatives and HR practitioners' characteristics. The conceptual framework is then developed in a concluding summary.

3.1 Business Performance Aspects

There are varied measures of business success including: financial performance, efficient operations/processes, excelling in finances (assets, facilities, equipment), customer satisfaction, employee engagement, social impact, strategic focus and more. For example, business success has been identified by Ahmad et al., (2011) through measures such as (a) satisfaction with financial performance, (b) satisfaction with non-financial performance, (c) performance relative to competitors, and (d) business growth. Ariyachandra and Frolick (2008) identified the most critical success factors for business performance management as: championing the interests of employees, management of resistance, sufficient resources, effective communication, data, strategic thinking, and technology. From a different perspective, Kraaij (2020) introduced employee turnover as an essential measure of the organisational performance that companies focus upon to avoid harmful sequences. Alternatively, cost management has been presented as a main constraint to maximise the profit where the application of cost control and reviewing the budget form an effective method of cost reduction and consequently achieving profit (Akeem, 2017; Begum et al., 2020).

In the context of visualising the business performance in consideration of HR practices, it is important to acknowledge that there is no one universally agreed-upon concept that defines the business impact that HR practitioners are expected to deliver. According to Caldwell (2003, p.984), there is a “lack of clarity or accountability in specifying the goals, business outcomes, or the contribution of the personnel function”. Similarly, Cascio (2005, p.160) highlighted the need to develop a "stretch mentality" throughout the entire HR profession, stating “That is perhaps the greatest challenge in human resource management today: to get the thousands of professionals in this field to strive, to grow, to reach for more than they thought possible”. Given the complex and dynamic nature of business and the varied expectations of different stakeholders, it is difficult to establish business success as a single, definitive aim that HR practitioners must fulfil.

The common measure of business success has been identified mostly in terms of financial profitability, growth, market share, revenue, increasing sales, and profit (Ahmad et al. 2011; Ietnev & Nikolaeva, 2019). These financial terms are key factors that allow businesses to reinvest in their operations, hire new staff, and expand their reach. This may involve entering new geographic regions or targeting new customer segments and be willing to adapt their products or services to meet the unique needs of the new market.

Beside the successful financial measures, organisations continually adapt the customer element as an indicator for successful organisational performance where customer satisfaction and strong customer relations are essential requirements (Teece, 2010). According to Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 124, cited in Seturi, 2017), “Customers are the only reason you build factories, hire employees, schedule meetings, lay fiber-optic lines, or engage in any business activity”. By ensuring that customers are satisfied with a firm’s products or services, customer loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth advertising are more likely to ensue (Jankalová,

2013). Most importantly, it is widely believed that increasing customer loyalty and establishing strong customer retention ultimately drive growth in sales and revenue (Teece, 2010).

Likewise, brand recognition is another measure that impact the business performance where “A strong brand is the key to beneficial business” (Hamid et al.,2012). Déniz & Palacio (2014) expressed that brand plays a pivotal role in determining the success and performance of a business in today's competitive market. Similarly, Kotler & Armstrong (2015, p. 250, cited Seturi, 2017) said: “Brand plays a huge role in the product’s commercial success in the market”. It serves as a powerful tool that establishes a company's identity and distinguishes it from competitors (Homburg et al., 2010). Additionally, businesses with high brand recognition often enjoy a competitive advantage, as consumers are more likely to choose a familiar and trusted brand over others in the market (Amini et al.,2012). In essence, the importance of brand recognition cannot be underestimated, as it directly correlates with business performance, growth, and sustainability.

It should be noted that business success is usually measured using various KPIs that are specific to the organisation’s goals and objectives. These KPIs may include financial and non-financial metrics such as cost, finance, quality, time, flexibility, delivery, reliability, safety, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and social performance. Nevertheless, it can be emphasised that business performance aspects may be outlined through the examination of three key factors: customer satisfaction, profitability, and brand recognition.

3.2 Key Existing IS Factors

This section aims to outline the key existing IS factors in relation to two theories. The two factors from the TAM model (Davis, 1986) (Figure 3) have been adopted in the conceptual framework, namely, “perceived usefulness” and “perceived ease of use”. These two factors are deemed crucial to the success of IS implementation and user acceptance (Davis, 1986). This is

confirmed by Ng et al. (2013), who said that “the success of a system can be determined by user acceptance”. According to Davis (1986), a user’s acceptance of technology depends on the perception of usefulness in the software and ease of use, which are two essential elements for accepting and using the innovation.

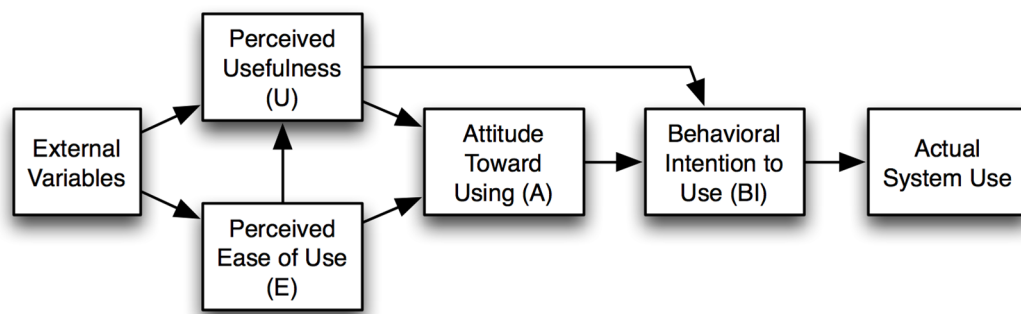


Figure 3: TAM Model (Davis, 1986)

As Figure 3 shows, the perceived usefulness is impacted by external variables which have been identified variously in IS research (Surendran, 2012). In this research, these external variables are identified in the light of the TOE framework (Figure 4), as technology, organisation, and environment (Tornatzky & Chakrabarti, 1990). These external variables are identified as external dimensions that impact on the perceived usefulness in the conceptual framework of this research.

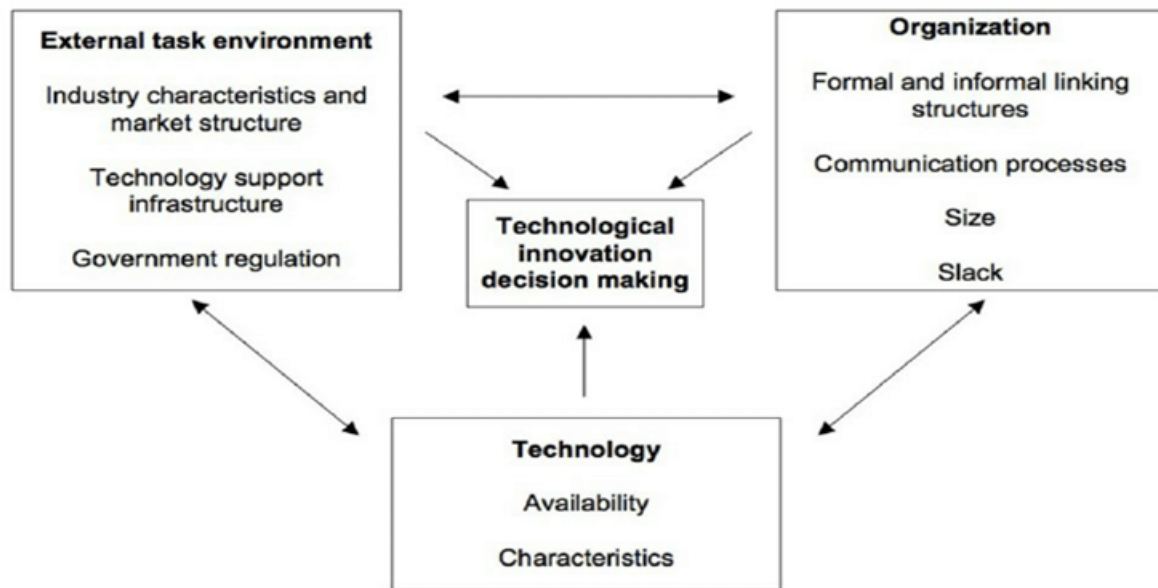


Figure 4: TOE Framework (Tornatzky & Chakrabarti, 1990)

3.2.1 HRIS Usefulness

This section examines the usefulness of HRIS from two perspectives. The first is accessibility and use of HRIS, and the second perspective is the perception of the usefulness of HRIS. In terms of HRIS accessibility and use, their usefulness is demonstrated through the ability to be accessed and shared by many employees at once. For example, the Employee Self-Service (ESS) functionality in HRIS allows employees to manage their own and their subordinates' HR tasks and personnel information, such as applying for leave, submitting timesheets and getting them approved, or signing in and out for attendance tracking. Through HRIS, line managers can now do appraisals, recruitment, and generate HR reports on their own desktops (Mane, 2016; Lischka, 2017; Rahmayanti et al., 2022). According to Mohrman and Lawler (2003, p.16), "Much administration can be accomplished by self-service information technology solutions" and this helps practitioners to manage effectively and efficiently other strategic HR functions such as employees' career development and manpower planning. However, this accessibility for line managers may become a challenge for practitioners and enable power conflict among different groups in the organisation (Hekkala & Sarker, 2021).

Kinnie and Arthurs (1996, p.14-15-16) remarked that HR practitioners, who were “personnel specialists, sought to place themselves at the centre of an employee-information system through the use of transactional applications rather than use expert systems which potentially weakened their power..... IT systems have the ability to reshape the distribution of power within organisation”. Kinnie and Arthurs (1996, p.17) commented that HR practitioners “appear to have taken up a position which avoids the wholehearted acceptance of IT as the only way to maintain their position within the organisation and have adopted a half-way position which combines an upskilling of their job together with re-emphasis of their traditional skills”.

The perception of HRIS usefulness ranges from operational excellence to strategic decision-making (Sadiq et al., 2013). One of the most frequently cited HRIS benefits is its ability to unify HR activities in one centralised location. This concept was first predicted by Kovach et al. (2002, p.47) “Future HRIS portals can be the one-stop shop for most company-related transactions between employers and employees”. Moreover, the usefulness of HRIS lies in its ability to enhance HR service delivery by streamlining information flow, resulting in fewer transactional errors (Nawaz & Gomes, 2014). This efficiency is manifested in various forms, such as quicker HR responsiveness, time saving, paperless processes, improved employee communication, the delivery of accurate, accessible, fast, reliable, and timely information, and knowledge sharing (Ngai & Wat, 2006; Batool & Raza, 2012). An example of HRIS efficiency concerns the automated offboarding stress-free process. This service helps the finance department, for example, to quickly provide the employees who have resigned with all the financial clearance statements once the offboarding process is completed by all the people/departments concerned.

In the realm of recruitment, automating the process has become increasingly popular. This includes tasks such as job posting, application reviews, and candidate interviews. Such automation has been shown to save recruiters a great deal of time and effort, for they no longer

need to manually categorise, classify, and filter applicants (Shahbaz et al., 2018). According to Shahbaz et al. (2018), HRIS allows recruiters to track candidate resumes and information, enabling them to match employment opportunities with suitable candidates. This facilitates the hiring process and guides recruiters in making the best hiring decisions.

On the same topic of HRIS usefulness, Maamari and Osta (2021) discuss the impact of HRIS on employees' job satisfaction, while Batool and Raza (2012) discuss the reduction in the amount of the transactional paperwork that HRIS make by storing the data electronically. Various studies have demonstrated the advantages of HRIS, including enhancing efficiency, saving time, reducing administrative burdens, facilitating HR planning, increasing the quality of HR service delivery and making crucial strategic decisions (Hussain et al., 2007; Krishna & Bhaskar, 2011; Marler & Fisher, 2013, Sadiq et al., 2013; and Kavanagh & Johnson, 2017).

However, whether the strategic benefits are implemented practically in the workplace is still subject to debate. Ngai and Wat (2006) note that, on average, 86% of the HRIS that are used or developed are for payroll services and general information. Such a figure defeats the objective of companies that wish to transcend the transactional use of HRIS and used their help to make informed business decisions. These companies have taken for granted the promises of HRIS fulfilment of their administrative processes and have ambitious views about the business impact that HRIS would bring.

Some authors seem to be claiming that the perceived usefulness of HRIS may not be fully appreciated unless reporting and analysis-support services are used. While automating HR administrative activities is essential, it is argued that the ultimate business impact will be realised only through these HRIS services. HR data is accessible thanks to the accessibility configuration features of HRIS. However, the HRIS reporting services are not adequately used. This justifies the perception of the limited HRIS usefulness: that it lies mostly in an administrative context.

3.2.2 HRIS Perceived Ease of Use

On the topic of IS implementation, the factor of “easiness” has been deemed critical in determining success or failure (Safaâ & Mohamed, 2020). Fattahi and Afshar (2006, p.137) say: “easy and quick access to desired information are two major parameters in designing information systems. This is to save users’ time, in particular experts’ time”. The advantages of easy-to-use HRIS have been highlighted in terms of time saving and user acceptance. Software providers strive to hire HRIS designers capable of creating user-friendly frontend interfaces that facilitate initial user acceptance (Jitnupong & Jirachiefpattana, 2018). Research indicates that users are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes to user-friendly systems when they can relate to and interact with the application to obtain the desired benefits. Normalini et al. (2012) indicate that the perceived usefulness of the HRIS can be negatively affected by complexity, because this factor can limit the number of users who are willing to access and utilise the system (Jahan, 2014). Troshani et al. (2010) identified three factors that influence HRIS adoption, one of which is the demonstration of HRIS benefits before implementation. The authors emphasise that to alleviate user resistance, HRIS must deliver these benefits through user-friendly functionality.

In essence, easiness affects the user’s ability to easily navigate and use a system. Poor interface design or complicated structures can result in implementation failure and negatively impact the usefulness of an innovation (Jitnupong & Jirachiefpattana, 2018). According to Liang and Yu (2018), “the compatibility of display and manipulation in human machine interface determines the ease of use to a large extent”. HRIS that is easily accessible can enhance employee experience, promote memorable transactions, mitigate employee resistance, and minimise inconsistencies and errors.

3.2.3 External Dimensions That Impact HRIS Usefulness

According to IS literature, there are several dimensions that affect the usefulness or implementation of information systems, including technology, people, data, and environment. The authors Venkatesh et al. (2003) and DeLone and McLean (2003) have identified most of the IS factors in relation to these dimensions. For example, Al-Mobaideen et al. (2013) have contended that IT infrastructure is a crucial factor for the successful adoption of HRIS. On the other hand, Tansley et al. (2001) have identified several factors that cause HRIS failure, such as the lack of understanding of the potential of ERP, HR, silo mentality of process owner, and mapping each of the HR process independently. In the context of identifying factors that impact on HRIS usefulness, Bedell et al. (2008) have discussed the system development process for HRIS and clarified that in certain countries modifications may help bridge the cultural gap. However, many HR software systems implemented overseas did not meet the national employment law, did not help in the organisation strategic decisions, or were a wrong investment due to limited customisation. Yasin and Quigley (1994, p.27) have found that poor communication and conflicting views between Information Systems Executives (ISEs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) about the IS implementation process are reasons for unsuccessful implementation. CEOs complained about the ISEs' inability to communicate effectively with other employees, while ISEs were dissatisfied with being treated as "second-class citizens" by CEOs. ISEs highlighted that CEOs have unrealistic expectations and insufficient understanding of the potential and limitations of IS. With reference to the importance of the user acceptance as one of the IS success factors, Stone and Gueutal (2005) quoted a dialogue between two employees about the redundancy caused by using HRIS and asserted that this could quickly explain why some HR practitioners are reluctant to accept HRIS: "want to check on your latest performance review? How about some online training? You can try calling the HR staff but remember they have been reduced by a third since we went

online”. Similarly, Kinnie and Arthus (1996, p.15-16) discussed user acceptance and identified the concept of power as a challenging issue for accepting and implementing HRIS effectively. They stated: “The use of HRIS provides a potential threat to the political power of personnel specialists because of its ability to loosen their control over employee data and the possible bypassing of their role as a source of advice. Personnel specialists have not ignored these challenges, but instead, have responded to them in such a way as to seek to maintain and enhance their organisational power”.

In conclusion, most of the IS factors that have been discussed by IS researchers overlap in meaning and in practice. These factors could be technological in nature, such as security/compatibility or may have organisational content such as cost and management commitment (Troshani et al., 2010; Begum et al., 2020). It could be said that a range of factors with different labels and terminologies have been identified over the last four decades and classified along three main dimensions: technological, organisational, and environmental (Tornatzky & Chakrabarti, 1990; Baker, 2012). These dimensions are discussed below.

3.2.3.1 Technological Dimension

The technological dimension has been previously discussed from several perspectives. For example, Ruel et al. (2007) assess the effectiveness of e-HRM in the light of three factors: ease of use, job relevance and the quality of the system. According to these authors, the perceived quality of e-HRM applications is a fundamental requirement, whereas job relevance and ease of use surprisingly have no significant impact. In any case, the technological dimension is commonly discussed in three factors: security, integration, and compatibility. The next section briefly discusses the security factor of the technological dimension.

3.2.3.1.1 Security

One of the main features that distinguishes IS quality is the trust in technology and the implemented security system that defines the users' roles, accessibility, and authentication (Lippert & Michael, 2005). Leaks and data breaches have been identified as the main concerns in the IS implementation process (Zafar, 2013; Phudphad et al., 2017). This security concern becomes a more sensitive subject for HRIS due to the confidentiality of the employees' information which requires the IT methods to preserve its availability, privacy, and integrity (Bedell et al., 2008). Confidentiality means that the confidential information is safely preserved from unauthorised personnel and remote from threats (Phudphad et al., 2017). Confidential data include citizens' identification, first contact information and expiry dates for mandatory certification.

Examples of the security measures implemented in HRIS include permissions configuration for the user role (ESS, Admin), the workflow approval cycle (who can approve whom, who can reject, etc.) and data group operation CRUD. Other security measures would include, for example, the login token, session time out and audit trail system that allows organisations to track the transactions of the software on a daily basis.

In conclusion, Ortho Biotech's Engle (cited in Kovach et al., 2002, p.47) maintains that "One of the difficulties in implementing HRIS is accounting for all the ancillary databases throughout the company and making sure that the data is secure yet available to those who need it". Without security, HRIS usefulness would be merely theoretical, since accuracy, trust, integrity, and privacy would be negatively impacted. Therefore, organisations should implement security standards, cyber-secure policies, and employees' security awareness courses; they should assess how important employees perceive information security to be (Bedell et al., 2008; Zafar, 2013).

3.2.3.1.2 Integration

The impact of integration on HRIS usefulness is an important factor in the technological dimension. An integrable HRIS allows work to continue alongside other existing information systems in the company. This enables users to access relevant information, save time, and avoid confusion (Bedell et al., 2008; Puspitarini, 2018). Integration involves connecting HRIS to other systems, enabling data to flow between systems in real time. For example, if payroll software is integrated with HRIS, updates in one system will automatically be reflected in HRIS records, allowing employees to share this information through the relevant interfaces (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2017).

Phudphad et al. (2017) argue that when HRIS is integrable with other systems such as finance and CRM, the services become more useful to users in different departments. According to Kovach et al. (2002), integration is a critical factor in extending the function-ability of HRIS. Sekgweleo et al. (2015) found that communication, change, lack of understanding, exploration of new technology, and improvement are critical factors to consider when integrating systems in an organisation. With reference to the integration factor, the compatibility of the software is another essential factor of the technological dimension.

3.2.3.1.3 Compatibility

Compatibility is another relevant factor in the technological dimension that has an impact on the usefulness of HRIS. Compatibility has been considered one of the main requirements in implementing information systems (Normalini et al., 2012; Aldholay et al., 2018). It is defined as the degree to which an innovation is understood as consistent with other networks, and with browsers. According to Sebetci (2018), technological compatibility, whether regarding software, hardware or remote access, is one of the factors that impact on user satisfaction. Organisations should ensure early that they have up-to-date software and hardware to avoid

any instability or problem with performance (Aldholay et al., 2018). To sum up, compatibility is a technological requirement in IS implementation. To ensure successful implementation, pre-checking the compatibility is an essential part of the implementation process in hardware, software, networks and mobiles.

3.2.3.2 Organisational Dimension

In this section, the two organisational factors discussed in relation to HRIS implementation are top management support; and organisational structure.

3.2.3.2.1 Top Management Support

Top management support refers to the willingness of management to provide essential assets, authority, and resources for successful innovation (Al-Harazneh & Sila, 2021). Troshani et al. (2010) said: “Management commitment is crucial for both supporting adoption initiatives and for ensuring that suitable resources are made available for sustaining adoption efforts including training and development of organisational human capability”. More support from senior executives makes it easier to adapt new technology in the organisation because it helps staff to prevail against barriers and drawbacks (Sitompul, 2016). Cascio et al. (2010) assert that support for innovation from top management promotes employee motivation, leading to the company’s progress and success, and stimulates positive attitudes and awareness to innovation.

Active involvement and support from top management can indicate the right direction for adopting innovation. Visible top management support can signal the importance of HRIS and lead to positive attitudes from users to the innovation (Hagan, 2021). This support can also smooth the transition from existing work procedures to new automated processes and workflows (Sitompul, 2016). In its leadership role, top management can ensure the allocation of required capital, sufficient financial support, and adequate resources for innovation

adoption. In summary, top management support is about assessing employees' understanding of innovation, attitudes to innovation, and the extent of involvement in the adoption process. It is crucial in overcoming user resistance and resolving probable conflicts.

3.2.3.2.2 Organisational Structure

The organisational structure factor includes various aspects such as organisational behaviour, values, sharing knowledge, communication, employee relations, and hierarchy. The traditional HR model that emerged in the late 1920s was based on the centralisation of knowledge, responsibility, authority, and control. This traditional model developed in organisations dramatically over time.

The exchange of individual knowledge and experience among employees, for example, would lead to better success at the organisational performance level (Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., 2018). Although employee involvement strategies lack practical implementation (Lo et al., 2015), Tracey and Nathan (2002) have recommended a flat structure and shared-centre approach to replace the outdated traditional HR model by a new model.

Prior research into HRIS reveals a number of organisational aspects as potential determinants of the adoption process such as organisational culture, behaviour, and values (Hagan, 2021). Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., (2018), discussing HR-related QM practices, found that teamwork and decentralisation significantly contribute to organisational innovation. Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al. (2018, p.9) state: "Teamwork breaks down barriers so that communication and information exchange are improved, both of which contribute to innovation". Phudphad et al. (2017) discussed the open climate in workspaces and found a positive relationship between a positive working atmosphere and HRIS implementation. Similarly, the results of research by Yeh et al. (2012, p.209) suggest that "collaboration capability", "cross-departmental communication" and "knowledge sharing capability in organisation" are highly important in

the process of IT strategy implementation. They confirm that the quality of IS/IT strategic planning process necessitates the involvement of different departments to share the knowledge since implementing IT strategies “cannot be accomplished by only one person” (Handfield & Nichols, 2004 cited in Yeh et al., 2012, p.209). These concerns, about sharing the knowledge and increasing the communication inside the organisation, were discussed long ago by Warner (1997, p.75) who was afraid that technology might impact negatively on the employees’ communication within the organisation. He stated that “people today seem to be less skilful than ever in interpersonal skills” and “despite the fact of so many people staring at computer terminals much of their working day, there appears to be as strong, or perhaps even stronger, a need as ever (maybe in part because of the isolation of sitting before a screen) to interact with others both for work and social reasons”.

As well as the importance of sharing knowledge, Tansley and Watson (2000, p.120) maintain that self-development and employee succession planning are important elements in HRIS implementation. They linked “personal strategic exchange” with “organisation strategic exchanges”. They proposed a managerial lesson about seeing how the lives of personnel and their managerial competencies should go in tandem with the implementation of HRIS project. To conclude, self-realisation, HR functions decentralisation, a flat structure, sharing knowledge, and enhancing communication between employees, are all effective strategies for creating positive organisational cultures that positively impact on the HRIS implementation (Tansley et al., 2001; Yeh et al., 2012, p.209). Command and control or top-down management structures are not a welcoming approach nowadays and have been identified as organisational structure issues that cause IS implementation to fail (Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., 2018).

3.2.3.3 Environmental Dimension

Environmental factors, specifically competitor's pressure and tech- reputation impact on the implementation of HRIS are considered in this section. IT tools could be employed within organisations to mobilise a pre-determined business strategy or respond to external pressure. It is accepted that the environmental dimension with its various factors has impacted on the success of the IT implementation.

3.2.3.3.1 Competitors Pressure

During this digital era, organisations started to be technologically competitive with each other by adopting the latest innovations (Aggarwal & Kapoor, 2012). This external pressure imposes on organisations the need to implement HRIS, bearing in mind that such investment helps in reducing costs and ensures the efficient allocation of HR resources, possibly streamlining processes (Begum et al., 2020). HRIS is one of the innovations that organisations seek to adopt to compete in the market and effectively manage their human resources.

However, the link between the HRIS and achieving competitiveness over competitors is difficult to investigate and measure. Sadiq et al. (2013, p.86) describe it as follows: "The extent to which HRIS can provide a competitive advantage to any organisation is contingent on the role of the HR department within that organisation. In institutions where HR is mostly confined to a personnel or employee advocate role, it is difficult to see how even the most effective HRIS can contribute towards increasing the competitive advantage of the organisation". Nevertheless, studies indicate that pressure from competitors is a critical driver in technological implementation (Aggarwal & Kapoor, 2012).

3.2.3.3.2 Technical Reputation

The discussion on the external environmental dimension includes the perspective of organisational reputation and image, as presented by Foroudi et al. (2019) and Sadri & Chatterjee (2003). The competition between companies now extends beyond services, goods, knowledge, and talents to include their reputation for a positive image and technological advancement. Bannister et al. (2003) highlighted the impact of managing relationships with customers (CRM initiatives) on organisational reputation. They state: “since reputation is linked to customers’ satisfaction, CRM initiatives may positively affect the general reputation of an organisation, even though such initiatives are not implemented aiming to this specific goal”. With reference to HRIS, Sadri and Chatterjee (2003) noted that HRIS can contribute to strengthening an “organisation's character”, and the pressure to adopt the latest technological advances has created a technical reputation imperative. In the digital era, aiming to be the leading tech-advanced company has become a common approach for those who wish to move ahead of their competitors (Maier et al., 2001).

3.3 HRM Characteristics

The HRM characteristics identified in this research as required aspects that enhance the HRIS contribution to the realisation of business success. These required aspects are HR practitioners’ characteristics (business knowledge, analytic ability, strategic competency, ethical compliance) together with the line managers’ initiatives (business expectation about HR role, productive relationship with the HR practitioners, empowering the HR practitioners).

3.3.1 Required Characteristics

This section examines the skills that HR practitioners need in order to make a positive impact on the business. It has been reported that many HR practitioners currently lack the necessary

skills to effectively enhance organisational performance and add value. A report by Deloitte (2014, p.107) observed that about 70% of the HR practitioners did not have the appropriate skills to contribute to business operations management. This shortfall has forced the management to contract outsiders to serve on the corporate boards. In addition, the lack of appropriate skills made it difficult for the HR practitioners to make a useful contribution to the formulation of business strategy and have “a seat at the table” (Ulrich et al., 2009). Close to half of the CEOs claimed that HR practitioner’s performance was below expectation and only 27% of the CEOs reviewed the HR personnel’s performance positively (Deloitte, 2014, p.27). HR practitioners reported that such figures were driven by the ego of the management. Some business managers (CEOs and MDs) were less than appreciative of the competence of HR practitioners, who were perceived as a threat to their dominance (Fallon Jr & McConnell, 2013, p.25).

In response to these deficiencies in the HR personnel, several researchers have developed different models of HR practitioners’ characteristics. Ulrich (2013) has provided several models and declared that “since 1987, we have done research to further the profession by defining the competencies that explain what makes effective HR professionals personally effective and what HR professionals do to impact business performance”. However, the findings in Caldwell’s (2008) show that these models are not yet effective in advocating the HR business partner role and improving business performance. He concludes that the effectiveness of the competency models should depend on four contextual factors: the degree of change to the HR function, the consistency in implementing business partnering, the level of reduction in transactional HR, and the extent to which the HR function is centralised or decentralised. The following sections discuss the required characteristics in turn in the light of the practitioners’ strategic competency, analytic ability, business knowledge, and ethical compliance.

3.3.1.1 Strategic competency

In HRM studies there is still some ambiguity in identifying the strategic competency of practitioners. Lo et al. (2015) noted that “what remains unclear is whether this lack of strategic focus is because HR practitioners lack the competencies seen as necessary to be a business partner, or because they have them but are not required to use them, or because there is a lack of clarity on the strategic competencies needed”. The strategic competence of the practitioners has been interpreted by many authors as the HR’s alignment with the organisational objectives. Ulrich et al. (2013), using their model (Figure 5) and study findings, define “Aligning strategy, culture, practices, and behaviour” as an essential factor for business impact. They declare that “HR professionals must make sure that their collective practices are innovative and integrated. HR practitioners need to integrate HR practices into unified solutions to solve future business problems. These innovative and integrated HR practices will result in high impact on business results”.

Martín-Alcázar et al. (2005, p.651) define Strategic HRM “as the integrated set of practices, policies and strategies through which organisations manage their human capital, that influences and is influenced by the business strategy”. For example, if the company has a high-growth strategy, this imposes the requirement of hiring more sales employees and executives for decision making roles. When the company has a retention-focused strategy, in contrast, the focus will be on hiring more employees for customer care roles.

It should be noted that most of the models of strategy related characteristics have been based on the reinventing the HR role and transforming the HR function (Venegas et al., 2017). Tracey and Nathan (2002, p.25) comment that with the new HR model that that they have adopted “HR professionals will become internal consultants and strategic partners rather than mere arbiters of proper practice”. To sum up, HR practitioners are required to demonstrate their strategic alignment, identifying business potential problems, predicting the future, and ensuring

that an organisation has a qualified stock of human capital to implement the organisational strategy. Such a strategic approach is the best way to impact on the business and add the required value to the organisation.

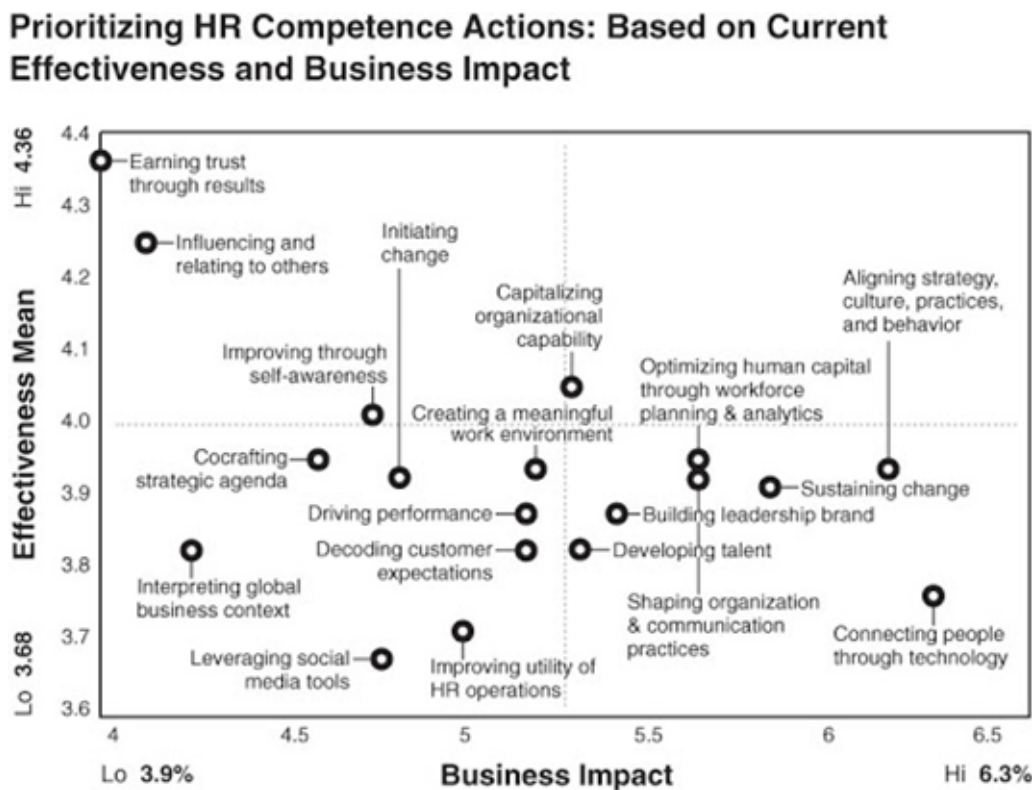


Figure 5: Prioritizing HR competence Actions (Ulrich et al., 2013)

3.3.1.2 Analytical Ability

Analytical ability is one of the most important characteristics that practitioners should consider. Kryscynski et al. (2018, p.715) claim that “HR professionals with greater analytical abilities will be better HR professionals overall, *ceteris paribus*. They may make better decisions, have greater influence, generate new insights, better communicate with business leaders, and so forth”. In data-driven decision making in HR, for example, practitioners are more in a position to provide business leaders with insights and approaches that are based on empirical evidence.

In addition, such analytical skills are essential for handling issues related to job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, employee turnover, compensations, and benefits planning. Toghiani & Rasmussen (2017) contend that through analysing current and future talents, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, threats, and setting up the relevant training accordingly, practitioners are more likely to drive the business towards strategic targets. Stone and Gueutal (2005, p.13) suggest that “with better data, of course, came better information; and with better information came better and more informed decisions”.

Kryscynski (et al., 2018) note that “HR professionals with analytical ability are more likely to build strong working relationships with their numbers-oriented colleagues in these other functions”. HR departments need data driven HR teams to be welcomed in the dynamic business world, a point confirmed by Kryscynski et al. (2018, p.716); “We would expect to find that an individual who utilises analytical skills and abilities would be a welcome contrast to other less empirically grounded HR professionals”. However, “future HR practitioners almost universally shy away from the more analytical classes”.

It has been reported that HR practitioners lack skills in statistical analysis, data forecasting and methods of analysing the data usefully (Toghiani & Rasmussen, 2017). According to a survey report from the software company Sage People, while 83% of HR leaders agree that all people decisions should be based on data and analytics, only 37% actually use data to solve their HR issues. A survey conducted by the IT company Sierra-Cedar found that the most popular tool for business intelligence and HR analytics was Microsoft Excel, which simply cannot process big data (OrangeHRM, 2022). HR practitioners need to translate data into useful insights and effectively use HR analytics to create value for organisations. They need to unlock their analytical potential to solve critical problems and take a leading role in achieving business impact.

3.3.1.3 Business knowledge

Business knowledge can be interpreted in the light of the employee's knowledge of the company and the industry in which it operates (Lo et al., 2015). Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) identify business knowledge as the awareness of the internal and external business environment, political dynamics, and financial savvy. According to Lo et al. (2015), "Business Awareness competencies were rated higher for strategic HR roles (5.87) than for functional HR roles (5.30)". However, HR practitioners have sometimes been identified as unable to highlight the problems central to the business strategy and recognise marketplace trends and their impact on business. Ulrich et al. (2009, p.26) say that "HR practitioners are often not seen as activists having active and accurate opinions about business. They often do not fully understand the business and how to it makes money, serves customers, attracts investment capital, and differentiates itself from competitors. While many in HR have sought and gained a seat at the table, they too often are not as confident in what they need to say once they're there". Similarly, Whittaker and Marchington (2003, p.256) have discussed the HR practitioners' limited business knowledge. They state that HR practitioners like to maintain their traditional activities and keep themselves as passive figures in their comfortable zone far from the complicated world of business. Ulrich et al. (2009, p.31) acknowledge the importance of HR practitioners' ability to talk business for "in a world where HR professional are finding themselves seated at the table, it is crucial that they add substantively to business discussions". Groysberg et al. (2011) suggest that organisations should consider hiring Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) who have experience with commercial models, change management, and can find practical solutions to complex issues. They argue that this approach will increase the likelihood of success for both the CHRO and the organisation as a whole. Similarly, Forsten-Astikainen, (2017, p.477) says that HR professionals should "work from the outside-in. They help define their organisation's strategic position by understanding general

business contexts and specific stakeholder expectations”. Whittaker& Marchington (2003) say that line managers see the personnel practitioners as “out of touch with commercial realities, unable to comprehend the nature of the business, its customers, or its corporate goals”. This irrelevance of the business vision has been historically attached to such practitioners, especially with the increasing demand to even disband, outsource, downsize, or devolve the HR function to line managers. Therefore, HR practitioners, for example, need to understand how marketers, sales professionals, business developers, and CEOs think and what their requirements are. Cascio (2005, p.160) quotes one of the precepts from a business leader to HR practitioners: “You must look at the business through the eyes of the CEO”. HR practitioners need to educate themselves about sales initiatives, business trade shows, and customers’ expectations. By overcoming the individual limitations of business knowledge, the HR practitioners make themselves more eligible to contribute to business finance/sales decisions.

3.3.1.4 Ethical Compliance

HR practitioners are expected to act as ethical guardians and ensure that ethical conduct is central to the sustainability of corporations. According to Wooten (2001, p.173), “to ensure the increased effectiveness and strategic partnership of HRM, the field must be seen as ethical and must act ethically”. However, several examples from literature demonstrate that ethical compliance has not been invariably observed in HR practice. The collapse of the Lehman Brothers Corporation was partly due to the absence of a robust corporate ethics framework (Kumar & Baag, 2021). Similarly, the Enron scandal highlighted the shortfall in implementing ethics in HR practice (Snyder et al., 2006). But at the same time, various activities and the legislating of actions such as zero-hour contracts, cutback processes, mergers, acquisitions, and cases of downsizing have been reported, and HR practitioners have had to align their practices in line with the diminished capital resources and recent changes in strategy (Shook & Roth,

2011, p.136). In summary, the literature suggests that HR practitioners must prioritise ethical compliance to ensure the effective implementation of their HR activities.

3.3.2 Required Initiatives

This section examines the initiatives that line managers need to take to help HR practitioners to make a positive impact on the business. Since 1980s, HR practitioners were calling for such assistance to accomplish tasks related to employees' activities (Russ et al.,1998). The line managers initiatives can be discussed from three perspectives: maintaining a productive relationship with HR practitioners; empowering the HR practitioners; and adopting business expectation about the HR role.

3.3.2.1 Maintaining A Productive HR-line Managers Relationship

HR-line relationship is discussed in this section through the concept of devolution and the isolation of HR practitioners. Devolving some of the HR activities and functions to line managers provides an opportunity to support the practitioners and free them to work strategically. On the contrary, this could be seen as “deprofessionalizes” and “strips the status” of the HR unit (Caldwell, 2003). Unfortunately, the devolution concept has been misunderstood by some line managers and HR practitioners as a devolution of power (Perry & Kulik, 2008). In certain areas, the line managers look at the HR role as a leading rather than a supporting or sharing role. Kinnie and Arthurs (1996, p.14) say that “personnel specialists’ ability to produce reports from the employee database can become a source of power over line managers as they are able to act as gatekeepers of vital information”. Either or not this is the case, based on a 200 IRS survey (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003) 60% of the participants have problems with the devolution of HR activities to line managers. This observation was justified by the fact that the line managers have other primary business responsibilities which take precedence over the HR

functions (Perry & Kulik, 2008). Beside the pressing priorities (business comes first) of the line managers and their lack of time, it has been noted that line managers are short of HR skills or training to resolve, for example, workplace grievances. Whittaker and Marchington (2003, p.251-254) quote one of the arguable responses in their case study: that line managers need to acquire certain skills to be “consultants rather than GPs” and line managers “do not take the HR aspects of their role seriously, believing that what they are required to do is nothing more than common sense”. Effectively implementing the devolved HR tasks by the line managers should be interpreted as an opportunity for allowing the practitioners to freely and collectively work with the line managers to achieve strategic organisational objectives (Fisher, 2009, p.349; Graham et al., 2015, p.451).

Regarding the HR practitioners’ isolation, it has been noted that the HR practitioners’ visibility and presence are not properly recognised inside the organisations. Some HR practitioners have adopted an isolated approach, implying that “HR was shut up in its ivory tower, out of touch with commercial realities, anonymous and lacking in visibility” (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, p.256). This sort of isolation or incommunicativeness is a serious issue that Lo et al. (2015, 2319) refer to in their findings: “Relationship building competencies were considered as the most important for job success”. Warner (1997) long ago perceived it as “a matter of relationships, relating with others to get work done. HR practitioners need to see themselves as interventionists, to be in between people, groups, and organisations to facilitate relationships. There is a great need”. Till today, this need has not been fulfilled. Some have attributed this isolation to the impact of the technology. Whittaker & Marchington (2003, p.258) concluded that “indeed, there were concerns that the HR function lacked visibility, and that it had become remote with increasing usage of electronic data systems and self-help HR. Having the chance to talk with someone from the HR function was regarded as essential”. Another quotation from the Whittaker and Marchington’s (2003) case study, a dialogue

between two employees, showed the impact of technology: “HR have produced a ream of documents, all on the PC, with various guidelines on how to do this and that, which is a really good, quick reference guide. However, it’s taken away the personal contact.... I think that’s been a big factor in them seeming to be more remote. I get the impression that all the courses are listed on the databases. Everything seems to be on a database. I think HR are on a database”. It could be said that isolated remote practitioners and uncommitted line managers handling the delegated HR responsibilities, would both cause unproductive HR-line managers’ relationships. These unproductive relationships will keep the HR practitioners who handle transactional activities shackled in their offices. Line managers have to take the lead and the initiative to handle the delegated tasks professionally, free the practitioners, and break their isolated norms by involving them in their business activities, since this will exert a positive business impact. Business leaders need to maintain a productive relationship with the HR practitioners by activating the devolution strategies, insisting on having open communications and interactions with the HR practitioners. Line managers should take the initiative to handle the devolved HR responsibilities professionally and help the practitioners to balance the companies' wellbeing with employees' welfare, (O’Brien & Linehan, 2014, p.1257). When the line managers maintain a healthy relationship and share the responsibility with the HR practitioners to effectively implement the HR practices, HR practitioners will be free to enhance the strategies that impact on organisational performance and the business overall.

3.3.2.2 Empowering HR Practitioners

This discussion focuses on the empowerment of HR practitioners, specifically through their participation in management meetings and involvement in business decision-making. It has been reported that the most HR practitioners are either partially represented or not represented at all on their company boards. According to Hyman (2018), except for a few firms, 4% of the

Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 500 firms had no slot for the HR director nor any HR practitioner on the executive boards. This absence in board meetings was attributed to the fundamental shifts in business operations when most businesses replaced large boards with smaller and more efficient boards. This decision denied HR practitioners the opportunity to express their view in board meetings, because recommendations from the regulators made the boards suppose the HR practitioners had nothing to add in the key management meetings.

However, the need to have HR represented in management meetings has been highlighted to avoid the negative outcomes of obliging the HR practitioners to report to second-line managers instead of the executive management (Fallon Jr & McConnell, 2013, p.15). This fault in the hierarchy was reported to be inappropriate because it had a negative impact on the use of HR practices. Tracey and Nathan (2002) insisted on the HR practitioners' involvement in strategic decisions and reported that "while most executives acknowledge the importance of HR for implementing strategic plans- making it happen, we have seen few who formally incorporate HR concerns when developing a strategic direction". Caldwell (2003, p.984) criticised the absence of HR practitioners and reported "issues of powerlessness or marginality in management decision-making processes, especially at a strategic level". Labeledz and Lee (2011, p.56) discussed the HR practitioner's exclusion and claimed that HR practitioners were devoid of the ability to engage in a "robust strategic perspective" due to their constant engagement with human resources, which had made most of the HR practitioners distinctively people-focused – a factor which had the potential to affect their input in the managerial decision making.

Even so, HR practitioners have insisted on raising the level of their contribution in business decision making because doing so will ensure the use of employee's talents, motivation, and behaviours. The limited engagement of the HR practitioners in business management decisions has been identified as one of the concerns that limit the potential of implementing HR practices

effectively and contribute to business performance (Ulrich et al., 2009; Kryscynski et al., 2018).

To sum up, it is recommended that line managers should take the initiative and increase first, the HR presentations in their management meetings; second, HR involvement in business decision making in order to empower the HR practitioners to enhance the business performance and impact on the business effectively. It would also help to align HR activities to business requirements more effectively. Besides, such involvement will help board members to consider the human side as well as the legal requirements in their business decisions. When the HR practitioners are empowered and their presence becomes essential in key management meetings, both line managers and HR practitioners propose solutions that would foster the well-being of the organisation as a whole.

3.3.2.3 Adopting Business Expectations about HR Role

This section discusses the line managers' expectation of the role of HR. Many authors report that management expectation of this role is limited, attributable to the "role ambiguity" and "role conflict" that Caldwell (2003, p.887) identified when he discussed the HR role. Based on interview and survey evidence, Caldwell (2003, p.984) concluded that "the role of the personnel professional has altered in a number of significant respects, and has become more multifaceted and complex, but the negative counter-images of the past still remain". He describes two HR role models as follows: "Neither model can adequately accommodate the emergent tensions between competing role demands, ever-increasing managerial expectations of performance and new challenges to professional expertise, all of which are likely to intensify in the future". In other words, Caldwell (2003) directly tackles the confusion about the HR professional identity, finding that the HR role is still subject to endless demands and pressures to change or be reinvented. Such demands have produced new dynamics in HR practices

whereby HR practitioners are assessed against the strategic input they provide (Lo et al., 2013, p.4). Till now, some corporate managers have considered HR practitioners more qualified in handling functional/operational HR tasks (recruitment, workforce planning, and employment benefits) than strategic/business activities (Hyman, 2018; Lo et al., 2013, p.5). Tracey and Nathan (2002, P.18) criticised the limitation of the HR role and argued that “HR is basically an employee-advocate function and represents the “soft” side of the business; HR is a cost centre since it does not generate revenue; HR serves as an administrative-support office and organises the company picnic; and HR is responsible for implementing strategy, not developing strategy. We could go on, but the point is made, human resources get much lip service but no respect”. Such management stereotypes and misconceptions about the HR role have been addressed by many authors through the HR models by which they redefine the HR role with more strategic and business insights (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Ulrich in his model (cited in Shingal, 2018) presented the HR practitioners’ role in terms of people and processes (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Ulrich model (Shingal, 2018)

The emergence of Ulrich's model of the change agent, employees' champion, strategic partner and administrative expert is in line with the HR business partnership – a phenomenon which contributed to a complete redesign of HR functions (Keegan & Francis, 2010). In the light of Ulrich's model, Keegan and Francis (2010, p.875) noted that the new changes in business have compelled the HR practitioners to align their functions along two primary axes, namely, people versus processes and strategy versus operations.

Ulrich et al. (2009) in their model (Figure 7) discuss HR professionalism under two headings: people and business. They confirm that being confined to one category will not guarantee business benefits. On the basis of previous management approaches to the HR role, most authors who discussed strategic HR and HR practitioners adding value of business started to use the concept of HR business partnering.



Figure 7: HR Professionalism, source (Ulrich et al., 2009)

The three discussed aspects above could be considered as interrelated initiatives that line managers could take to impact on HR practitioners' activities and their ability to add business

value to their organisations. These initiatives would make HR practitioners' ability to contribute to organisational performance and business success attainment more probable. However, such initiatives on the part of the line managers would demand certain characteristics (skills and competencies) from the HR practitioners, which are essential if the HR practitioners are to work/partner effectively with the line managers.

In essence, in addition to these required initiatives, HR practitioners who lacked certain skills would find it difficult to understand the business language of the line managers, partner them, and be on the same page with them to share their business problems or opportunities.

3.4 Conceptual HRIS Framework

The previous discussion is synthesised as the Conceptual Framework in Figure 8. This framework is developed to address how HRIS could make contribution to business performance. The factors and aspects within this conceptual framework are derived from the thoughts and insights of HR practitioners and line managers as reviewed in literature. Secondary data, including the researcher's professional experience and interaction with HR practitioners and line managers have been taken into consideration in the development of this conceptual framework. The framework builds on the Initial Framework derived from established IS research model and implementation factors. In this Conceptual Framework, the research argues that the proposed factors and aspects provides a comprehensive framework to implement HRIS for business impact. The perceived usefulness of HRIS is refined into three external dimensions. Published and experiential HRM characteristics are structured into the perspectives of HR practitioners and business managers. This research is an innovative application of TAM and TOE theories.

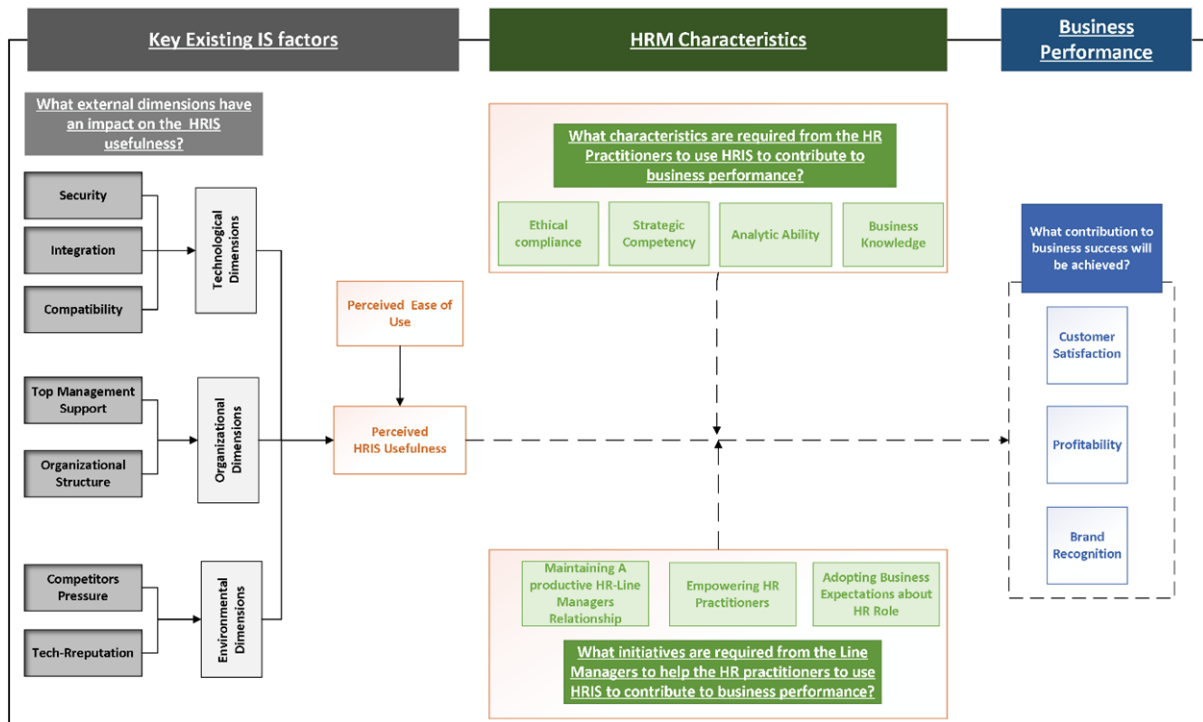


Figure 8: Conceptual Framework

3.5 Summary

The conceptual framework was developed in the light of TAM and TOE theories. Key IS factors were identified in terms of ease of use, technology, organisation, and environment and their impact on HRIS perceived usefulness. This study argues that considering the HR dimension/ HRM characteristics might provide new insight in HRIS studies and would help address the HRIS business impact deficiency. The HR dimension consists of two constructs: HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives. The HR practitioners' characteristics comprise analytic ability, strategic competency, business knowledge, and ethical compliance. The line managers' initiatives are about: maintaining a productive HR-line relationship, empowering the practitioners, and adopting business expectations towards the role of HR. The conceptual framework helps guide the exploration of the HR practitioners' and line managers' perceptions regarding the usefulness and easiness of HRIS. In addition, it will investigate the external dimensions that influence HRIS usefulness from both the practitioners

and the lines' perspectives. Besides, insights from HR practitioners and line managers will be gathered on HRM characteristics that could cause effective HRIS utilisation to impact on business performance.

4. Chapter Four: Methodology

Having discussed the factors and the aspects of the conceptual framework in the previous chapter, this chapter discusses the research methods applied in this study. The research methodology involves adopting a set of tools, methods, and techniques to examine the knowledge and the phenomena of interest. More specifically, it concerns the methods that are applied to achieve the objectives of the research. The methodology is discussed below in terms of research paradigm, approach, design, methods, sampling, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter briefly discusses the framework validation and implementation and ends with a brief summary.

4.1 Research Paradigm

The choice of paradigm can help the development of scientific practices, philosophies, and assumptions about the nature of research (Creswell, 2013). The paradigm therefore identifies the manner in which the research is carried out. It is about the methodological philosophy of the researcher, which plays an important role in influencing their way of choosing and conducting the research (Creswell, 2013). Philosophy in this sense can take the form of interpretivism, positivism or pragmatism.

The interpretivist paradigm is based on a deep understanding of “reality” and the reasons for accepting it. It is what people have thought the reality to be (Willis et al., 2007). It seeks to learn more about different cultures, studying their customs, religious beliefs, ways of behaving, politics, and economics. It investigates conceptual matters such as interactions and emotional attitudes that can explain the actions of others (Black, 2006). Interpretivism is a descriptive perspective that provides descriptive reports expressed in words (Ryan & Sfar-Gandoura, 2018). Interpretivism encourages participants to speak freely to allow the views of people about

the phenomena under investigation to be understood (Ryan & Sfar-Gandoura, 2018). Proponents of this research paradigm consider “reality” as something variable and dynamic (Ryan & Sfar-Gandoura, 2018), unlike the positivist school, which makes predictions about reality. The interpretative approach is the one implemented in the present research, where many people hold interpretations that should be reported. For example, the HR practitioners’ characteristics need to be explored and examined where the participants hold different realities and views about the practitioners’ skills, attitudes, identity, and potential to add business value. Adopting the interpretative standpoint in this research helps to gain detailed information, by exploring how the line managers perceive their HR practitioners’ abilities and the business knowledge required for business success. The nature of this research compelled me to investigate different opinions without assuming any absolute truth; I capture the various views of HRIS usefulness and what was needed to effectively use these services to impact on business (Black, 2006).

The positivist school, in opposition to interpretivism, is used to study the social sciences and the features of society in the framework of logical scientific evidence and proofs based on experiments and statistical results (Willis, et al., 2007). This philosophy is based mainly on the assumption of a fixed and agreed universe in which it is possible to lay down certain requirements of society and the solid social foundations and principles for them. The advocates of this outlook believe that science and logic are the only guides to true knowledge, and that facts are the basis of all sciences (Hua, 2015). Hence, it is widely adopted in the applied sciences for more practical developments in, for example, technological innovation. The main goal is to find logical principles and concepts that are common to science and truth (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). Positivism rejects claims based on intuition, theological speculation, and metaphysical knowledge (Hua, 2015).

Regarding the research philosophy of pragmatism, its essence can be found in its root word “pragma” which in Greek means action or “thing” (Grove, 1986). The adherents of this outlook believe that knowledge springs from taking actions, learning from the outcomes, and dealing with problems in a practical way rather than relying on theoretical principle alone (Giacobbi et al., 2005). This paradigm confers pragmatism on the way of thinking and does not adhere to the general view of world philosophy, finding instead no one way to learn but many different ways of understanding the many realities (Giacobbi et al., 2005).

To sum up, the nature of the problem under investigation in this research justifies the adoption of interpretivism, where understanding and exploring the feedback and views of the participants is essential.

4.2 Research Approach

There has been extensive discussion over which research approach, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed is the most rigorous, e.g., Brannen (2017), Hua (2015). It is evident that each of the research approaches enjoys several advantages, and the supporters of each research approach have built their arguments on the basis of philosophical and epistemological references. The quantitative approach has been widely used in IS research, since the existing IS theories/models presuppose the existence of one abstract truth.

Benbasat and Barki (2007) confront these approaches and assert that searching only quantitatively, as TAM models do, for example, is one of the deficits in IS research because the quantitative approach restricts the potential of the researchers to transcend the existing IS boundaries and propose further and more trustworthy results and practical solutions. This is endorsed by Vogelsang et al. (2013, p.12), who say that the main aim of TAM in 1986 was to “identify factors that have a significant influence on the technology acceptance. It was not the goal of the quantitative TAM-research to discover ways to increase the acceptance. With the

help of qualitative data, we are now able to describe and measure the relevant factors of software acceptance and to manipulate them”. The mindset of qualitatively investigating the usefulness of a technology has so far been “under presented” (Vogelsang et al., 2013, p.6) and the dominant social factors/constructs need to be enhanced by other contextual aspects (Townsend et al., 2016). Benbasat and Barki (2007) noted that, together with the dominant IS factors, it is important to qualitatively investigate the social, cultural, or human contexts and the like.

This research adopts a qualitative approach because the essential qualitative function is to organise the raw data to explain, survey, map, theorise, and put concepts and data into categories (Liamputtong, 2020). To be more specific, it may be said that the qualitative approach was adopted for four reasons. First, the qualitative research approach is better able to gain in-depth data and insights about the topic under investigation (Willis et al., 2007; Liamputtong, 2020). This argument is more evident in management and human experience research, which is described as complex. A questionnaire, for example, might not be enough to probe into the depth of certain phenomena or experiences (Punch, 2014). The HR dimension in this research necessitates such qualitative exploration and investigation. Second, qualitative research tends to be more heuristic and flexible, and less structured than the quantitative approach. According to Hennink et al. (2020), the qualitative approach allows space for the researcher to be dynamic and more heuristic; this is very important for understanding the aspects of business performance/success, the HR dimension, and the IS factors in an HRIS context that this study brings out. The third advantage lies in the sampling technique, where the qualitative approach tends to be more tolerant and inclined to accept purposive sampling strategies, e.g., by targeting high-value and data-rich participants. This is relevant to the present study because it investigates HRIS more from the business perspective through participants occupying a managerial position. Finally, the qualitative approach enjoys the narrative and

story style techniques. Thus, the findings reported from this research would be appealing and accessible to a larger audience than quantitative research understood by statisticians would attract (Patton, 2014). It would add to the research to broaden the size of its audience.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the qualitative approach in this study helps to approach the research objectives, which are to investigate the key IS factors and explore the HRM requirements for impacting on business performance. This exploration and investigating approach allow me to probe into details, personal stories/experiences to do with HR practitioners' skills, the initiatives that line managers have taken and how these required skills and initiatives will help when they use HRIS to contribute to business performance. The finding from this examination will eventually help to establish the relationships between the investigated factors/aspects and improve the conceptual framework and should thus teach us about the requirements for HRIS business success.

4.3 Research Design

The research design presents the procedures and the methods that were used to collect and analyse the data (Flick et al., 2004). A research design is needed since it smooths the navigation of the research phases and makes the research as efficient as possible, resulting in maximum information (Flick et al., 2004).

As Figure 9 shows, the research design adopts a sequential structure of four stages. The design flowchart starts with the literature. This secondary desk research (a literature review) was conducted using secondary sources of data. The articles were sourced from the Google Scholar database (SAGE, JSTOR, ProQuest, Emerald, and the ScienceDirect publications). Other data were derived from selected reports from CIPD and other HR bodies.

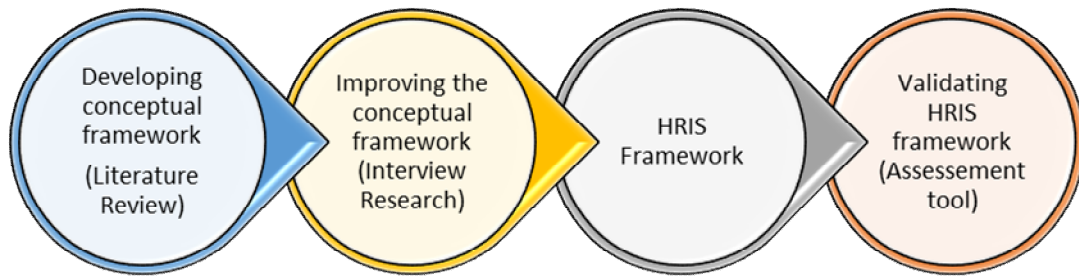


Figure 9: Research Design

This secondary data was adopted as the initial part of this research design to develop the conceptual framework. Based on previous studies and theories, the initial/conceptual framework was developed with the related IS factors and characteristics of HRM. Once the conceptual framework was developed based on secondary desk research, the field study was conducted as a second stage to improve the framework. The interview findings (primary data) would improve the conceptual framework and set the relationships between the IS factors, HRM and the business performance aspects to create the research framework.

The combination of primary and secondary research is justified, given that each procedure has its benefits and limitations; hence, the research design of this study gains strength by combining the advantages of each procedure and eliminating its limitations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The initial work involves secondary research to develop the conceptual framework for the primary research. Evidence from previous IS studies justified the choice of secondary data as a foundation for the primary research in this study. Long-Sutehall et al. (2011, p.336) note that secondary research contributes to the development of new insights concerning the subject of interest through in-depth analysis of the research theme. Therefore, it is important to have the secondary research as the base for the primary research.

When the conceptual framework is improved through the interviews, it can be presented as a research framework. The last phase validates the framework by implementing a Readiness Assessment Checklist (RAC) at one of the organisations. It is essential to present and discuss the research design due to its significant reflection of the quality of the study and its results (Cresswell, 2013). In addition, it should be noted that this research adopts a progressive and dynamic design that has been improved by the results as they emerged over the course of the research. This approach is advocated by Hammersley (2011), who suggests that a researcher needs to be dynamic and prepared to develop their framework/model throughout the research journey.

4.4 Data Collection Method

The main method of collecting data in this research was interview (no questionnaire has been used in this research). The research problem is to understand why the potential of HRIS is not fully used in achieving the organisation's business success. Such an understanding requires investigation and exploration of insights from both HR practitioners and business line managers who provide feedback on the usefulness of HRIS, the characteristics of HR practitioners, and the initiatives taken by the business line managers. This kind of exploration was implemented in face-to-face interviews (both in person and online) with HR practitioners and business line managers who were business oriented and in charge of achieving the business objectives. Questioning the line managers gave an assessment of HRIS usefulness and its contribution to business success. In addition, the face-to-face investigation included questions on the IS factors that impact on this usefulness, and indicated whether or not the HR practitioners' skills and the line managers' initiatives would impact on HRIS contribution to business success. The details and the analytical interpretations of the interviews provide a description that helps to answer the research question. A more detailed rationale for choosing

interview method to interview both the HR practitioners and line managers is provided in the next section.

4.4.1 Data Collection Rationale

The rationale of adopting the interview as a tool is discussed in this section. Several features inspired the choice. First, direct contact with the interviewees (HR practitioners and line managers) allowed enough flexibility to discuss the participants' issues, visions, aspirations about business and HRIS effectivity. Second, the interview as a data collection tool can detect any potential problem in the respondent through body language, which a telephone interview cannot; nor postal/online questionnaire (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Burgess (1984) warns researchers using interviews that a change in the interviewer's tone may affect the participants' replies and lead to different answers. Third, although the quantitative approach has the advantages of standardisation where the research procedure is highly structured, interview allows the researcher to alter this standardisation when they feel it necessary and elaborate more on certain questions. It helps clarification by allowing interviewers to rephrase or repeat question when it is needed for an accurate response (Flick, 2021). This is available for both the researcher and the participant.

However, the researcher might face some disadvantages with the interview method. For example, it lacks the sense of privacy that answering a questionnaire might give. In certain cases, interviewees might be affected by the researcher's presence, e.g., they might want to give desired or logical answers (Sachan et al., 2012). In addition, Heiervang and Goodman (2011, p.69) note that online questionnaires are beneficial because they reduce the cost and help to speed up the acquisition of data. The use of an online questionnaire is also encouraged for its ability to generate large volumes of data and its convenience in standardising the

procedure and replicating something similar. However, this approach is not required in this research.

To conclude, due to the nature of the problem under investigation, the one-to-one interview method with both the HR practitioners and line managers enabled me to go into details and understand certain issues that might have an impact on HRIS and its contribution to business performance. Some of the interview questions require sensitive answers which would be difficult to get without making direct contact with the participants and creating a comfort zone for them. During the interviews, I had the chance to put the participants at their ease and generate a climate of trustworthiness as far as possible. The interviews started with a piloting phase to test the questions and modify the content dynamically.

4.4.2 Interview Pilot Testing

Flick (2021) suggested that piloting interviews can help researchers refine the questions, improve the clarity and flow of the interview, and ensure that the interviews are feasible and acceptable to the participants. The interview pilot testing in this research consists of two stages. In the first stage, nine HR managers were targeted, while in the second piloting stage, four-line managers participated.

HR Practitioners

The initial draft of the questions was first sent to three HR managers (experts with more than 8 years of experience in the HR domain and HRIS implementation). They provided feedback based on their HR expertise regarding the perception, content, structure, and wordings of the questions. This was an added value in structuring, reviewing, and validating the questions, and the potential responses (Flick, 2021). Those three experts assessed the practicality of the questions that would be put to the participants. Each of these three HR experts was asked to

offer their views after experiencing and reading the questions, written feedback was provided by one of them while the other two practitioners provided their feedback over the phone and a detailed notes were taken by me. The input of these three HR experts helped specifically in forming the questions related to the HRM characteristics (Section three in the interview questions) and making necessary adjustments. These adjustments improve communication with the participants and consequently improve the quality of the results. A systematic procedure was followed in this piloting stage. In addition, a semi structure interview was used with open, open-ended and closed questions, starting with demographic questions followed by seven sections (see Appendix 1). More details about data collection, instruments, and analysis will be provide in the following sections in this chapter.

Line Managers

Four-line managers were asked for feedback. The purpose of this pilot testing stage was to amend (if required) the interview's schedule, design, presentation, content and wording based on the line managers' views, reactions, responses, and behaviour. In the second stage of piloting, the same procedure was followed as in the first one where a combination of techniques was used (open, open-ended and closed questions). Open questions were used because such questions have higher predictive validity in empirical research (Wu et al., 2007, p.938). The open questions investigate participants' opinions, for example, on HR practitioners' skills, role, involvement, the HR-line relationship and how such aspects impact on the HRIS contribution to business performance. In addition, closed questions (Olson, 2016) are used to prompt the participants for direct answer, particularly in areas such as security, organisational structure, and environmental pressure where "yes" or "no" answers were needed. These varied styles of questioning let the participants provided targeted information on the HRIS use, HRIS service delivery and benefits, HR role, practitioners' responsibilities, and more.

The second pilot offered me further experience in interviewing and confidence in probing further into better quality data (Flick, 2021) before conducting the actual field study. The results from piloting the interviews with the respondents were very helpful in developing the overall design of the interview and it did not raise any concern about the validity of the instrument. The results of the pilot interviews for both HR practitioners and line managers will be presented in chapter five.

4.4.3 Interview Structure & Design

The results of the piloting interviews with the HR practitioners and line managers helped in developing the main interview structure and the best sequence of the questions to follow. The interviews with both groups (HR practitioners and line managers) was semi-structured. Kallio et al. (2016) comment that semi-structured interviews seem to be the most relevant and effective tool for finding new insights into what is happening in a specific context. This semi-structured interview method was effective in this research to deal with the different mentalities of the participants, especially line managers who were working in different industries and in charge of different business responsibilities. In addition, probing, open ended questions were used to explore further responses to the research question and objectives. According to Jansen (2010), the interview gathers valid and reliable data relevant to research questions if it is designed to obtain in-depth responses from participants. The interview design, that was implemented in the interviews of the HR practitioners and line managers, starts with demographic questions followed by seven sections (see Appendix 1). The interview design was constructed according to the conceptual framework. Each question in the seven sections was constructed with insights from HRIS and HRM studies, along with inputs from the discussion following the piloted interviews.

Eight demographic questions were asked about each participant from both groups, HR practitioners and line managers. These questions featured demographic information in line with the best practice in previous research studies (Wu et al., 2007, p.933). The demographic questions helped to understand the interviewees' background and suggested any differences that their previous experiences might make in analysing the data and the findings. These questions elicited the participants' age, job title, education background, company name, sector and size, and years of HRIS experience. The last demographic question concerned the name of the HRIS software in their company.

The first section was about the relationship between business performance/success and the contribution of HRIS. This was meant to define business success and suggest how HRIS could contribute to its attainment. Business success was discussed in terms of profit/sales, cost reduction, customer satisfaction, brand recognition, etc.

The second section of the interview moved to investigate how useful the HRIS were, the frequency of the HRIS usage, the accessibility of HRIS to line managers, and the use of reporting services. The third section went on to examine the characteristics of HRM, including HRM-oriented questions in relation to HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives. The questions included management expectations of HR role, HR practitioners' involvement in management meetings and decision making, devolving HR tasks to line managers and HR practitioner's visibility/presence. The HR practitioners' skills and attributes were discussed in terms of the ethical compliance, their knowledge in business and their ability to align HR practices and analyse the data. In addition, the impact of the HRM aspect on HRIS contribution to business performance was discussed.

In section four, the ease of using the HRIS was investigated in terms of complexity, friendly user interfaces, and training requirements. The fifth section examined the technological dimension, including security issues such as log in credentials, role authentication, and audit

tracking. In the same technological context, HRIS compatibility with an organisation's IT infrastructure and HRIS integration with other existing applications (such as finance, CRM) were asked. The sixth section focussed on the organisational dimension. This investigated whether or not the top management was aware of the benefits of HRIS and encouraged the employees to use HRIS at work and how this was done. In this section, the investigation included the organisation's adopted values and strategies related to teamwork, collaboration, flat structure, shared knowledge and open communication and asked how participants were practicing this. The last section (section seven) concerned the environmental dimension. This dimension was investigated in two main questions. The first one looked at competitive pressure that might impact on the decision to implement and use HRIS effectively. The second checked whether the organisation's reputation was the driver in implementing HRIS and using it effectively.

The interview concluded by asking if the participant wanted to comment further on something not covered in the previous questions. This question proved to be highly relevant, and could cover any point not mentioned in the interview questions. Flick (2021) believes that ending an interview with such a question helps the researcher to avoid missing any of the relevant information. It also offers an excellent opportunity for the researcher to wrap up the interview. Such a question allows the participants to highlight the most important points for them. In summary, having a clear systematic interview schedule and design proved crucial as reflected in the data analysis. The next section discussed the procedure followed in collecting data from both the HR practitioners and line managers.

4.4.4 Data Collection Procedure

Detailed discussion reflects the quality of the study and makes the results more trustworthy (Liamputtong, 2020). Lune and Berg (2017) believe that providing a detailed description of

data collection enables the reader to relate the results to other contexts. The data collection procedure of this research followed a systematic structure with all the participants (HR practitioners and line managers). Participants selected for this study were contacted and invited to participate by email or phone. This phone call or email briefly set a time and location for the interview. The participant could choose time of the interview to suit themselves. It was hoped that offering the interviewees the chance to selecting the location of the one-to-one interviews would give them more confidence and consequently would improve the quality of the data (Flick, 2021). All in-person interviews were held in London or nearby with both HR practitioners and line managers. The interviews were face-to-face and one-to-one. This technique was preferred because it enabled me to observe facial expressions during the responses to questions. The facial expression and body language were critical in helping me to capture whether a question had caused to the participant any inconvenience. Besides, previous research has documented that one-on-one interviews are associated with representative outcomes (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013, p.57). Face-to-face interviews also enhanced responsiveness, clarification, and adequacy (Irvine et al., 2013). For ease of note taking, each of the participants was allocated a number (Goodenough & Waite, 2012). Note-taking was used to capture detailed quotes from participants and to describe what took place during the interviews. Extra notes were taken in each interview and write several quotes for later retrieval at the data analysis stage. As the interview started, I briefly assured the interviewees in both groups, practitioners and lines, about the code of ethics (participant data protection), and this positively facilitated the participants' engagement (Olson, 2016). Participants were informed that the research followed a number of codes of ethics which protects participants and ensures anonymity. Then, the participant was informed that this research was justified on academic purpose only. The interview was structured into seven sections. The total number of the questions and the average time needed to complete the interview were also mentioned.

Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any of the questions or ask to end the interview whenever they wanted. I quickly introduced myself and mentioned some personal details to help break the ice. Litosseliti (2003) dwells on the importance of starting in this way since it reflects the volume and intensity of data generated when the interviewee is put at their ease. Having informed the participant about the code of ethics, the academic purposes, interview structure, I asked for the participant's permission to record the interview and then asked the first question. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participant for their input.

Some incidents during the in person face-to-face interviews are noted. Four of the participants preferred to be interviewed at my workplace. One of the participating line managers (P5) asked me in the middle of the interview if she could leave for a while to sort something out and resume when she came back. I paused the recording and waited till she came back, but it was a little difficult to re-create the comfort zone and put the participant at ease again. Most of the interviews were held in public cafés of the participants' choice. The café interviews were challenging since the noise level were high and the interviews were sometimes interrupted. For example, in interview number 1 (line manager), the conversation was interrupted by dog barking so loudly that the participant was hard to hear. Another example with a line manager occurred in interview number 8. The interviewee asked me to hold the interview at a café next to his workplace in the Reading area (far from where I live). I drove on my motorbike to the café through snow and I arrived somewhat tired and cold. It took me some time to regain enough energy to start the interview. One of the interviews was located at the participant's house. In the middle of the interview, her child started to cry, and this disturbed her concentration. Similarly, the interviews for the participants who chose to be interviewed in their workplace were occasionally interrupted. The colleagues of participants number 12 interrupted him twice during the interview. In order to avoid any negative impact on the quality of the data, several strategies were used to maintain the flow of information from the

participants, such as note-taking, pausing the recording, or rephrasing the question (Billups, 2019).

In summary, both practitioners and line managers were encouraged to answer as many questions as possible and to ask any question for clarification whenever needed. This helped to create a dialogue mode of interview between the participants and the researcher (Hiebl & Richter, 2018). All the interviews were recorded. I was aware of the issue associated with recording an interview: that it risks losing the participants' spontaneity in answering the questions (Flick, 2021). However, I managed to turn all the interviews into interesting informal conversations and get as much information as possible.

4.5 Sampling

This study involves both HR practitioners and line managers. The participating HR practitioners were experts who actively involved in the day-to-day operations of HRIS. On the other hand, business line managers were recruited with business expertise and HRIS experience. They were more likely to provide insights into business performance and the impact of HRIS on it. In addition, their interaction with HR practitioners could enable them to offer opinions on the practitioners' capabilities and identify the necessary requirements required to improve the HRM characteristics in general. The next section discusses the sampling technique that was adopted for targeting both the line managers and HR practitioners.

4.5.1 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique (non-probability) was used in the present research (Dworkin 2012; Palinkas et al., 2015) to target both the line managers and HR practitioners for the interview.

HR practitioners with extensive experience and knowledge were targeted to provide their thoughts about implementing and utilising HRIS in their organisations. Such insights could offer a deep understanding of how these systems function in real-world scenarios. The focus was on recruiting HR managers with HR experience to clarify how HRIS automates their HR processes such as recruitment, onboarding, performance and employee data management.

Regarding the line managers, it was important for this research to recruit line manager with HRIS experience to assess the potential of HRIS and its business contribution as seen by business minded participants. Such business managers with HRIS experience would be able to reveal in-depth views about the usefulness of HRIS and its benefits in various business contexts. The responses of the business managers are relevant in assessing the HRIS usefulness in the light of the business activities they perform every day. Moreover, the targeted line managers are in direct contact with the practitioners and might be able to practically express their views about their practitioners' characteristics and the initiatives they were mounting to support/empower the practitioners. The next section discusses the size of the sample of both line manager participants and HR practitioners.

4.5.2 Sample Size:

The sample size of the HR practitioners was nine participants. After interview number 6, the practitioners' input started to become similar, and further interviews would not provide new insights. In other words, the saturation level had been reached (Mason, 2010).

It is important to mention that the sample size of the line managers group was impacted by the sensitive nature of the data, as some interview questions required sensitive responses from the participating-line managers. Some line participants were reluctant to participate after reading the consent letter. They justified this reluctance by their perception that certain interview questions hinted at investigations into the effectiveness of their practitioners' capability, their

HR department, and their HRIS system. Some of the line managers were a little reluctant to participate and informed me that they were not willing to provide feedback which might not favour their HR colleagues and their company's HR software systems. One of them working in a bank wrote to me that she and her colleagues are all forbidden to participate and disclose such information even for academic purposes. One of the participating line managers (P12) told me that my question about HRIS usefulness required "true and honest" answer. He said: *"Exactly, no, not for me, not for my team. I think even for the whole company if everyone was true and honest"*.

Evidently, the sensitivity of some of the required data in this study formed an obstacle to the participation of the participants, especially the line managers, which affected their sample size in this research (25 participants). However, nine HR practitioners and twenty-five interviews have been conducted and were adequate, since the participants' insights and input started to be repetitive specifically starting from interview number 17 of the line managers and interview number 6 of the HR practitioners and so forth. Therefore, I concluded that the sample size was adequate and no more required. This saturation sampling strategy has been effectively adopted by many researchers (Mason, 2010).

4.5.3 Sample Recruitment

Only individuals who can provide relevant in-depth information were selected from the HR practitioners and line managers. This impacted on the sampling method and the number of participants. In this study, HR practitioners and line managers who were working in large companies with an HR department and HR software were targeted as interviewees. In addition, one of the main requirements of the recruitment was having participants with HRIS experience. The reason was that most of the questions were related to HRIS usefulness and benefits. It should be mentioned that those requirements restricted the research's sampling options of the

line managers, since only line managers with HRIS experience and direct contact with the HR practitioners could have participated in this research. This is unlike quantitative studies where the sample size is usually large. An ad hoc and convenience recruitment strategy was adopted in this research to recruit both the HR practitioners and line managers. The recruitment process was based on snowball sampling.

Regarding the recruitment of HR practitioners, participants were identified and approached through my LinkedIn network. The platform served as a valuable resource for identifying professionals in the Human Resources field who could provide relevant insights for the study. Concerning the line managers, I sent an invitation to line managers to participate in the interviews through contacting the shared office space management where I work two days a week. They helped me by posting an introduction letter on the members 'platform. This introduction letter gave details about the research, aim as well as the code of ethics. Five members showed interest in participating in this study. Four of the participating line managers were generous enough to provide further information and contacts for people from their network. Accordingly, eight-line managers were recommended by others.

The snowball technique in sampling (Townsend et al., 2016) helped me to interview twenty-five participants in total.

In this sampling, different demographical aspects were considered. First, the participants were drawn from different sectors. Secondly, the age of the participants varied between 34 and 52 years and this helped to build in the required maturity in management and business. Third, the participating line managers had different educational backgrounds and played different business managerial roles in different business contexts.

In brief, targeting HR practitioners with extensive HRIS experience as well as business managers from different business contexts was suggested by the research agenda. Investigating HRIS through business leaders' observation, experience and feedback would provide unique

insights and more business and strategic views about the HRIS input and impact, and this would help in responding to the research problem and proposing possible solution.

4.6 Data Analysis Procedure

All the data collected from all the study interviews (HR practitioners and line managers) followed a similar procedure in order to ensure the reliability and consistency of the measurement, and validity and accuracy of the results (Patton, 2014). Tracy (2019) believes in following similar and systematic procedure in the data analysis, since tampering with the analysis procedure would impact heavily on the quality of a study and its results. This applies more strongly to qualitative research and qualitative data analysis since a variation in analysis could steer the results away from its focus and research aim (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). The data analysis was conducted according to a data management plan. Since the research took place over an extended period of time and collected a large amount of qualitative data, a solid data management plan was needed (Hennink et al., 2020). This plan started by storing the audio recording files on my personal laptop which was protected by security login credentials. The next step of the plan was to group all the files in one folder which contained three subfolders, each of which contained participants from a different time period in the data collection. This helped me in retrieving the files and the data. Within each of the folders a separate folder was created for each of the participants. Each of those folders had all the files to each of the participants. Files included the audio recording and interview transcript. A backup folder containing all the files was also kept in an external hard drive for emergencies. Having created the folders and named them, I used the dedicate and transcribe Microsoft Word feature to automatically transcribe the audio recording files as MS Word files. In order to capture all the words, ideas, and even expressions mentioned by the participants (HR practitioners and line

managers), I took great care during this process and went through the transcripts and audios several times.

Once the interviews were transcribed and ready to be processed, an analysis framework was required. The qualitative data analysis framework of Miles et al. (2019) was chosen for this purpose. This framework consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions and verification.

During the first stage of data reduction, the collected data from the semi-structured interviews, which were based on a theoretical framework, were analysed to create the main themes and subthemes (Harding, 2018). These themes and subthemes were labelled with codes. The codes were created and categorised manually using an Excel spreadsheet. In addition, an open coding technique was used to ensure the consistency of emerging themes, categorisations, and pattern exploration across categories (Mayer, 2015). To note, the codes which were used to label and highlight the themes and subthemes helped in analysing and retrieving the data. This process proved to be most helpful in the second stage of the analysis framework, which was data display (Miles et al., 2019).

I retrieved and grouped the relevant quotes from all the participants (HR practitioners and line managers). At this stage draft narratives were produced, which were later used for the final stage of discussion and verification. The drafts were compared to the interview transcripts for confirmation (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). It is important to refer that the findings from the data analysis were presented in a narrative that was structured in a format that corresponds to this study's theoretical framework. This offered the investigation clearer structure and relevance (Miles et al., 2019; Patton, 2014), and helped in writing a consistent story and built confidence in the trustworthiness of the findings which is discussed in the following section.

4.7 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness or rigour of a study refers to the degree of confidence in its data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure its quality (Connelly, 2016). This was demonstrated in this research through four points.

First, the study started by conducting a review of the relevant literature in order to establish initial ideas and insights about the topic under investigation. This review led to creating an initial/ theoretical framework for the research in offering a solid structure (Lune & Berg, 2017). Subsequently, the conceptual framework helped to empower the study's internal validity. In this regard, the interview schedule was created following the points and ideas suggested from the conceptual framework (Lune & Berg, 2017). Similarly, the data collection went through a rigorous procedure in order to ensure trustworthiness. On the same lines, the same data collection procedure was adopted systematically, allowing replication to ensure the validity and quality of the data quality (Patton, 2014).

Second, an interview piloting test in two stages was conducted to confirm consistency and reliability (Flick, 2014). In the first stage, the HR managers checked the content, design, structure, and the wording of the interview questions. They tested the effectiveness of the questions and identified the potential issues. In addition, they participated in piloting interviews. The second piloting stage was conducted with four-line managers whose input was valuable and helped to amend some key points in the questions. This piloting stage was essential to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected (Creswell, 2013).

Third, the purposive sampling technique that targeted participants working in large companies (plus 250 employees) was adopted to investigate HRIS effectiveness and helped in gaining valuable data to depend upon, unlike the data from SMEs where one or two practitioners represent the HR unit. Perry and Kulik (2008) observe that companies with more than 250 employees have substantive HR departments with HR practitioners who are in charge of

implementing various HR functions through HRIS features. Therefore, the selection of large corporations with formal HR departments added credibility to the quality of the collected data and helped in generalising the findings for other large companies. This purposive sampling helped in recruiting rich data informants in the study, resulting in more relevant data and results (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Fourth, the ad hoc and convenient technique that I adopted from the random sampling techniques performed by most qualitative researchers (Peterson & Merunka, 2014; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). They note that such a convenience approach has often been implemented in business and management research where a variety of insights and reactions to certain facts enrich the content. As mentioned before, this research shares some aspects with HRM studies where HR practitioners' identity, activities, and practices are under investigation. This research suggests that the randomised selection of the participants would inject new ideas and insights about the HRM characteristics that would positively impact the overall quality of the data.

The above points have helped in enriching the study representativeness and helped in enabling the research to generalise its findings, and hence strengthen its external validity and trustworthiness.

4.8 Framework Validation & Implementation

The content of the research framework was developed into a Readiness Assessment Checklist (RAC) and applied at a company specialising in stone supplies. The company has many locations and stores and employs fifty people. It is referred to as BCC in this thesis. The head office is located in Reading (40 miles from central London). The company has been operating for more than 20 years mainly in wholesale mining and construction supplies. The company is interested in installing HRIS and gave me permission to implement RAC to evaluate the company's level of readiness before implementing HRIS. Based on the assessment results, an

evaluation report was issued and sent to the company with recommendations to relevant training courses and a consultancy package to overcome the weaknesses and handle the difficulties before the actual HR software was deployed. The validation and implementation served well in validating the research and the applicability of its findings to a real context. This tool (RAC) is discussed in detail in the validation chapter, Chapter Seven.

4.9 Research Ethics

The current study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and research best practices. To ensure responsible conduct, participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided with the option to participate voluntarily, with no pressure or coercion. Any potential risks associated with participation were explained, and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were assured. Participants were also informed that they could decline to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with, and pseudonyms were used to present qualitative study results. No participant will be identifiable in any way after the research, and all collected data will be encrypted and destroyed. Therefore, ethical considerations were considered to prevent any potential negative impacts or harm to respondents, either directly or indirectly. The research was completed in accordance with the Cranfield University policy with approval number (CURES/18109/2023).

4.10 Summary

The interpretative paradigm, interview method and the qualitative approach are the methodological philosophy in this research, which investigates what it takes to maximise the HRIS potential to contribute to business performance. This research adopted an interpretivist paradigm to understand the limitation of HRIS usage. This research has to look below the surface to discover how to overcome the HRIS limitations to contribute to business

performance. Investigating the HRIS effectiveness in contributing to business success led me to choose an interpretive paradigm to describe how specific required HRM characteristics were essential to enhance HRIS business impact to the point of such as profitability and customer satisfaction. The qualitative approach is appropriate for conflicting views, sensitive matters, and rich content to be explored. The first consideration of the choice is the investigation the existing IS success factors in a qualitative mode might provide findings that agreed or disagreed with the common documented quantitative results of HRIS studies. Secondly, the business performance/success definition in this research required qualitative investigation to identify the related aspects that HRIS might impact on. Thirdly, the HRM characteristics (required characteristics and initiatives) in this research involve in-depth investigation to assess the validity of considering such aspects in HRIS implementation studies.

In line with the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative approach, interview was employed as the primary tool for data collection. This choice was made because it would have been challenging to understand the views and the insights of the HR practitioners and line managers using other methods such as a questionnaire. A semi-structured interview method with open-ended, closed, and open questions were used to deal with the variety of the participants working in big companies. The purposive sampling technique was followed to recruit nine HR managers and twenty-five-line managers to assess the skills and initiatives required for creating effective business impact using HRIS. Snowball and convenience/ad hoc recruitment strategies were selected to recruit the participants who met the saturation sampling criteria. This methodological structural process helped me in analysing the findings and improved the conceptual framework.

5. Chapter Five: Piloting interviews

The pilot interviews helped to refine the interview questions/ sections by eliminating all forms of ambiguity and ensuring the validity of the instrument used. Furthermore, the results of the pilot interviews are reflected in the amendment and revision of the wording, structure, content and presentation of the interview. In this chapter, the findings of both HR practitioners' and line managers' piloting interviews are discussed and presented according to the interview design and structures (seven sections) (See Appendix 1). This chapter starts by presenting the findings of the piloting interviews with nine HR practitioners.

5.1 Piloting HR Practitioners' Findings

The findings are presented in seven sections: Business Performance & HRIS Impact, HRIS Usefulness, HRM Characteristics, Ease of Use, Technological Dimension, Organisational Dimension, and Environmental Dimensions. Each section discusses various factors from the perspective of piloting HR practitioners. The HR participants worked for various companies, have experience in the HR sector, and vary in ages. Please see the table (1) below.

Table 1: Piloting HR Practitioners' Demographic

P	Age	Title	Company Size	HRIS Experience	Sector	Education	HRIS Brand
1	39	HR manager	300	10 years	Medical Insurance	Business Administration	Oracle
2	38	HR Consultant	6500	13 years	Telecom	Professional certifications: PHR - SHRM	Oracle
3	45	HR manager	2000	22 years	Motors and Real Estate	Postgraduate Diploma in HR	Oracle
4	38	HR and Operational Manager	240	8 years	NGO	Masters in HR	Vista
5	44	HR Business Partner	80,000	22 years	Oil and Gas	Masters in HR, Level 7 Advanced in CIPC	SAP
6	47	HR Trainer	2000	10 years	Telecom	Science Applied geology	Inhouse
7	34	HR manager	1400	10 Years	Agriculture	Business Administration	Oracle
8	48	Senior System Analyst Specialist	30,000	18 years	Manufacturing & Construction	MBA	SAP
9	36	HR Manager	400	11 Years	Hospitality	Civil Engineering	Workday

5.1.1 Section One (Business Performance & HRIS Impact)

The questions of this section (See Appendix 1) were to identify the success factors of the business performance and investigate the extent to which HRIS contributes to these factors, along with the reasons for any limitations. The first and most common answer provided by the HR practitioners regarding business success was about the importance of human resources. They prioritised the human capital factor, the human element, or employees as a significant factor for business performance success. HP5 noted: “Our main focus is, you know, people. So, my company is really people centric organisation” and this is confirmed by HP6 whose answer was: “human resources is one of them”. Besides the human element, the financial performance and customer satisfaction aspects were mentioned subsequently. The participants used different expressions to convey their views about the profitability such as “profit”, “growth”, “lower cost”, and “expanding”. For example, HP9, who works in the hospitality sector, said “ the main objective of business was to achieve, let's say the satisfaction of the service provided to our customers. That's in the first place. Then let's say commercial, commercial wise, they always seek the high occupancy on long terms of the property. So, combining those two factors, customer satisfaction with higher occupancy. That means the success”.

Regarding HRIS contribution to business performance, all piloting HR participants’ provided positive responses, confirming the substantial impact of HRIS to their business performance. However, one participant (HP8) expressed concerns about the usage of their HRIS, specifically Success Factor SAP. HP8 confirmed that while the software is effective, its usage is partial due to limitation in the owner’s mentality. This shortfall in HRIS usage has a negative impact on both HRIS business impact and the perception of HRIS usefulness, which is confined to administrative functions.

Apart from HP8, none of the practitioners provided negative answers or indicated that the HRIS business impact is not recognised or is limited in their companies. Terms such as “off course”, “for sure”, “definitely”, “asset” were constantly used by the participants to express the power of HRIS in impacting business performance. For instance, in response to my question whether HRIS is an important element, HP6 noted: “Of course, well, it's not the only element but, but obviously having a software which will help functional managers to manage performance of their members, obviously it will.... it will make a difference”. HP1 keenly noted: “of course, the system is very useful to achieve the business success..... I think people are becoming more aware of the importance of having systems in HR”. HP5 stated: “Of course, of course, we need....we need very robust and solid software, SAP is one of the big, let's say two ERP systems worldwide, and yeah, it's very.. it's very satisfactory for all users”. HP2 elaborated and positively commented as:

“In general, if you are talking about HR as contribution to business, it's really major contribution and I cannot believe that a company which does not use HRIS.... I can see the amount of suffering they can experience at all levels, administrative level and business level. So, this is to summarise, HRIS is important in all aspects and it is still improving and still providing more and more, you know, useful features which can be helping the business and helping the decision making in future based on data analysis and porting and dashboards”.

In response to how HRIS contributes to business success, the participants used terms such as “managing people effectively”, “control”, “cost reduction”, “tracking”, “saving money”, “organising”, “less mistakes”, in reference to the various benefits of HRIS implementation. In other words, the participants highlighted the effectiveness and efficiency that HRIS

implementation achieve, which eventually impacts the business performance. For example, HP2 said: “HRIS have, you know, contributed in different aspects in this concept.....whenever you manage the people well, this will contribute to improving their performance and reducing the cost of the overhead”. HP6 said: “ Basically, in order to achieve the objectives, you must have a specific and clear KPI's to measure the human resources related things”. HP6 elaborated:

“You can't manage what you can't measure. And the human resources software will definitely enable line managers, functional managers, even project managers to measure the performance of their team members. And therefore, they will be able to manage them and to do corrective actions to do whatever necessary in order to achieve their objectives”.

HP1 demonstrated the HRIS efficiency by providing an example of how HRIS contributes to business through decision making in the recruitment process.

“OK. See, when we talk about systematic HR, through Oracle or any other system, we are talking about cost efficient processes in in terms of, for example, recruitment or manpower planning. It's very important to define how many people you need in which position. Because of the volume of the work, if you recruit more, you will lose. If you recruit less, you will not have output. So, it's very good to have a systematic process to identify the right manpower, the qualification and what is required from the job description. The recruitment process should be very systematic such as feedback, pool, waiting list, salary structureeverything. So, when you have a fair

process, organised structured processes you will have more positive impact or outputs of your mampoe which at the end will impact the business”.

Besides the effectiveness and efficiency that HRIS brings to business performance, HR practitioners referred to the analytics features and the reporting services that HRIS deliver. For example, HP9 illustrated: “Yes, actually HRIS has a main role in in that plan, you know, getting and gathering data to analyse from reports about employees, it's all related to HRIS..... we always suffered from high rate of turnover. I'm giving you an example about turnover report, because the consistency of the provided service at the hotel depends on consistent and well-trained employees. So, gathering all this data is really a main factor that HRIS provide and it is directed to the business success”.

Regarding why the HRIS business impact is not realised yet, it was challenging to investigate this area as the participants expressed positive views about HRIS and its impact on business. Two participants (HP1 and HP2) attributed this shortfall in impacting business performance to two reasons. HP1 referred to “owners’ maturity” stating: “this is relied on the maturity of the owners of the company and some owners are not considering HR or HR systems as a main area in business”. In addition, HP1 added: “in the colleges or universities, this is not highlighted for the studies in HR how to use the HR system to add business value. So maybe we have to focus on the academic side, more training to HR people to be more efficient in using the system”.

To conclude, based on the results from piloting HR participants, the identified aspects of business performance success included the human resources, profitability, and customer satisfaction factors. However, it could be argued that the employee satisfaction is not at the top of the list for business leaders or owners who aspire to achieve business success, especially when compared to achieving, for example, profitability. In addition to the effectiveness and

efficiency of HRIS, participants emphasised its impact on business performance through analytic services provided by HRIS reporting module and dashboard. Nevertheless, the practical implementation of these analytic services is still unrecognised by many line managers and remains a debatable subject in the literature. That could be presented merely as a theoretical proposal by HR practitioners. Most importantly, it was difficult to explore the reasons that cause limitation in HRIS usage due to the general overwhelmingly positive feedback from the practitioners about the business impact of HRIS. This uniformity and positiveness in the practitioners' responses made it difficult to determine, based on practical experiences of HR practitioners, specific reasons for the deficiency in HRIS usage that impacts the business performance. The next section explores how HR practitioners perceived the usefulness of HRIS.

5.1.2 Section Two (HRIS Usefulness)

This section was designed to investigate four areas: HRIS usage frequency, line managers' accessibility, the utilisation of data analysis and reporting features, and the perception of HRIS in terms of administrative and business usefulness. However, the question regarding the usage frequency was neglected, as HR practitioners are continuously using and overseeing HR software.

Regarding the reporting and data analysis features, all the piloting practitioners confirmed that they regularly deliver reports to line managers. Examples of reporting services included: "budgeting", "overhead cost reports", "recruitment and lay off forecasting", "payroll and overtime reports", "attendance report", "performance", "turnover", "personnel reports", "employee counts", "employee development", and "assigned projects". For example, practitioner HP8 said: "We have ad hoc reports as required, and we build dashboard using Power BI and the robot to auto generate, and to keep it up to date day by day. It will be available

in the dashboard.....this is auto generated from either Success factor or SAP ECC or QM”.

Practitioner, HP2, elaborated further and said:

“Well, actually we have monthly reports, which is on what's going on usually. But as well, we have some on demand reports. So, on monthly report we provide reports about what we have achieved during this month, the progress on the projects which we are working on. And we have some on demand reports happens when we are trying to add new benefits or, you know, measure the progress of some benefit or project we are working on. Sometimes we work on culture measurement survey”.

HP5, continuing in the realm of reporting and analysis functions, added:

“We have, yeah, we have different lines of reports. We provide like, let's say, spending related reports in terms of the rewards, in terms of the payroll, in terms of the, let's say bonuses, we have headcounts reports, we have talent related people, start objective training reports, performance related report. So, it's different kind of reports for each area and the HR cycle”.

Regarding the line managers' accessibility to HRIS reporting services, all the participants (except HP9) confirmed that their line managers have access to HRIS reporting and analysis features. HP6, for example, noted that “The functional managers or line managers could easily log into their account and export the report they want”. Similarly, HP2 commented: “Yes, for sure. Now this system which we are using have the business intelligence (BI) module which provide them access to the reports and dashboards, but it's not all available on the system. Sometimes you need to customise some reports and build it out of the system”. This is

confirmed also by participant, HP3, who said: “Yeah, we do, because, you know, line manager has to control the cost. He has a budget. So, giving him an access, it will make it easier for him to control his cost, to understand how much he's paying salaries, over time, or maybe bonus, commissions, so he can control that, yeah”. However, one of the respondents, HP5, linked the level of access to the management level and said:

“Due to confidentiality, not all of them, it depends on their levels. So, we have like, you know, management level. So, Tier one or Tier two or Tier three or Tier four to Tier 5. So, Tier 1 till Tier 3, they have most of the access, but the others no, they need to ask HR to provide this, and we hide some information for yeah, confidentiality reasons, So yes, they have. We have something called authorities dashboard. So, line manager, the IT already provide them access, depends on their role level. You know what I mean? So senior vice presidents, vice presidents, they have automatically access. They can go to our reporting system and withdraw or pull some reports. Supervisors, or let's say, leader, like section leaders, department leaders, not all of them they have. They have some restricted areas. So, if they need some other reports, like something related to numbers, something related more to payments, to figures, they shouldn't have all total overview on it, so they need to ask HR, and HR needs to get approval from the senior management to provide access to such reports”.

Regarding the perceived usefulness of HRIS, all the interviewed practitioners perceived HRIS as useful. HP5, for example, commented: “Definitely, it's useful, of course”. In addition, the practitioners perceived the usefulness in both administrative and business context. HP6, for example, commented: “Definitely both. A rationale for my statement, obviously the system

will include information about business wise, business related issues like performance and administrative things like leaves, you know. So, yes, it will help for both”. HP3 directly answered the question and said: “Mainly business... it should have impact on the business. Admin is the entry level it's a dashboard and it's a control, you know, it's mainly to control, stick to the budget. Are we hiring more people? Or less, yeah”. One of the practitioners (HP1) noted that the HRIS business usefulness is “indirect” and illustrated:

“when we say the objective of the company, this objective is cascaded into many sub objectives on the departments. So, finance is required to do something, sales is required to do something else, etc..... So, when I put the objectives and competencies, whether it's in the recruitment, hiring, evaluation, it's all contributed indirectly to the achievement of the organisation objective. So, if I have bad people, I will have bad achievement at the end. Those people are part of the achievement, so when you treat them right, you achieve the right objective”.

Participant, HP2, was confident and used the term “power of reporting” to refer to HRIS usefulness in relation to business:

“When you have HRIS, you can identify where you have high absenteeism, you have high leaves consumption. You can check the diversity as example. You can check the portion of payroll from the overall payroll from different departments, the cost centre and profit centre, how this affects the business in general. So, on the business side, yes for sure it's clear that the system with the business intelligence and the power of reporting can let you improve your decision making, and this is the core concept of how it contributes in the business decisions”.

To conclude, the practitioners demonstrated the utilisation of data analytics and reporting features by providing various examples. In addition, the participants (except HP9) confirmed that their line managers have access to the reporting and analysis module. Furthermore, they perceive HRIS as useful in both administrative and business contexts. A fundamental question arises in the light of these findings: to what extent is the data collected from the practitioners about HRIS aligned with the perspectives of business leaders? In other words, why is this optimal outlook from the practitioners about HRIS not yet perceived by many line managers, as the secondary data suggested. The answer for this question could be attributed to the possibility that what the practitioners provided might be interpreted within a theoretical framework that lacks applicability. Nevertheless, the interviews with the line managers could provide different insights that might help understand HRIS usefulness from different perspectives. The next section presents the feedback from the practitioners regarding HRM characteristics.

5.1.3 Section Three (HRM Characteristics)

The findings in this section cover seven factors related to HRM characteristics. There are two main areas to be explored: the HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives.

Line managers initiatives

The HR practitioners shared their views about line managers' initiatives in terms of three concepts: the relationship between themselves and line managers, the empowerment received from line managers, and the expectations of line managers regarding the HR role.

Regarding the HR-Line managers relationship, all HR practitioners reported that the relationship with the line managers was good in general, except two participants, HP3& HP8

who faced challenges in a family-owned business due to issues in top management. HP9, when asked to describe his relationship with the line managers, stated: “Actually it is strong and healthy. It was positive in general”. HP5 described his relationship with the line managers as “good” and elaborated:

“We are driven by policies, and we are driven by, actually, guidance, written guidance from, let's say, the company management. So, the manager, they already know what task or assignments should be delegated to them.....so, we don't like, assume that, ok this need to be done by the manager or this one should be done by the HR. So, we know some tasks should be directly run by the manager, and some should be handled by HR. I don't know if that makes sense to you. It's very structured relationship, yeah. It's very good relationship, because we have understanding, we don't need just to have, like, assumptions. We don't need to have, like, throw the balls among us and this is your responsibility, or this is not your responsibility. we have already guidance shared”.

HP6 used the “relatively” word in this answer expressing that:

“We worked hand in hand on daily basis really, and obviously there was up and downs. Nevertheless, the relationship was relatively good. The intensity of the collaboration would increase on few occasions throughout the year, mainly when doing performance reviews. When doing any update on the system. So, we need to sit with them, explain the updates functionality, train them on how to use it”.

Participant, HP1, used the “it depends” term to describe the HR-line relationship:

“When HR is interfering in the evaluation, in setting objectives or competences, he (line manager) feels that his space is affected by the HR..... So, that's why they (line managers) feel sensitive..... Our department is a supportive department.... HR is responsible on performance, recognition, promotion, career metrics, career development, everything, fairness of the salaries, everything. So, till now some people consider that HR should not be allowed to interfere in certain areas, so that's why I say it depends on the person, whether it's mature enough, understanding enough or not”.

Regarding the HR visibility, all the practitioners considered themselves easy to approach and close to people. However, this visibility is influenced by the remote work, as HP2 explained:

“Starting from, you know, working from home trend, I believe that it was like, when we were sitting at the office most of the time, it's more connection, more, you know, the communication is much better. Now still we are in contact for sure all of the time, we are working as one team, but working from home I mean make that less feasible let's say”.

It is important to note that all the participants agreed that to have a productive relationship with the lines will help in using the HR software more effectively. HP3 said:

“Definitely, I need the input from him (line manager). I need the information from him. I need to understand his forecasting, his budget, performance management, I

cannot do his part..., yeah, if there is no collaboration, if he doesn't agree to work on the system, definitely the system will not be efficient”.

Based on the above collected data, the participants described the relationship between the practitioners and the line managers as good and confirmed that they are reachable and easy to approach. This positive feedback from the practitioners could be interpreted in two ways. First, the sensitivity of the topic might influence the honesty of the responses. Second, the participating HR practitioners might perceive the concept of HR-line managers relationship in a general context, similar to any managers relationship within the company. The question goes beyond investigating a relationship between, for example, a marketing manager and a sales manager or an IT manager and a finance manager. The question seeks more in-depth insights as both HR practitioner and line managers handle delegated tasks related to people and their issues. However, practitioners did not provide clear examples about the delegated tasks that need to be performed by the lines, a situation where conflicts are more likely to arise. For example, HP2 commented: “It's not that clear....yes, the delegation is there, but is it a process? Is it documented? Not in a proper way let's say. In most of the cases there is a delegation happening on the spot case by case, but it's not a proper organised delegation. If we can describe it like that”.

It could be argued that assessing the effectiveness of HR-line managers relationship depends on the quality of the delegation process between HR and lines. Accordingly, a more practical approach to investigate this relationship might involve seeking insights from the line managers who receive the HR services and are responsible for HR delegated tasks. Nevertheless, the feedback suggested positively that the practitioners are available, and a good HR-line relationship was maintained.

HR practitioners' Empowerment

Regarding this factor, most practitioners (N=8) marked that HR practitioners were either involved or partially involved in their line managers' meetings, especially when the personnel element is present. However, a single participant, HP3, who worked in a family-owned business, responded negatively when asked if he was welcomed to attend management meetings. He replied: "No, not at all... I'm not welcomed. Yeah. This is common (laugh)". He elaborated:

"let's say, the general manager or the owner of the company... he doesn't give empowerment to the HR department. He consider the salespeople, the people who are making money, the most important people in the world.....they feel the HR, is like, let's say a cost centre. But on the contrary, the HR department is a profit centre".

Participants HP1 was not definite and referred to the partial involvement of the practitioners:

"Sometimes yes, sometimes no. When they have a sales meeting to discuss the objective, the achievement, the challenges, they don't consider HR part of this, so sometimes this person is not invited to those meetings, but I want to highlight that this is very important to involve these people in the meetings. These people need to know everything about their recruitment process, manpower planning.....the objectives, what challenges they have.....the technical requirement of the candidates. If I know what they are working directly or clearly, I can choose better candidates to fit this position..... In general, HR is partially involved, partially empowered, but not totally involved. I will give you

an example. It's impossible to have a management meeting to plan, to discuss without the finance manager. But it's very common to have these meetings without the HR manager”.

Similarly, participant HP 2 referred to the limited involvement compared to the finance people and stated:

“The problem with HR is that usually businesspeople, they consider HR as a cost centre. So, it is contributing to increasing the cost in the company, and this is why they try to avoid, let's say, sometimes taking the contribution of HR in such meetings. Maybe the concept is that they still cannot see the complete picture of how HR should be part of all these meetings. So, I believe that it is still in progress; the matter of having HR as a major partner in these meetings. But we are not at the same level of the past 10 years where HR is not part of that at all, we are part of the meetings, but still ongoing to be more effective in the coming years. We cannot compare that to finance who are more major for sure. I mean, HR are still working on their chair in those meetings”.

However, HP5 was positive and elaborated:

“We have HR Centre of Excellence, who do the HR transactions like rewards, like payroll, like leaves, you know what I mean, and we have HR business partners... We are we are like in a way or another a focal point between management and employees in terms of the relationship, employee relations and anything related, to keep this relationship actually in a in a healthy mode. So, of course, that's why we attend management meetings to some certain levels. Now, I'm not talking about very high level, you know management meeting and especially with meetings related to

people. So, we don't we don't interfere in technical meeting. It's not our business only people related meetings”.

HP6 used the word “depends” to refer to the meeting type and said:

“It depends on the meeting itself. If it's purely business kind of technical business meeting, yeah, I won't be involved because of the technicality of the of the meeting itself. And maybe because of the restricted information they could share with non you know, non-related personnel, other than that, yes, the human resources was considered as one of the main entities, main functions in the company, and it was important for human resources to get involved in the, you know, main work streams for the company”.

In conclusion, the practitioners indicated to their active or partial involvement in business meetings when necessary or when the personnel element is present. However, despite this positive feedback, there are two concerns that need clarification. First, the HR practitioners may not be fully aware of regular business meetings taking place in their companies as their involvement occurred only when their presence was required. Second, it could be argued that HR practitioners should not be involved solely upon request for HR issues or personnel requirements. Regular participation in business meetings would allow the practitioners to familiarise themselves with business processes and enable them to suggest new approaches that could enhance overall business performance. Business management meetings might address problems that potentially require HR input, as it is not always evident that the solution necessitates an HR-specific resolution. Accordingly, seeking information about HR involvement in business meeting from the line managers, who run these meeting, could reveal more

accurate insights into which meetings HR practitioners are engaged. It could be more beneficial in this study to adopt the line managers' feedback to understand the level of involvement and the type of management meetings the practitioners are allowed to participate in.

Line Managers' Expectations Towards the HR Role

All the practitioners (Except HP5) agreed that the prevailing management/business expectation still view the HR role as an administrative function. Only HP5, with the title of HR Business Partner, expressed a different perspective stating: "They perceive it very well.... They respect the role, because of the culture, our company's culture from the top down, it is very sustaining to our HR, as a real role model, as a real partner for company success". In contrast, HP8 remarked: "It's only a title without the actual concept". HP9 tried to demonstrate how difficult to change these expectations, he said:

"They always see the HR as the disciplinary maker..... the disciplinary actions come from this department. So, it wasn't clear. I worked really hard to clear and correct this image when I was in this role. I changed actually the name of this department from HR to People & Culture. So, it was..... it was really a twist for them. I really showed that the HR rule as a mix between operation and administrative and business. It was not only administrative, archiving and approving leaves and stuff like that".

HP6 laughed and commented differently on my question, which he considered "tricky" and said:

“Well (laughing) that's tricky, because of nature of my job, the size of the company, I would definitely meet with, with people from both sides. Obviously that's s OK, because you can't expect 100% of line managers to look at HR and see that they are business partners. You must, it's a must, I think, to come across a couple of managers who think that involvement in some human resources activities is a burden on them, because they are practical and they might think that this is waste of their precious time, while the majority of experience managers would definitely look at human resources functions as a business partner”.

HP2 argued and mentioned that although the old perception about the HR still exists, there is an improvement. He commented :

“It's moving from being an administrative partner to be business partner. I mean end of the day, still in most of the cases, the business views HR as administrative partner, helping them to manage the people and that's it. But we are moving towards having our, you know, business partner concept, so we are not there yet, yes, but we are towards that. They still see finance as more important, CFO as an example, is a position where they need to include him in every meeting. But maybe the head of HR? We'll still need more time to have the equal chair of finance”.

In response to my question about whether changing the old views about the HR role, would impact the HRIS business contribution, the practitioners agreed and HP1, for example, said:

“Of course, of course, because till now there is a lot of companies, and you will be shocked, that there are famous companies not relying on HR systems, they are still

using Excel for HR. They didn't have the passion to buy or to put money to buy software for HR”.

HP9 elaborated about how such initiatives in general, not only line manager’s expectation about HR, would help to impact the business, regardless of HRIS. He stated:

“Actually, you are asking me about these initiatives, I touched those initiatives and yes, actually, it helped more to understand the main business, the main goal of the values of the property or the company I was in. To me, as an HR manager in the property, yes, it helped a lot to be more involved, to see the routes, to contribute, to enhance a lot of processes....I'm talking about this experience and it really meant a lot to me. I need to describe it really well. Uh. It helped me to see the pyramid from bottom to top. This vision really helped a lot to contribute to enhance the business processes. The results were reflected on the business side not only administrative side. That's my experience.....I was able to reflect the collected information and the things I touched in the operation as data, and to analyse this data by charts and numbers”.

As the results showed, the practitioners agreed that the HR role was underestimated by some line managers who primarily restricted its potential to administrative benefits. In addition, the participants indicated that this underestimation has a negative impact on HRIS and its business influence. To conclude, the practitioners shared almost identical insights about the three initiatives taken by the line managers. This consistency in the feedback raises concern about the sample recruitment of the HR practitioners. Consequently, insights from line managers are required, as their input might bring different perspectives to address the problem under discussion in this study. The next section investigates the HR practitioners skill/characteristic.

HR Practitioners' characteristics

Four characteristics were investigated as main requirements for the practitioners to add business value. The practitioners expressed their view in the light of these four characteristics.

Strategic Competency

All the practitioners (except HP8) considered themselves strategic. HP8 who works for business family company said: "We are working according to the guidance of the top management. They eliminate this strategic part. They say that they are working strategically, but where is the strategic? Nobody knows about it. What is the vision? Nobody knows about it". Apart from HP8, the term "of course" was used by almost all practitioners as a confirmation word in response to my question about possessing a strategic thinking. HP9 answered directly by stating: "To me, for sure, actually it's, let's say it should be for granted (laughing)". HP5, for example, replied "Yeah, otherwise, they would never hire me in this role (laughing)", similarly HP6 said: "Well, I can claim that, because of my background, I've tried to enforce this, you know, to introduce this, the knowledge and skills to my team, because I do believe that they must acquire such a knowledge. Other than that, the work won't be appealing. The interaction with the business won't be appealing as it should be. So yes, I do believe that a human resources specialist or professional should have these capabilities". All the practitioners stressed on the importance of linking between HR objectives with organisational strategy, culture, and targets. HP2, for example, said:

"Strategic thinking is major skill required to be obtained by HR practitioner. We believe in that and it is part of the standards of human resources whenever you study or you prepare for your professional certification, this is a major part of your

skill... when you are working on high level, management level or HR development part and organisation development, this is a major requirement and this is already included in the skill set when we are hiring people for HR posts”.

On two occasions, I tried to argue with HP2 and HP3 that HR practitioners are accused of lacking strategic thinking. HP3 defended himself by saying: “Actually I have a strategic thinking, but I could not implement that because of the top management. They don't consider this.... The top management not interested, they are just interested in how many cars we sold today, how much our profit today.... how many rooms are rented out. This is their main concern”. HP 2 raised his voice in response to my argument and elaborated:

“There is a typical way of thinking of HR because of the previous experience. And actually because of the preset expectations that this department is a department to help us in managing the people, their leaves, their payroll, they are not supposed to be part of strategic thinking and strategic management. This typical way of thinking actually affect how they deal with HR, now end of the day, if you have that expectation of what you said about line manager, when you are with this mindset, that HR do not have the required skills, you are not involving them, so the typical picture you have will not change. However, when you involve HR people I think you will get brilliant ideas to your business.....Sometimes the business managers will think about a new project or expansion that we need to hire people, we need to fill something. Maybe you have a potential within your people where you can save time. You can save culture change and you can save cost with the strategic thinking of HR as a talent management within your organisation”.

To sum up, it was clear through the discussion with the practitioners that they could effectively demonstrate the importance of thinking strategically at their HR departments and how that would impact the business performance. Regardless, in the light of this positive feedback, it remains challenging to explore why the HR business input or HRIS business impact is not yet realised by many line managers. Obtaining insights from the line managers is necessary to further investigate this characteristic from their perspectives.

Analytic Ability

The feedback about the analytic ability mirrors the positive views expressed in the previous section regarding the strategic competency. The practitioners consistently used the term “of course” in their responses to express confidence in possessing and practicing analytical skills as part of their HR responsibilities. HP5 emphasised on the importance of this skill and noted: “It comes with the onboarding training as well”. Despite the negative feedback about HRIS business impact and usefulness of HP8, who worked as a system analyst specialist, he confirmed that: “ I am always presenting figures, where are we going? I have my plan, what I need to do depending on the figures on my analytics. What we have here as a weakness and what we are looking for, all depending on the numbers”. Participant, HP2 used the word “again” as a sign of repetition and similarity to what he stated about the strategic competency in the previous question. He said:

“Again yes, our practitioners, they depend on numbers..... The question is, do HR people have data enough to do our HR analytics? I believe nowadays yes; data is there whenever you are using proper system you are collecting proper data. The richness of data available to human resources, and is a very valuable source of doing HR Analytics. So, by default, whenever you are building such a level of

maturity and understanding of data, you, by end of the day you can use this data to enhance, and I believe people who are working in these fields, they have the required skills and they must have the required skills”.

HP5 explained how the analytic ability and data would in taking informed decisions:

“We don't depend on SAP only. So, we have already like bespoke, you know versions to meet our needs. So, we have different layers of software, which is integrated all together in a way or another. So yeah,..... we have a very big HR Analytical teams, we have more than like, let's say, 25 specialists. They are indoor, in-house direct staff, so, they help with such developments. So,....hiring, for example, new employees for some opening vacancies, talent acquisition business partners, if they have the good analytical skills, they need to analyse. What the difference in terms of hiring someone from this country or that country, how it's going to cost the company. We have something called financial performance management team. So, they designed the fully loaded cost. When you say fully loaded cost, that means, the salary and any other elements related to the role of this vacancy. If this role needs to travel a lot, the travelling from home country to another country, that is cost. This is what I mean for fully loaded cost. They assign someone who helps the recruitment to decide where the best location is ,for example, to announce this vacancy in”.

It could be said that the practitioners have the positive insights about the analytic ability acquisition and confident of possessing such skills to enhance the business decisions at their organisations. The next characteristic is business knowledge.

Business Knowledge

All the participants (except HP8) assured that business knowledge is a critical demand and they are knowledgeable enough to understand the business and its basic requirements. Participant, HP5 said: “Business acumen. Yeah, business acumen is very.... it's a key skill we need just to have, you know, as an HR business partners. Because it's helped us as integral and vital for our role to support our client groups who are the managers and the employees and the organisations itself”. HP9 referred that his business knowledge was built due to his direct contact with the line managers, stating: “My role and my interfering and being involved in a lot of operational details, that really helps to reinforce this point”. However, HP2 wanted to make it clear that this knowledge should be generic or basic and commented: “Look, I believe that the knowledge of HR in these aspects should be adequate. It's not expected that HR person should be an expert in the market. We are not expected to give business advice in the strategic meetings”. HP2 provided further elaboration in response to whether he has this knowledge and said:

“For myself, yes, for sure. It's part of my education. I believe this is expected from my side. Again, as an HR consultant, as a person who's working on a level where you need to enhance the human resources management and enhance the talent management, you need to understand what's going on in business. But again, the level of understanding. I'm not comparing myself to a person who is pure operation person. I'm in a place, as you said, where I should understand the language, and I should take this business acumen and the understanding of where the company is

to adopt in my HR strategy.....Business acumen and business knowledge is very major....Yeah, you should understand the language. Yes, as example, when you are in a meeting and the finance manager is talking about the balance sheet and how the organisation is positioned financially, what are the finance pain areas at the company, you should understand, you should be aware of the basic standards of these departments”.

In addition, the practitioners confirmed that having business knowledge will facilitate the use of HRIS to contribute to business performance. HP3 said: “It will help with the performance and KPI system, to build a very strong KPI system.....forecasting manpower planning, you know, and most importantly the training, designing the training for the employees”. Furthermore, participant HP5 referred that having the previous skills (strategic, analytic, business knowledge) helps in assessing the effectiveness of the software, he said:

“When you have these skills, you know what you need from HRIS and you know what you miss. So, if you have HRIS system already, if you have these three skills already, you know if this software is serving you at the maximum or the software needs some development, some improvements. So, to have HR software performing at the maximum, at the optimum, you need to have these three skills, already robust in your competency framework”.

In conclusion, all the participants (except HP8) expressed confidence by stating that they have sufficient business knowledge to communicate with the business leaders at their companies and use HRIS effectively to contribute to business performance.

Ethical Compliance

All the participants confirmed that they act ethically and maintain ethical standards. It is important to mention that it was not expected that any of the participants would report ethical issues at their companies especially HR practitioners, as HP6 noted: “Well, it's a must. That's not negotiable”. HP9 said: “I thought you would never ask about this, but you know, the HR role has, let's say, approximately a full access to everything. The ethical side is..... something really....Uh. I don't know how to say it, but it's behind us, really. Because you can't be in this place if you don't have the needed ethics. With this power, and with this access, and with these relations, the ethical side is really important”.

In addition, the participants assured that being ethical will help in using the system more effectively, HP3, for example, said: “Of course, more controls, more, you know, layers of approvals, that will give more control”. HP2 wanted to elaborate in this respect and said:

“Yes, ethics is very important part of human resources management. And this is very focused on recently in all standards of human resources whenever I'm recertified in my certification, ethics is a major requirement.... there as a concept in the HR. I believe whoever works with people, should have ethics as a major part in their thinking..... So yes, ethics is important and I believe that ethics is part of my, you know, considerations whenever I deal with anything”.

It could be said that investigating the ethical side with the practitioners would not provide any valuable information due to its sensitive nature. In conclusion, suggesting any relationships or associations among the factors discussed so far is challenging, as most of the insights were positive and aligned in the same direction. Apart from the deficiency in expectation towards

the HR role, no relationships could be identified between HRM characteristics and HRIS deficiency problem. In addition, it could be said that exploring the HRM characteristics through the perspectives of HR practitioners seems to have led to a homogeneity in the data, which is a potential for deducing biased outcomes or decisions.

5.1.4 Section Four: (Ease Of Use)

In this section, the findings regarding the ease-of-use factor were provided based on the practitioners' experience. All the participants indicated that they did not encounter difficulties using the system and found it easy to navigate. For example, HP1 said: "easy, need like two weeks orientation training then it's very easy to use". However, HP2 referred to the possibility of finding it difficult in the performance appraisal module, he said:

"I can consider Oracle as a user-friendly system, but let's say, in some modules, it's very clear to the point. So, it's easy for users, but when you go to work on more complication, talking about performance management, you know, goal settings and talent management, it's not that easy".

From this piloting stage, it could be concluded that there is a relationship between the perceived usefulness of the practitioners and their assessment of the ease of using the software.

5.1.5 Section Five: (Technological Dimension)

This section presents the findings related to HRIS' security, integration and compatibility. Apart from HP2 who had concerns about the integration factor, and HP9 who has concerns about compatibility, all participants marked their HR software as secure, compatible and integrated. HP9 indicated that: "Actually, speed or performance was not... I don't give full

mark for this. Yes, sometimes I needed like, let's say, 30 or 45 minutes to generate a report if it was big report or if I want to go back three years back, so it needed more time". From different perspective, HP2 commented that:

"Now the integration is a concern to be honest. End of the day, Oracle has a big fish as they believe that other systems should integrate with them not they should integrate with other systems. Whenever you are in a company using local portals and systems you will find an issues with the integration, and this is a challenge in HRIS system or concept. For example, in the company I'm working for, we are using biometric system which is related to attendance. So, letting two systems to speak to each other is not an easy task..... At some point you may require getting the data as a download from one system, modify it manually and then upload it to another system and this opens a mistake area or an error area, bug area which can affect the system".

Based on the practitioners' feedback, it could be said that a relationship could be established between the technological factors and HRIS usefulness, since most piloting participants identified HRIS as useful, secure, compatible, and integrated with no technological issues to report.

5.1.6 Section Six: (Organisational Dimension)

Regarding the top management support, all participants (except HP8) agreed that their top management encouraged the employees to use the HR software. HP3 said: "each owner needs to have control of the stuff..... you know, he feels more comfortable when he has control. So yeah, we have a huge, huge support from the top management to implement the system". In

addition, the practitioners reported that their top management support was manifested through the obligation for using HRIS. HP5 said: “Actually, we don't have an alternative, we have to. It's integral part of our law to use the system. We can't avoid using the system”. HP1 added:

“They are totally supportive to use HRIS or all systems in general for all department, including HR. They don't accept any process without being done through the system. They trained all the supervisors, line managers on the system to be able to do all the functions required. They trained also, the employee to be as an end user to the system, so yes, they were totally supportive”.

Although it is compulsory to use some HRIS features, participant HP 2 noted that his top management with certain modules “they still believe in their traditional way of managing performance, for example. Maybe they still need more time to convince them to understand the job requirements and manage the best fit employee, the level of performance, and the training need analysis through the system”.

Regarding the organisational structure, the participants (N=7) mentioned that their organisations are well-structured, and they enjoy a healthy atmosphere. They talked about the positive culture they created or the values they tried to implement. For example, HP 9, who worked in the hospitality sector, said: “We have a golden rule in our branches around the world, it says “treat others the way you would like to be treated”, OK”. Regardless, this is expected to be expressed by the HR practitioners who are in charge of establishing the organisational structure. HP5, for example, expressed his satisfaction about his organisational structure and stated:

“Yeah, of course, we are very agile in terms of, you know, the organisational structure and the org structure in terms of how we manage our team. It starts with

managing ourselves before being managed by our manager. So, employees, they are professionals, they know what they need to do. Say they are self-supervised, and they know when they need their manager to help or to support, and because we are really structured well in terms of authorities and decision making, so they know what areas they can just deliver without going back to the manager for any advice, and what areas they need to go back to the managers for example. So, we are flat, very flat, and at the same time because we are very big, we have very short vertical layers between each level”.

However, HP2 noted that the organisational structure could be affected as “on papers when you work in that meetings and when you see the presentations, you see these concepts are already there. When you go to implementation, this is affected by what's going on in the business. It's more into politics and business volume issues which may affect how reliable these aspects are considered overall”. Besides, the participants linked directly between the effective use of HRIS and well-structured organisations. HP1 noted that: “HR is minimising the conflict and minimising the problems between departments and colleagues, because everything is structured, systematic and clear”. It could be deduced that a relationship could be established between the organisational dimension and HRIS usefulness. The next section will discuss the final dimension.

5.1.7 Section Seven: (Environmental Dimension)

All the practitioners linked between being competitive and using HRIS effectively. The answers were very positive such as “100% correct” “of course”. HP2 said that: “100% correct. I mean, end of the day, the competitive edge..... it's either technology or people in most of the

cases..... HRIS helps you in identifying talents, high potential people, improving them....so yes for sure”. Similarly, HP5 elaborated further and said:

“Of course, and not any software, it should be the best software, to be more competitive, you should have a very, very responsive software that meets your need. And you need just to invest, invest well in developing and improving that software, because, you know, needs changes from time to time. So once that we have a change in business needs, you need just to improve or just to alter the rules in your system to react or to respond to your business needs”.

Similarly, HP1 noted:

“If you need to be a competitor to other companies, you need to have a good stuff, you need to determine the right salaries for them that they are not going to other. So, all this happened through the analysis, the studies, the historical data from HRIS”.

Regarding the reputation and image factor, most practitioners (N=7) agreed that tech reputation factor plays an important role in impacting the HRIS usefulness. HP2, for example, said: “That's completely correct. Yes, it's one of the reasons.....that reputation have value toward the customers. So, whenever you put at your presentation that you are using this kind of technology, this gives more reliability to your business”. However, HP6 had different view, he indicated:

“Well, in, in my experience, that won't make a difference because this system was for internal use and other external parties or stakeholders, I think they would not get reach to use this system, so my answer I think will fall under no”.

5.2 HR Practitioners' Position Towards HRIS

HR practitioners reported that HRIS significantly impacts business performance, utilised for reporting on, for example, budgeting, overhead costs, recruitment forecasting, and performance metrics. They noted that line managers access HRIS reporting for cost monitoring. Practitioners view HRIS as useful in administrative and business contexts, emphasising its indirect contribution to organizational objectives. Positive relationships with line managers are highlighted with structured collaboration. Practitioners acknowledged the impact of remote work on visibility. Line managers' expectations were seen as administrative. Confidence in possessing skills and characteristics was expressed and that reflected in their role in HR effectiveness and HRIS impact. Overall, HRIS was found easy to use, with minor challenges in specific modules (performance appraisal). It was considered secure, compatible, and integrated. Top management support was high through obligatory practices. Positive organisational structure and culture were reported. Practitioners linked HRIS effectiveness to competitiveness and highlighted the importance of tech reputation. Few concerns about limited usage due to owner mentality were acknowledged. Such feedback provides a rationale for introducing the next section.

5.3 HR Practitioners' Exclusion

Based on the feedback received from the practitioners involved in the piloting study, seven points prompted the decision to exclude the HR practitioners from the subsequent field study. First, the HR practitioners identified the human element (employees) as a main factor of

business success, to be followed by the financial objectives (growth, expansion, etc). It could be argued that “employee satisfaction” is not at the top of the list for those business leaders or owners aspiring to achieve success, especially when compared to objectives like profitability. Second, the practitioners have strongly recognised and perceived the HRIS business impact. Such acknowledgment, however, would not provide additional diverse insights and justification to the argument presented in this study, which addresses the deficiency in HRIS where its full potential, particularly from the perspective of line managers, is not yet realised. Third, the practitioners reported effective utilisation of the data analytics and reporting features of HRIS. Additionally, it was mentioned that line managers have access to the majority of HR analytic reports. Moreover, HRIS usefulness is considered in both administrative and business contexts. This feedback does not assist in exploring the phenomenon stating that HRIS usefulness has been primarily perceived in an administrative context, and there is a deficiency or limitation problem in influencing business performance. Fourth, regarding the investigation of HR-line relationship, the practitioners provided positive comments on this relationship and that could be attributed to the role of HR practitioners in delivering administrative services to the line managers in the organisation (payroll, recruitment, etc). In other words, they serve as service provider, hence, the positive feedback could be justified. It might be more beneficial to inquire about the quality of practitioners' services or the HR-delegated tasks from the recipients, namely line managers. Fifth, regarding the HR practitioners' involvement in the business meetings and decisions making, they indicated their participation in line managers' meetings. However, understanding whether the practitioners were invited on request or on a regular basis to be exposed to the business processes, is important and can be clarified by the line managers who organise and lead such business meetings. Sixth, the assessment of HR practitioners' characteristics/skills by the participants appeared overly confident. In the discussions with the HR practitioners, it was evident that they view the HR role as strategic

enough to partner with the line managers. Their confidence extended to their analytic ability and business knowledge. As a result, interviewing HR practitioners is unlikely to yield practical insights that would effectively address the problem under investigation taking into consideration the HRM characteristics. Finally, the practitioners provided almost identical answers and shared similar opinions regarding the discussed factors. This “response homogeneity” or “response uniformity” in research methodology causes challenges in terms of generalisability and limiting the depth of the analysis (Falk & Lann, 2008). Based on the practitioners’ findings, there is lack of diverse responses which is essential in academic research to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation (Passmore et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this section addressed the argument for excluding the HR practitioners from the study sampling population. The rationale beyond this decision springs from the potential impact on the generalisability of the results and the overall robustness of the study. In addition, the feasibility of gathering insights from the HR practitioners to understand HRIS deficiency is considered impractical. Conducting interviews with line managers could prove more effective in obtaining practical, business-related answers regarding the HRM characteristics, HRIS usefulness and its impact on business performance.

5.4 Piloting Line Managers’ Findings

The outcomes from the line managers in the piloting stage reflected the potential to get rich data. The line managers provided a variety of insights and views related directly to the phenomenon in the research. They provided more down to earth and practical evaluation to both HRM and HRIS. The line managers denied the proposition that HRIS contributes to business performance as absolute truth. They were more able to assess their HR colleagues based on their various experiences and past occasions

In comparison between HR practitioners' and line managers' feedback, HR practitioners highlighted strategic impact and indirect contributions. Line managers prioritised administrative benefits and efficiency. Both groups acknowledge positive aspects of HRIS but differ in their perspectives on its business impact. HR practitioners express a more strategic view, while line managers focus on administrative efficiency. Arguably, based on this piloting stage, the line managers provide grounded answers that help explain why HRIS is used limitedly in the organisation. Accordingly, the line managers were considered as the main population in the field study of this research, and the findings are presented in the following chapter.

5.5 Conclusion

It is important to note that the initial piloting stage involved nine HR practitioners. The key finding from this stage is that the feedback from the HR practitioners seemed somewhat disconnected from the ongoing debate surrounding practitioners' skills and the doubts raised by many business leaders about their capabilities. Moreover, the HR managers showed a level of confidence and refrained from acknowledging the HRIS deficiency. They presented themselves as business partners, emphasising that their HRIS services and deliveries are specifically designed to positively influence the business performance. These issues identified in the pilot study justified the decision to make line managers the focus subjects of the major survey in the thesis.

6. Chapter Six: Data Findings & Research HRIS Framework

This chapter consists of six sections, followed by a summary. The first section focuses on presenting the demographic findings of the participants. In the second section, the business performance success aspects are discussed, along with the contribution of HRIS towards achieving those business aspects. The third section presents the key existing IS factors and their impact on HRIS usefulness across three dimensions. The fourth section concentrates on HRM characteristics, presenting both required characteristics and initiatives. The final section evaluates, revises, and improves the research framework. It is important to note that the findings are structured in a manner that corresponds to the conceptual framework, as well as the data collection instrument. In the subsequent section, the presentation will start with the demographic findings.

6.1 Participants' Demographic

This section discusses the participants' demographic results from seven different perspectives namely age, title, company size, experience, sector, educational background, and HRIS brand. The sector or industry (Table 2) in which the participants work was considered because this could affect their understanding of HRIS based on the specific requirements and practices of their industry. In addition, this diversity in the participants' sectors/industries will increase the reliability of the collected data. The study also examined the participants' job titles (Table 2) that could impact the perception of HRIS. It was important to include different job title as this allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how HRIS was perceived across different managerial organisational roles, which could provide valuable insights into the varying needs and expectations of different stakeholders within an organisation.

Table 2: Participants' Sectors & Job Titles

P	Job Title	Sector
P1	Service Delivery Manager	Information Technology
P2	Finance System Manager	Investment sector
P3	Finance Manager	Construction
P4	Finance Manager	Finance and construction
P5	Business Development Manager	Oil and Gas
P6	Operation Manager	Marketing Communication
P7	Senior Marketing Executive	Education
P8	Social Software Engineer Manager	Health Domain
P9	Senior Recruitment Manager	Education
P10	Senior Developer	Insurance
P11	Program Manager	pharmaceutic
P12	Corporate Development Director	pharmaceutical Consulting
P13	Program Manager	Transportation
P14	Associate Partner Manager	Architecture
P15	System Developer	Finance
P16	Program Manager	digital consultancy
P17	Executive Business Role	Software
P18	Executive Business Role	Engineering
P19	Head Of Delivery (Data Management)	asset management infrastructure
P20	Senior Security Engineer	Technology Sector
P21	Senior Software Developer	Technology Sector
P22	Program Manager	Construction
P23	Team Manager	Travel and Hospitality
P24	Awareness & Education Manager	Software Development
P25	EHS Manager	Energy

The educational background of the participants (Table 3) was also considered as a demographic factor, as it can influence the participants' perspectives and approaches towards HRIS. Having participants with diverse educational backgrounds, such as degrees in finance, IT, or engineering, can provide unique insights into how HRIS was understood and used across different disciplines. Besides, it is imperative to mention that this study also considered the HRIS brand used by the participants' organisations as a demographic factor. The HRIS brand (Table 3) may have unique features or functionalities which could impact the perceptions and experiences of the participants. By including participants who use different HRIS brands, the study can provide a more understanding of how different HRIS systems may influence HR practices and outcomes. The findings show that the reported brands of HRIS are established

and well-known in the HR software industry, which adds credibility to the study's findings. By using reliable and popular HRIS, the participants' feedback would be more rigorous based on tested and mature HR software.

Table 3: Participants' Education & HRIS Brand

P	Education	HRIS Brand
P1	Masters in IS	Talentia
P2	Finance (chartered)	People Matters
P3	Finance	WebHR
P4	Qualified Accountant	Orange HRM
P5	Physics	Inhouse
P6	BA in Statistics	Plus HR
P7	Masters in Marketing	Workday
P8	Computer Science	ESR NHS (IBM)
P9	Masters degree in Chinese Language	Workday
P10	Software	Inhouse HR
P11	MBA	HR Go
P12	Masters In pharmaceutical science	I know
P13	Engineering and Master in Business	Oracle
P14	Architect, Master	Intranet
P15	Telecom Engineering	Workday
P16	Secondary School	Infime
P17	Masters in Marketing	Oracle HR
P18	Masters in Engineering	Customised
P19	Masters of Art	Oracle
P20	Computer Science	Bamboo
P21	computer engineer	Inhouse
P22	Civil engineer Masters	Oracle
P23	Business Marketing Master	People HR
P24	PHD Degree	HiBob
P25	Environment (Master)	I Trent HR

Regarding the participants' age, one participant (P22) is under 34 years old (Figure 10), while the others are over 34, reflecting the maturity of the participants line managers who are occupying managerial positions at their companies.

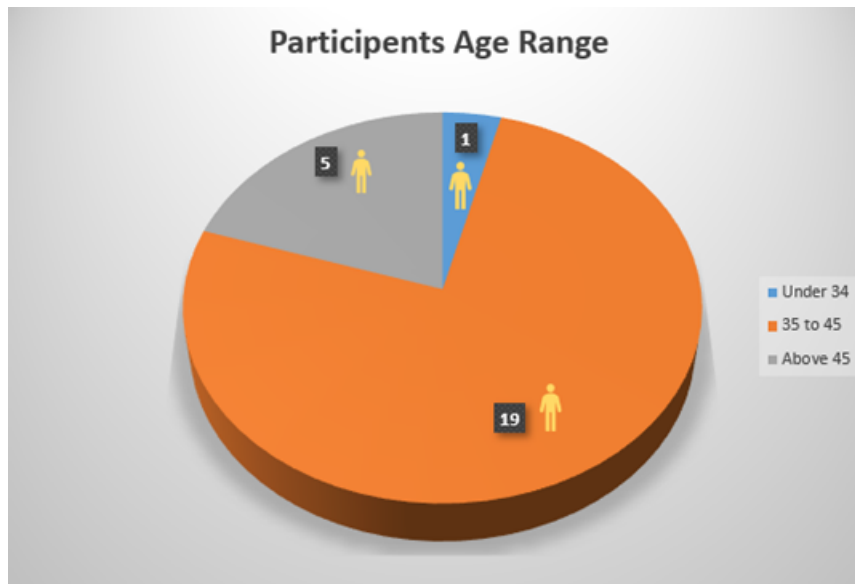


Figure 10: Participants Age Range

As Figure 11 shows, the participants work in large companies and that highlights the crucial role of the HR department in such big organisations. Nine of the participants (Figure 11) work in large companies with more than 5000 employees, where HR challenges and difficulties are more common compared to small or midsize companies.

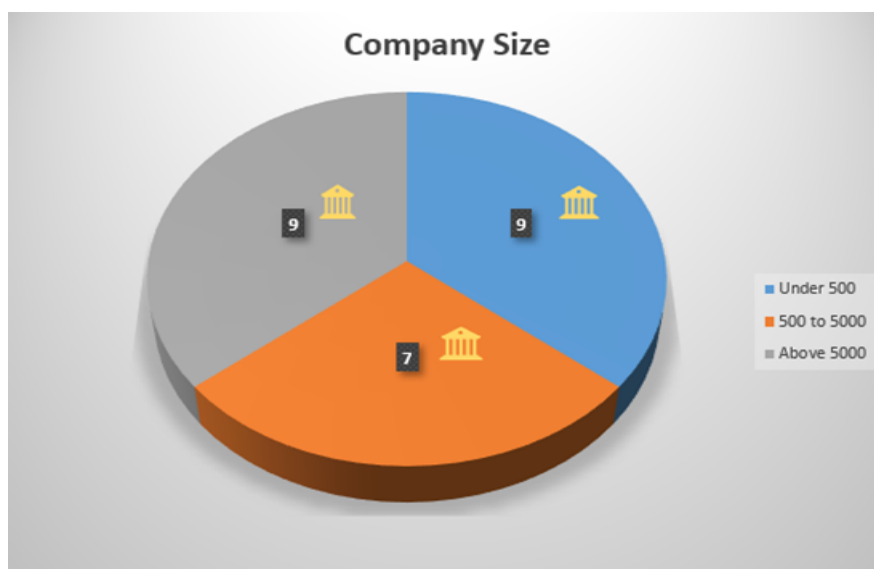


Figure 11: Company Size

Besides, the participants' experience level was considered as a demographic factor, as it can influence their familiarity and comfort with HRIS use. This allowed for an exploration of how HRIS perceptions may differ among HR professionals with different levels of experience. However, as Figure 12 shows, the minimum HRIS experience was three years and this could ensure that the participants had enough knowledge to provide reliable and insightful feedback.

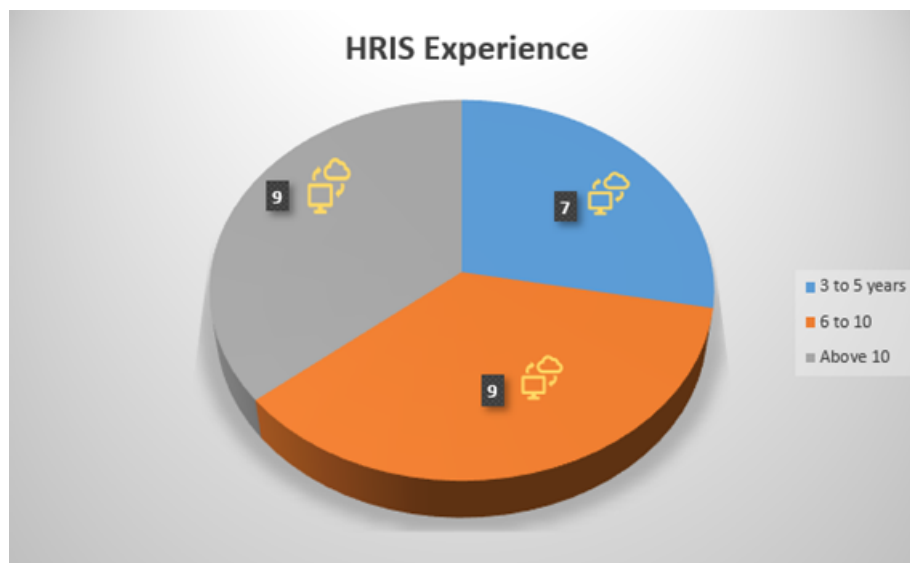


Figure 12: HRIS Experience

Although it is always important to carefully consider the potential impact of demographic variables on the research findings, this research focused on a specific population (twenty-five participants), and the findings may not be easily generalisable to other populations or contexts with different demographic characteristics. In summary, the study's demographic results, including participants' sectors/industries and educational backgrounds, provided valuable insights and a broader view of the subject matter. The diversity of participants from different industries allowed for multi-perspectives on the use and implementation of HRIS. These demographic factors helped contextualise the study's findings, although it is important to note

that they had no impact on the results. This consistency suggests that the sample size was representative, and the study's findings are likely valid across different participant groups.

6.2 Business Performance Success

The findings related to the definition of business success are presented in this section. Based on the responses of the participants, the aspects of business success that their companies aim to achieve can be categorised into the following themes: profitability, customer satisfaction, safety, brand recognition, good working conditions, talent acquisition, employee retention, and employee satisfaction.

Two participants (P3 & P6) mentioned the branding concept in their business success definition. P6, who is working in the marketing sector, defined business success as: “Achieving profitability and raising profile in the marketing industry”. Two participants (P13 & P19) highlighted the safety factor as a main objective that their companies aspire to achieve. P13 elaborates:

“The main purpose of our company to keep Britain going safely. Moving goods and people from one place to another, but having said that, that means looking after all the stations, looking after all the track signalling, overhead lines equipment to get people connected from one place to another. Cities and towns together”.

This is similar to his colleague P19 who referred directly to his government organisation and said:

“I think within the company, I am in infrastructure management, safety is the key priority, customer satisfaction, user satisfaction, delivering a service for our stakeholders and our customers, which is..... which is safe. That is the end goal of

what we do. we are government organisations, so profit is not the main driver.

Safety is the main driver for usbut as I said, safety comes at the top of the list”.

It is important to mention that themes related to safety, brand recognition, good working conditions, talent acquisition, employee retention, and employee satisfaction have been limitedly mentioned by P3, P22, P24 & P18. For example, P24 explained:

“Our people like to work together, like to work in the environment, and then the products that we are selling, we are making successes out of it and getting income from it. So, we build products that are acceptable to our clients. Therefore, we need to have people that can build those products and those people will only stay if the human culture, the environment is good”.

Similarly, P3 has outlined, beside profitability, brand recognition and good teamwork.

“Obviously, like any other business, profitability is one thing. Every business wants to be profitable, but at the same time we want to be reputable as well in the market, we want to be competitive in the market. We want to create a brand and image for ourselves. So yes beside the profitability, all those areas”.

P18 added: “My personal definition of success is customer satisfaction and good work culture”.

In conclusion, it is important to note that themes such as brand recognition, safety, and working conditions were mentioned less frequently compared to profitability and customer satisfaction. Therefore, these themes are not considered in this study, whereas the factors of profitability and customer satisfaction are discussed in the following sections.

Profitability

It was evident that almost all of the participants, 21 out of 25 (Figure 13), were consistent in mentioning profitability in their definition of business success. Some of the answers were short and direct to the point, like P9, who said: “Generate more revenue, this is the main purpose in general”. P12, who works in the pharmaceutical industry, interpreted the profitability factor by stating: “The intention is to grow the contract value and then to find new pharmaceutical customers in order to win new contracts where we can advise them on M&A's and strategy, etc. So that that's the objective”.

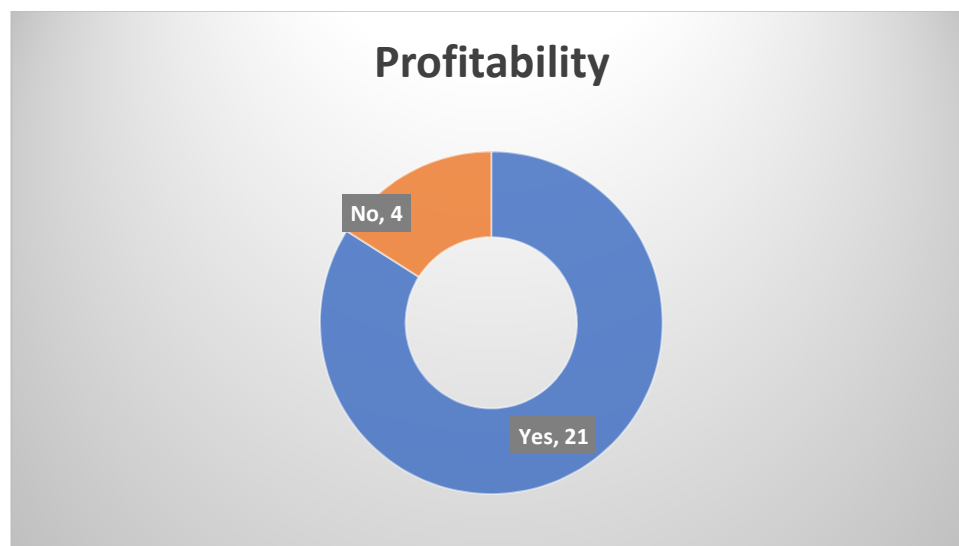


Figure 13: Profitability

In the same line of explaining the profitability as a main factor in business success, P1, who is working in the information system sector, used the term “becoming global” to identify the goal of his company and said:

“Our company becoming more global. Mainly they try to not only has a global present but also a global partnership and getting connections across the globe. That is the goal of the company at the moment. They want to integrate with other

companies, share information, share knowledge. It is more about open sourcing and collaborating”.

P11 linked the profitability factor to the sales, cost reduction and efficiency and said:

“They have to make profit, increase sales because only then they'll be achieving the profit at the same time. One of the targets is cost reduction, but also we are looking at how can we find efficiencies in meeting the sales. You know, so how much time the employee spends talking to customers, ok, and how much time employee spends in actually doing the internal job”.

This is similar to what P23, who is working in the hospitality sector, expressed:

“It's actually evolved around our company's mission, you know, to be the most trusted service provider. So, once we reach that stage where all our members trust us, expand in terms of our customer base and, as a result, you know, generate a volume in terms of financial rewards, then these are the goals that we aim as a company to achieve”.

To conclude, maximising profitability is a critical objective for organisations, as it directly impacts on their business performance. According to the participants, the ability to generate consistent profits enables companies to reinvest in their operations, expand their businesses, and reward shareholders. During the data reduction process, different related terms to profitability were extracted to include: “increasement in the market shares”, “partnership with big companies”, “globalisation”, “expansion”, “more work”, “more clients”, “high return on

shareholders”, “more money”, “revenue”, “profit”, “grow the contract value”, “win new contracts”, “cost reduction”, “profit margin”, “getting bigger all over the world”, “attracting more people all over the world”, “get the budget”, “shareholders”, and “commercial element”. It could be said that profitability is a key performance indicator for most of the participants who agreed that their companies’ ability to generate profits is essential for their long-term sustainability and growth in the marketplace. The next section presents the findings of customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction

Besides identifying business success in terms of profitability, all participants agree that customer satisfaction is an essential component for business success. Different terms have been used to refer to customer satisfaction, including 'satisfying the stakeholders', 'happy customers', 'satisfied customers', 'service', 'clients', 'customers', and 'happy clients'. P22 commented, “Clients should be satisfied with the product or service your company is offering. That is key”. P8 adds: “we are looking to make sure that our customers are satisfied with our service, and we always try to improve it”. This statement is confirmed by P15 who said: “I’m part of the engineering team, let’s say of the IT team. We make sure that our users can provide the clients with what they need in terms of data or services”.

It is important to mention that among the participants who identified business success in relation to customer satisfaction, there are four participants (P2, P8, P13, P19) who did not identify profitability as a business objective at their companies. These participants work in the governmental sector, specifically in the medical, transportation, and pension sectors. P2, who works in the pension sector, stated that:

“We are not working for profit company, but we have to maintain enough fund and income to keep paying the pensioners who are on our payroll. Currently we have 160,000 pensioners receiving cash from us and further 150,000 yet to receive. Our target is to pay the right people, the right amount at the right time”.

It was expected that profitability would not be identified as a primary element of business success for those working in the governmental sector. Nevertheless, the main reason for targeting these line managers was to identify different aspects of business success. It could be said, based on the data, that the participating line managers agreed that customer satisfaction is a critical factor in determining the success of a business. They expressed that customer satisfaction refers to how well a company meets or exceeds the expectations of its customers in terms of product quality, service delivery, and overall experience. In this sense, customer satisfaction is an essential component of any successful business strategy. The findings below respond to the question of whether HRIS was playing a part in achieving those objectives.

6.3 HRIS Contribution to Business Performance

A direct question was put to the participants to explore the contribution of HRIS in achieving the objectives identified above. The answers that were provided by the participants are varied between positive, negative, or limited (Figure 14). The limitedness of HRIS business impact was reflected in the feedback of P8 who said: “Is it a big contribution? No. It’s a basic sort of organisational contribution. I wouldn’t say it’s like this huge contribution, you could live without it”. This response was different from participants P1& P14, who were certain that HRIS is not implemented to impact on the business as P1 expressed that “HRIS is not helping in achieving that goal at our company” and similarly P14 said “No, the system itself online is not contributing at all”. One of the participants (P24) was confident in her answer when she

shouted and expressed “No, the HR software is just to make administrative things easy. I don't think it... it doesn't really contribute to the success of the organisation because we could have done what we are doing with the tool via emails, via any other method”.

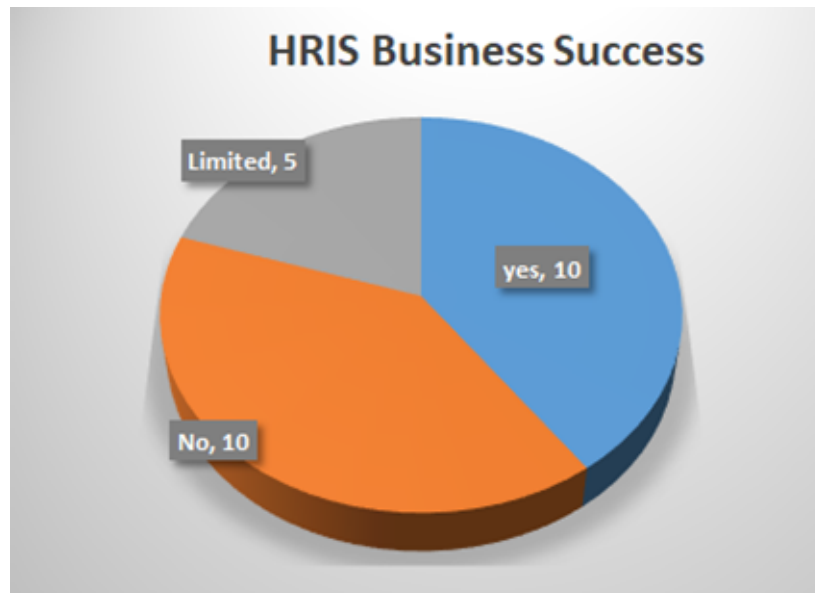


Figure 14: HRIS Business Success

P11 was uncertain and used the word “feel” in his statement: “It’s not 100% clear whether it helps or not, but I would definitely feel that it is an important aspect of the business”. It is relevant to mention that negative or partially supportive feedback from the participants regarding the impact of the HRIS on business has been captured through underlying terms such as "potentially", "Not quite to be honest", “Kind of”, "It's not 100% clear", "The true answer until now, no", "I do not think so", or "limited".

However, it could be said that half of the participants (N=10) had different views and reported that HRIS has an impact on business. This was expressed by P11 who said: “Definitely this system is helping to bring in the efficiency and like what we said cutting cost”, and similarly P13 added: “Of course, because of the size of our company we need tools like that which facilitates us and guides us for every step we take in managing our workforce and improving

our business requirement”. Some of these participants who were positive about the impact HRIS has on business performance provided some details with their answers. For example, P22 perceived the business impact of HRIS through enhancing employee retention and welfare. He explained:

“It does, kind of, because it helps with the retention and paying attention as well to people’s progress within the company. So, we look at how long they’ve been with the company moving them forward within our, you know, employment grid in order to retain these skills and expertise”.

In the same line of HRIS impact on business, P19 recognised the business impact of HRIS through automation that causes the efficiency. He said:

“From recruitment perspective..... it is possible that you might get different sort of CVs, different types of skills being given to you and as a line manager you don’t want to kind of sift through hundreds of CVS. You haven’t got the time. You would want some of those elements to be automated..... So, if you’re able to manage that journey and make it more efficient, then that will enhance your business outcome and you will at the end be able to deliver what you want to deliver to your end customers”.

P2 explained the HRIS impact on business through the implementation of their performance appraisal module. He said:

“In order to achieve success in the company, employees should make the success and you need method or tools to measure that success, so the HR system should help you to do this measurement, support line managers to appraise the employees

and set their targets and keep everybody motivated to achieve their targets. HR system is a tool to help manage that and I think if it is a good tool, then it is easier for managers to manage their staff and achieve these targets”.

Similarly, P7 recognised the HRIS business impact through their automated appraisal system. He added:

“There are internal reviews.... your performance will be reviewed and measured against those targets. That helps you to be aware of your responsibilities, and you have to achieve those targets to achieve your bonus because, you have, to achieve the target to get the yearly bonus. Otherwise, you won’t get the bonus. Achieving the target means achieving the profitability for the company”.

It is important to mention that the collected data indicates that regardless of the feedback received from the participants about HRIS business impact (positive, negative or limited), the contribution of HRIS to business performance was primarily recognised in certain contexts. Firstly, the performance appraisal module implementation. Secondly, the automation context that will cause efficiency and enhance employee welfare. However, there was no tangible evidence or actual demonstration of how HRIS contributes to the aspects of business success based on data. In other words, during the discussion with the participants, there were no explicit evidence or examples of how HRIS data analysis and reporting features can be utilised to contribute to the attainment of profitability and customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, the main purpose of this investigation was to explore the initial thoughts of the participating line managers on the effectiveness of HRIS and specifically its impact on business. The participants were also asked to identify the factors that cause the limitations of HRIS to impact on business. Their responses are different, provided in the next section.

Reasons for HRIS limitation

It is imperative to mention that the investigation into the reasons causing the deficiency of HRIS impact on business was exploratory in nature, aimed at gaining initial insights from the participating line managers about the research problem. The feedback from the participants can be classified into three primary themes: "design & technology", "HR practitioners' capabilities" and "people behaviour". Some answers were short and direct to the point, as shown in the input of P13: "I feel these HR practices are slightly out of date". On the other hand, some participants' feedback included multiple factors, as exemplified by P4's statement:

"The reason behind this is the culture, obviously people are always very reluctant to change. Secondly, the managers are too busy with so many clients and they are not able to utilize the software, this is for them to use, but they do not realise the benefit yet. Every month, at the meetings, we encourage them, but they are not utilising it, the managers themselves".

P17 attributed the HRIS deficiency to people and behaviour and said:

"A lot of people don't know how to use this system. They end up cutting corners using e-mail, using spreadsheets. There are no accountability people. Lazy, they are lazy, or they don't know how to use it? And they're afraid to ask. There's no motivation to actually use the software like that. There's no incentive. It's not a core process in your day-to-day, unless you're really focused and really committed and really dedicated, and we have an incentive to do that. It's not. It's a bit like people don't go to the gym. They have a gym around the corner, they have a membership, but they don't go, it is the same".

This differs from P12 who attributed the problem to the design and ease of use factor: “Sometimes it just becomes easy to not use it, just use Excel and get on with our objectives. Basically, it is the lack of ease of use”; this is confirmed by P6, who explained: “It is not user friendly, we do not know how to use it, no body in the organisation knows how to use it and we do not get training on how to use it, we’re just told the function is there just go and figure that”.

From a different perspective, P4 attributed the problem to HR practitioners’ capabilities and skills:

“So far, HR the only thing their job is to hire people and fire people. I think they are incorrectly trained. They have never told they are part of the organisation, and they can create so much for the organisation rather than just hiring and firing and just keeping the records. They see themselves as record-keepers and performing a task. They do not take any incentive to see how we can benefit, how we can improve efficiency, what elements we can look at to improve the efficiency such as the attendance, how we can improve the performance appraisal, so employees feel better”.

One of the participants (P3) referred that there is an alternative, he stated:

“There is something else that we use as well, which has got HR side in it, which is the project management software, that has got that feature. That feature is visible

and available to all line managers. So over there, they can see the productivity of the individual”.

It is relevant to mention that the following terms related to limitations were captured during the conversations with the participants: “not user friendly”, “complicated”, “not easy”, “no smooth workflow”, “the focus on basic HR functions only”, “not all applications inclusive in one application”, “HR practitioners are not interested”, “no integration with other systems (ERP, all inclusive, all in one stop)”, “IT skills problem”, “communication skills problem”, “resistance to change”, “poor quality of the system”, “HR practitioners are not trained enough”, “no management encouragement”, “no training provided”, “technology is too complex for some people”, “bugs”, “outdated HR practices”, “adoption problem”, “software capabilities”, “line managers are too busy”, “nobody told them to do it”, “utilisation problem”, “system quality”, “system/software design”, “architecture team”, “quality of the system”, and “time constraints of the line managers”. In the light of those terms, the data suggests that the reported reasons are typical IS factors that have already been identified and documented in HRIS studies, and some of them are related to HRM characteristics. While the reported reasons are common IS factors, which are considered in this study, they do not provide detailed feedback on key aspects such as HR practitioners' required capabilities, HR-line relationship, or empowering HR practitioners. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these HRM characteristics factors and how they relate to HRIS impact on business performance.

Overall, the impact of HRIS on business performance remains uncertain. Although many participants reported that HRIS contributed to business success, no solid evidence or practical explanation was provided to support this claim, except through the performance appraisal module and the automation benefits. It might be concluded that the extent of HRIS's

contribution to business performance success is not clear, and further investigation is necessary to better understand this issue in the next section. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of the usefulness of HRIS are investigated in the next section to further understand the HRIS deficiency problem. The perceived HRIS usefulness is one of the key existing IS factors that has been tackled in many HRIS studies. The findings of perceived HRIS usefulness are presented in the following section.

6.4 Key Existing IS Factors

In this section, besides the perceived usefulness of HRIS, two main areas have been investigated. Firstly, the perceived ease of use of HRIS. Secondly, the external dimensions that have an impact on HRIS usefulness. The findings of each area are presented in order, starting with HRIS perceived usefulness.

6.4.1 HRIS Perceived Usefulness

Four questions were put to the participating line managers to cover four areas related to HRIS perceived usefulness: HRIS usage frequency, accessibility to HRIS reporting services, HR department's data analysis and reporting service delivery, and participants' perceived usefulness of HRIS.

HRIS Usage Frequency

The usage frequency of HRIS by the participated line managers is different (Figure 15). Most of the participants (N=19) reported that they use their HRIS once or twice a week, which was referred to as basic and for merely administrative talks. For example, P14 clearly referred to her frequent usage at the end of her statement and said:

“I use it for example to record my sheets, daily sheets like hours of work, the timesheet, and I use it for booking holidays. I use it to access documents, official documents issued by the company like pay rise. May be once twice a week, yeah, not more than this”.

This is unsimilar to P23 who pointed out that he used HRIS “to log peoples progress, to log their absence, their rota, their..., you know, update their profiles in terms of details, documents, progress with trainings. So, I almost use it every day. Probably, let's say between half an hour up to one hour every day”.

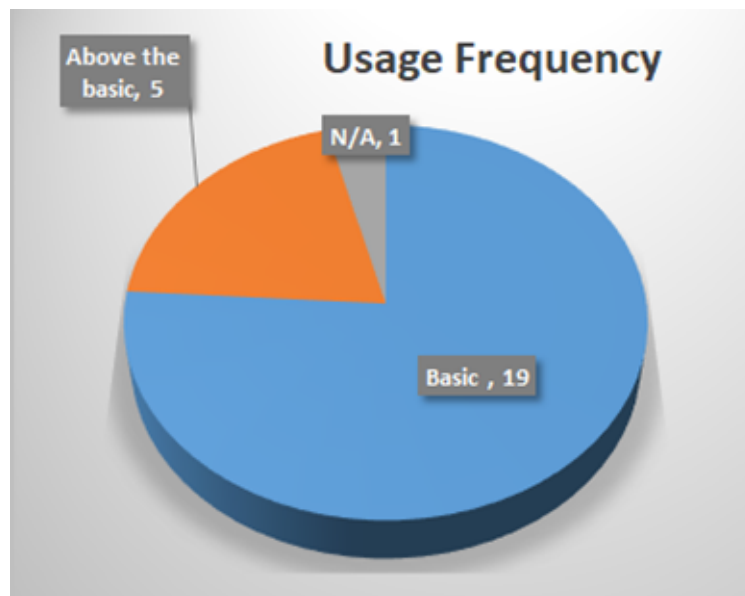


Figure 15: Usage Frequency

It is significant to point out that all the participants used the HR application for personnel-related activities. For example, P9 attributed the use of HRIS for: “When I need to book my holiday, when I want to request training, when I want to check my salary, when I want to update information regarding bank account, update personal details”. This is similar to what P18

stated: “occasionally when I want to book my holiday..... or I would see my promotion letters there”. P17 introduced HRIS as an “internal LinkedIn”, she said:

“It's almost like an internal LinkedIn for the organisation. So, when you want to see the whole chart and see who's who in different departments, that was in our HR system. And then I used it all the time to contact people”.

P12 used the term “mundane” when answering this question:

“Yeah, so typically I use it a few times for mundane tasks like someone in my team applied for leave, that's it, so approving it. I do use it once a week.....this is the time when I use it really a lot because it's appraisal season”.

It is important to mention that some of the answers (P7, P24 &P18) reflected the obligation element of using the HR software, as P7 said: “It is not for daily work, but you have to use it because if you want to book a holiday or you want to do the appraisal”. This is similar to what P18 indicated: “Probably once or twice a week, I would use it to book my time on projects because that was how I would get paid. So, if I didn't submit my timesheet, I wouldn't get paid”. (P18). P24 elaborated on this obligatory use and stated:

“Every time I have to go into the office, I have to use the software because that's where I booked my seat. My desk from now. Before, we used to have a separate tool to book desk, but now they have compiled... compressed everything onto the HiBob, so everybody has to use the HiBob because they want everybody to use Hibob”.

Perhaps P16's statement was honest, saying: "Maybe once a week, I try to use it as little as possible to be honest, booking holidays, just kind of like claiming expenses. If I need to get hold of some documents or whatever, yeah, like HR documents". P16's answer is unlike the other five participants (P3, P4, P19, P11, P23), whose use was above the basic when they were managing their subordinates' activities. For example, P19 was keen to elaborate in providing his statement and said:

"The system we have for employee management and day-to-day normal activities, I normally use it maybe once or twice every week because I just to apply for the leaves. When people want to apply for leaves, when I want to check their training status, when I want to check their adherence to key policies and practises. Are they compliant? The training and requirement stuff. If I want to do ad hoc payments for example. If I want to approve someone's leave and stuff like that, that's when I use the software".

Similarly, P11 was one step ahead in using the HR software as a project management tool that shows employees' availability for future projects. He said:

"Let's say because I'm also managing some people as well. This HR software also gives me visibility of who is doing the work and what kind of work, because we have a tracking of different projects and who is available for my next project. The software gives me visibly to who is going to be available in the next few weeks. Then I can then go in and see whether somebody can be only for a project. So, I do have to keep a track of what's happening in terms of resources".

To sum us, the data shows a small number of the participants use the HR application more often to access finance information (timesheets) or handle their reported subordinates' tasks, while others (N=19) reported limited/basic usage. Different reasons/purposes for using HR software were registered, including: "personnel information", "booking holiday", "performance appraisal", "attendance", "booking a seat", "training", "filling timesheets", "approving leaves", "applied for leaves", "appraisal seasons", "mandatory training", "claiming expenses", "browsing HR documents", "internal communication", "timesheet approval", "checking payslips", "requesting training", and "updating the personal details". As the data shows, the usage was limited to basic administrative features with no reference to the use of reporting and data analysis features. In the next section, it might be beneficial to investigate whether HR practitioners themselves are using the reporting and data analysis service from line managers' point of view.

HR Department's Reporting Services

The responses of the participants show that the HR department rarely sent HR reports to help line managers in their business decisions (Figure 16). Eighteen participants indicated that they were not in receipt of any reports from their HR departments. This was confirmed by P18, who said "Not really, not at all. Not that I can remember". Similarly, P9 said: "We do not really receive reports from HR". Three participants (P7, P12, P22) revealed that the HR reports delivered to them are limited to certain forms. P12 spoke of the related attendance and performance reports: "The only reports I receive at the moment are attendance or a copy of the documentation when I filled it in, like performance or lack of performance". Similarly, P22 mentioned that:

“Sometimes yes, you get HR reports on business key performance indicators. You call them and you can get them generated by HR there.....Sometimes you can get. You can keep like for example the number of staff. If there's any events going on in the company, etc. If the new projects arising”.

P7 referred to the employee satisfaction surveys and said: “They do employee satisfaction review yearly, and we were like supposed to answer this, and they sent us summary of that”. It should be noted that during the conversation, two participants (P8&P11) expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the limitation of receiving reports from the HR department by using the word “only”. P8 said: “If there is no change in employee status, only annual leave report, that’s it” whereas P11 explained: “I don’t get any reports. The only time the HR will send me an e-mail if there’s a training that’s pending, other than that nothing, yeah, and then obviously the pay slip that comes to me”.

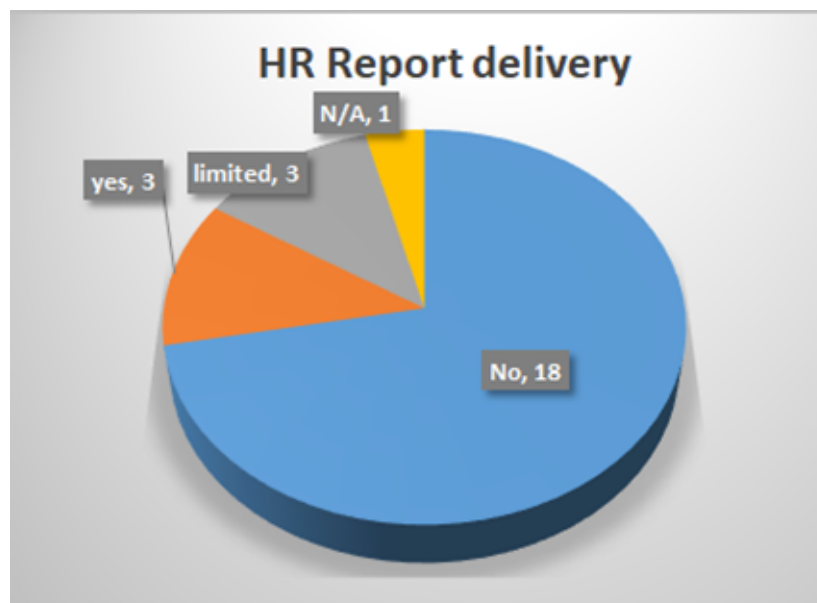


Figure 16: HR Report Delivery

The above statements are different from the feedback of participants P2, P13, and P19. For example, P19 explained and richly reported:

“We do, we do receive automated reports on compliances. So, reports relating to a number of training and policies and practises if those need to be refreshed. They e-mail us or those are automated messages such as ad hoc payments have to be made to people if they've worked over their limits, someone doing consistently extra hours. Health and well-being reports for example. So, we get those reports. We get reports around there's sickness if people have not been doing their timecards, we get timecard reports and stuff like that. So those are the common reports I get”.

Similarly, P13 provided a statement with details about what reports he receives by stating:

“They inform us about the future requirements or quarterly requirements, what we need to do, what we need to do with our resource as well how we can improve our interview skills, last two years because of COVID HR practices slightly change, there was additional burden. So again, especially after Brexit, how to get people in the roles which fit them properly”.

In conclusion, the responses from the participants indicated that either the HR departments were not effectively engaging with the lines regarding their HR reports, or the HR professionals were not motivated to analyse HR data and convert it into meaningful information to be shared with the lines for informed decision-making. Additionally, the participants who reported receiving HR reports mentioned that these reports include: "employees' status (who left the company)", "employees' annual leaves", "employee satisfaction survey", "attendance report", "performance report", "assessment report", "personal objectives performance", "surveys", "absenteeism", "training and development courses", "incentives", "commissions", "compensation", "approve payments", "health and safety", and "sickness reports". Based on the participants' responses, it could be said that even those who provided positive feedback about

the HR department's reporting service did not provide examples that demonstrate the depth of how the data had been transformed into knowledge that had an impact on their business decisions. Additionally, it could be argued that the lack of a robust data reporting service is the underlying issue causing line managers to be unaware of the business impact of HRIS. This issue of inadequacy in receiving HR data/reports from HR departments would be intensified when line managers do not have access to HRIS data analysis features. This matter is discussed in the next section.

Line Managers' Access

The collected data shows that most of the participated line managers (N=18) do not have access to HRIS reporting features (Figure 17). Although P8 worked in a large well-established governmental organisation, he said “I do not have access to any of the HR reports. I do not have access to performance appraisal, I do that actually like a paperwork and then we send it latter to HR, but we cannot see it on the system”. P7 was direct to the point and cut the conversation with me and said: “We do not generate reports”. Seven participants confirmed that they have access. P23, for example, explained:

“We have access to all these reports. And we can download them whenever we want. I have access to the performance. I have access to the Bradford score. I have access to training reports, I have access to..... I mean. Nothing crossed my mind right now, but generally these are the kind of report. As well as... how often they are logging into the system, you know, login details and stuff like that”.

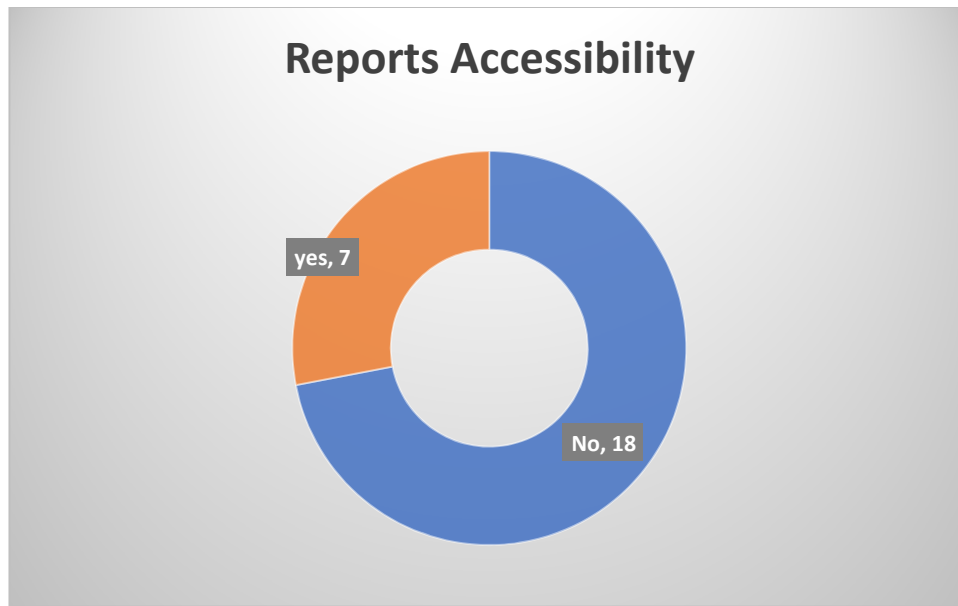


Figure 17: Report Accessibility

To compound the issue, P15 plainly said: “Well,... I know there is a report section, but I don't generate anything, yeah”. P19 pointed to his access and said: “Yes, we can. We can log on to system and we can check some of those reports. Attendance records for example, leave records, payment records”, but he did not provide evidence that this data was part of his business decision making. However, one participant (P11) demonstrated his access to the project management module’s reports and said: “I don't get report from the HR department, but I can go to the “HR Go” and I can see the report on exactly how many people are working? What are they working on? What projects you're working?” (P11). However, in addition to staff availability, HRIS project management features can provide information on the amount of time and cost spent on a particular customer, project or task.

In summary, the access to HRIS reports was found to be limited, blocked, or not utilised based on the participants' responses. Consequently, in addition to the infrequent use of HRIS and HR practitioners’ failure to provide reports, the obstruction of line managers' access to HRIS reporting features can be identified as another issue contributing to the deficiency of HRIS usage. In the next section, the discussion is focused on the perceptions of the line managers on HRIS usefulness.

Perceived HRIS Usefulness

With the exception of participant P6, all the participants concurred that their HRIS system was "useful" but gave varying opinions that it could be improved. P13 said: "OK, it serves the purpose. It fits the purpose. But there is always a room for improvement". P3 expanded his feedback and said:

"I think there are areas where we can improve, I think there are still opportunities where we can improve, I think there still room for more automation within the HR system, yes certainly, it is very decent system, we do get a lot of information from it, but I think, there is definitely room for improvement".

Similarly, P2 explained that: "The holiday section or module is quite good. It does the job. Training part where we can book training, it can be a bit better". Although the participants agree that their HRIS is useful, during the conversations some statements to the contrary emerged, such as: "I don't think it helps to do anything other than the basic" (P18) and "It's not a great system" (P16).

The most important issue that needs to be highlighted in this section is that most of the participants in this study perceived or demonstrated HRIS usefulness primarily in an administrative context. P8 said: "I do not see any contribution in business" and correspondingly P7 briefly stated: "It is for admin work only". It could be concluded in the light of the collected data that HRIS usefulness was perceived in the borders of daily employee transactions, welfare, and data storage. Different relevant terms were captured during the conversation with the participants and those terms are in favour of the administrative benefits of HRIS, such as: "data centralisation", "data and information storage", "tracking holiday", "digitalising the

transactions”, “easier and faster transactions and processes”, “self-service”, “automated processes”, “performance appraisal”, and “booking holidays”. For example, P22 said:

“It's useful because it takes away the aspect of keeping paper records. The software can automize and save the hard records of key information. Like your profile and everything from your profile can be built like your career plan progression, your timesheets, many processes”.

In a similar example, P8 touched on the employee welfare element:

“Through the HR software, you can see your position and you can get some like annual overview about the steps that you move through the organisation positions. This helps basically in organising the employees and improve their experience inside the organisation and make them feel comfortable with the organisation and that will be reflected on their, let's say, attitude and also performance in their daily job”.

P8' comment are consistent with P3, who perceived HRIS usefulness as a storing machine and elaborated:

“The HR software of the company, it become the asset of the company, yes,it is an asset to the company and again from the information point of view you are storing all the information over there and that is making the life easy, and it is kind of more centralised, all the information is centralised. Even if the person who is taking care of the HR has to leave the company tomorrow, there is somebody literary just come and take the HR software with very little training and will be able to have all the information available”.

Apart from the participants' agreement on the usefulness of HRIS as mainly geared to support the administrative transactions, nine participants (Figure 18) mentioned that HRIS helps them limitedly in their daily business work and their feedback was based on Timesheet and Project Management Modules implementation. The Timesheet Module involves daily work, where employee hours of work can be monitored for payroll and HMRC purposes (accounting job). P4, who is an accountant, explained: "We can also manage the hassle of the expense. People want to claim expense, before they have to send the papers, but now it is more digital, it is easier and fast". Another accountant, P3 added:

"I think the only purpose for that software for the finance division, let's say, is to take the information for the payroll purposes, and to take other information. For example, if there are any changes within the organisation in terms of people or any changes within certain employees benefits or perhaps salaries or anything like that. I am only using that system to take that information, to gather that information other than that, it is not giving me any other financial benefit".

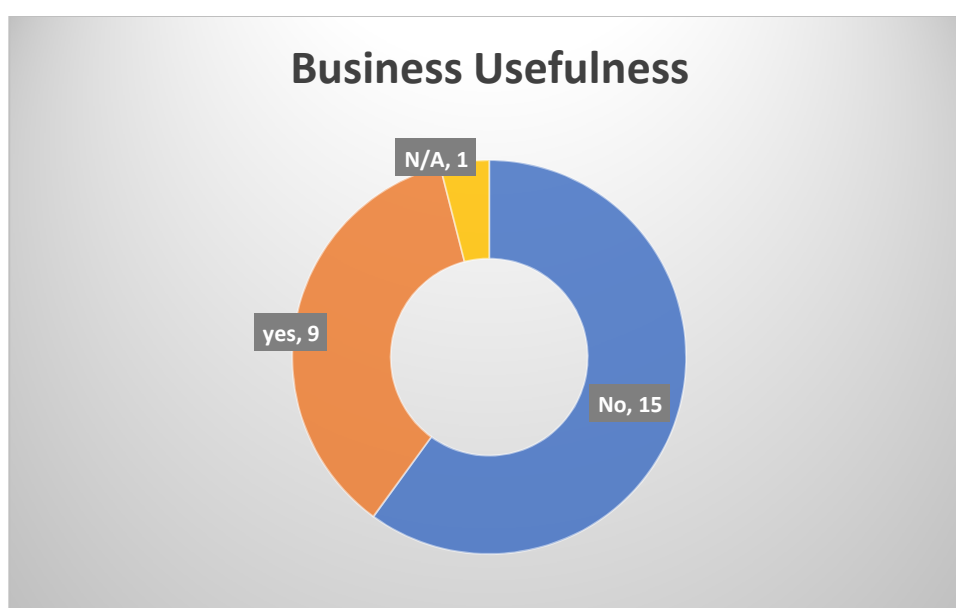


Figure 18: Business Usefulness

It should be noted that in response to my investigation about the perceived usefulness, the participants again mentioned the obligatory use to their HR software. For example, P16 has linked her perceived usefulness of the software to the obligation element and said: “Well, it is useful because you have to use it to get access to things, like accessing your pay slips, seeing how much holiday time you’ve got left, registering sick things, yeah, we have to do time sheets, so yes, it’s a mandatory tool that you need it”. In addition, it is interesting to consider the statement of P21 who, in response to my question about how useful the software is, he said: “From my point of view, to be honest, it's good but if you are a company director or a boss in the company, I think this will be very helpful for that person. OK, but for me, I don't think it is”.

In summary, the data showed that there are deficiencies and limitations in HRIS usage, as confirmed by participant P4 who stated: “In reality, so far, I would say we have not utilised the software 100 percent. I would say 30 or 40 percent we have utilised the capabilities and the features in the software”. Although participants expressed perceived usefulness using terms like "useful," "vital," "important," and "asset," they also made judgements such as "there are spaces for improvements," "room for improvement," "not the best system," "not bad," "still some paperwork involved," and "more automation is required." Additionally, it can be concluded from participants' answers that HRIS usage is basic and perceived usefulness is mainly from an administrative perspective. Only a few line managers demonstrated how HRIS could be useful in their daily business activities or decision-making, such as in timesheet and project management modules. Furthermore, line managers have limited or no access to HRIS reporting features, and the HR department rarely delivers or shares HR reports with them. These points affirm the HRIS deficiency problem addressed in this research and reflect the shortcomings in perceiving HRIS as a data-driven instrument. The following sections present the findings of factors that may potentially impact the usefulness of HRIS and contribute to the

deficiency problem. These findings begin with comments on HRIS ease of use, which are presented in the next section.

6.4.2 HRIS Perceived Ease of Use

Most of the participants (N=19) reported that their HR software is easy to use (Figure 19). The terms registered include: “user friendly”, “simple interface” “it is quite straightforward”, “simple”, “not complicated”, “easy”, and “robust security measures”. For example, P4 said:

“The software we use Orange HRM, it is very straightforward software, initially we did need training, the HR team had the training from the software provider. For the staff, it was easy only one training to understand the frontend and the task they need to do but it is not very complicated, it is very straightforward user-friendly software”.



Figure 19: Easiness

One of the participants (P23) expressed the perceived ease of use as: “it could be friendlier than what it is right now, but with the really basic training you can get your way around”. However, Five respondents were specific and explained that their HRIS is not easy to use and they have attributed that to a number of reasons and used various terms, such as: “tricky”, “not very easy”, “confusing”, “not smooth”, “design problem”, “not easy to use”, “a lot of security checking”, “overprotective”, “complicated”, “not clear to set the objectives”, “need user guide”, “not user friendly”, “not super straightforward”, “many platforms”, and “not one single platform”. For example, P19 said:

“We’ve got different systems, we’re doing a competency-based management system, and we’ve got different system for grievance, sickness, and all sorts of HR direct stuff. So, which is the reason I said we need one single integrated system which links into everything. You shouldn’t have to log on to different systems to do different activities. There is no need for you to go into every single element”.

It is important to note that the discussion on ease of use shifted when the performance appraisal module was brought up. Three participants explicitly stated that they found HRIS difficult to use because of the complexity of the performance appraisal module. P12 said: “Minus appraisal, it's straightforward. Appraisal is very complex”. Similarly, P1 noted: “I think around performance or objectives. It has been always tricky to know whenever we set new objectives for the next year for yearly reviews. It is always tricky to find out where to set the new objectives”. P2 elaborated and touched on the complexity of the performance appraisal in his HR software “People Matters” by noting:

“People Matters itself is a little bit confusing at the start. It is not smooth, the workflow inside not streaming smoothly. Design is not correct. Our system is not very user friendly in some areas, and that keeps employee in general away from it, so they communicate with their line managers about their performance through other methods like email or chat or face to face meeting, they still need to fill these fields to update their objectives, but they are doing for ticking box exercise rather than using it as an effective tool to help in day-to-day job. The design of the system is a barrier”.

One of the participants (P6) sarcastically answered this question and said: “Easy if it works (laughing), yeah, when it's working, yes, when it's not working it it's horrendous”. That could reflect the importance of implementing an easy-to-use HRIS and how difficult the situation would be when the system is down or out of service. It could be deduced based on the data collected that the concern is around having more than one system in place to sort out different HR activities, as well as the system design. In addition, the reported complexity in using the HR software was specified in certain features of the performance appraisal module, whereas the participants agreed that it is easy and straightforward to book a holiday, for example. The next section presents the findings of the external dimensions that impact on HRIS usefulness.

6.4.3 External Dimensions

The external dimensions that impact on HRIS usefulness in this research have been outlined in three categories as follows: the Technological, Organisational, and Environmental. The next section concerns the Technological Dimension.

6.4.3.1 Technological Dimension

This dimension is investigated from three perspectives as follows: security, integration, and compatibility. The line managers provided their feedback concerning these technological factors and highlighted the issues they were experiencing. The findings of the first factor, security, is presented in the following section.

Security

All the participants (except P20) confirmed that their HR software were secure (Figure 20). They referred to the advanced security measures that are applied nowadays to their HRIS systems such as: role configuration, single sign-on, two factors authentication, and feature for identifying the IP address of the user. Some minor issues were reported such as: session timeout without saving. Regarding advanced security, P7 said: “Very secure system. We use two factors of authentications”, whereas P5 commented: “I think it’s more that people are in big companies they are very aware of the data security so personally I did not experience issues with data security”. However, P3 complained about advanced security measures by stating: “There are lots of security protocols in terms of you cannot just go and do anything, sometimes I feel they are overly protective. I think in some cases there is no need for that, this is my opinion”.

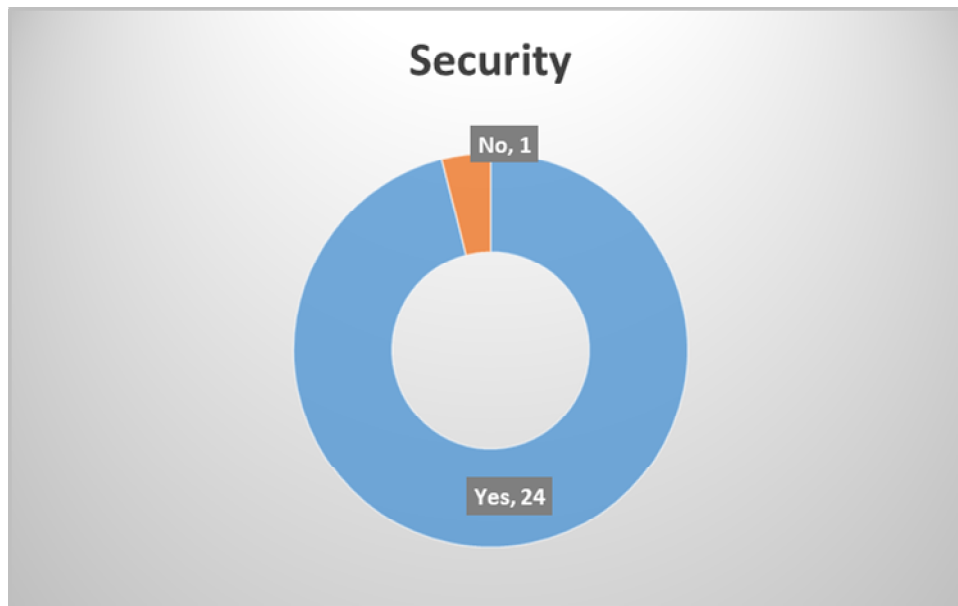


Figure 20: Security

It is interesting to mention that P3 stated HRIS helped the company to allocate the location of employees during COVID when his company started the policy of working from home. He explained:

“During the COVID pandemic, lots of people working from home, and we found out in some cases where people are actually out of country and they were working from there which is not something allowed for the employees just go abroad and start working from there without the consent of the head of the department. So that was something highlighted during the pandemic”.

It can be surmised that the data indicates that the participants found their HR applications to be secure, with minimal reports of security issues such as session timeout without saving. Their current HR software systems did not pose any major security concerns. The next section outlines the findings regarding the integration aspect.

Integration

Most of the participants (N=19) (Figure 21) stated that their HRIS systems were not integrated with the other existing applications at their companies using terms such as “Unfortunately no”, “not at the moment”, “absolutely not”, and “we are working on that”. Some key words were repeatedly mentioned during the discussions about integration, where the participants used the terms: “one single platform” and “all inclusive”. P1 complained about the lack of integration at his company and said:

“Our software, Talentia, has training module, but never utilised or used..... we have external platforms for training courses, if those platforms are fully integrated with the HR software, if it can be linked somehow, so we can access single platform HR software, and from there I can navigate to all those external training platforms..... that will be useful. At the moment we are not using the HR software for any courses”.

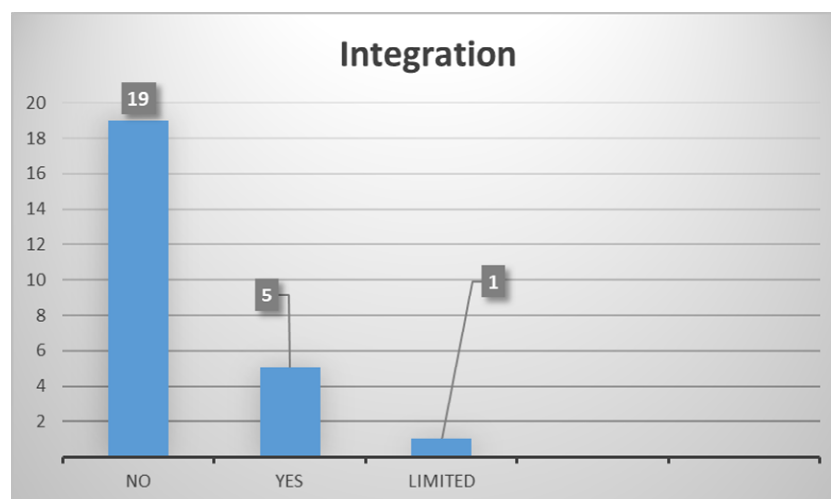


Figure 21: Integration

One of the participants (P4) desperately expressed the need for such integration and how that will link data together:

“I can give you example, the software we use Quick Books, there are many apps which can connect to Quick Books and does the work. But HR software, there are no apps which can connect. If that happens, the benefits will be much higher. The senior managers could be able not only to see the numbers, but also the source in terms of the people, the attitude, the proficiency, and other elements”.

Five participants revealed that their HRIS was integrated, but still not perfect or up to the expectation. P16 said: “I would like to say yes, but we have different systems..... we probably have about four or five different systems that we use to try and get things done, so they're not as integrated as they should be”. However, P23 was satisfied and said: “We have our main platform where we deal with all our requests, it's called “Can Make”. Uh, so it's integrated with that one. It's integrated with our Outlook. Uh, it's integrated as well with our Teams. It's integrated with yes, CRM as well”.

In the light of the collected data, it was clear that no integration had been achieved at most of the participants’ companies. The participants agreed that integrating the HRIS with other applications would help save time, provide more advanced data, enhance analysis, reduce the confusion of processing duplicated data. The participants could not explain why their HRIS had not been integrated with the other existing applications at their organisations. I believe technical people are more capable of justifying the integration constraints. The next section presents the findings of the compatibility of HRIS from the participants’ point of view.

Compatibility

All the participants (except P16) indicated that they do not have issues with compatibility (Figure 22). They expressed their satisfaction using terms such as: “responsive”, “helpful provider”, “quick”, and “good performance”. For example, P5 said:

“I must say I do not reach core particular issues with the internet or entering data, as soon as you got into the system in the first place, password works, you know, you have the authority to be going into that part of the system, then I do not have any particular memory about that”.

This deviates from what P16 noted where she is working for very big company (230,000 employees): “I would say probably, it can be quite slow because there's so many people who can use it”. This situation is unsimilar to P11 who also works for a big company (20,000+) but has not encountered any compatibility issues:

“See, I’ve been working this company for a very long time. OK, I’ve not seen the system being changed at all, so maybe the top management is OK with the system that’s there. Or maybe they didn’t find something else to replace it, as an employee I’ve been using it comfortably. Never had any issues, no complaints, so, the top management has not decided to change system so I think it should be OK”.

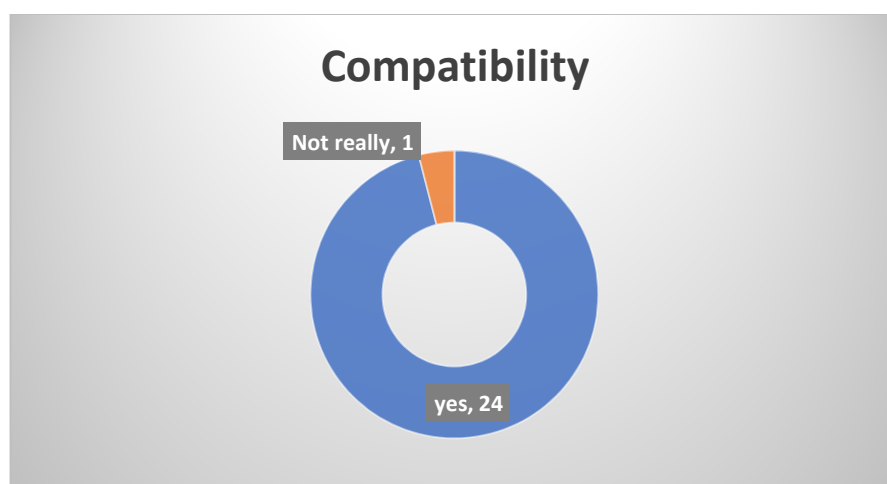


Figure 22: Compatibility

In conclusion, in terms of the technical dimension, none of the participants faced compatibility issues in their HRIS systems. The participants expressed satisfaction with the responsiveness and performance of their HR software. Moreover, the participants reported no significant security issues that could impact on the use or usefulness of HRIS. However, while all participants acknowledged the importance of integrating HRIS with other existing software in their companies, few of them had enjoyed the benefits of such integration. The next section focuses on the organisational dimension findings.

6.4.3.2 Organisational Dimension

The findings of the organisational dimension covered two factors: top management support and organisational structure. The responses of the participants towards each factor are displayed in separate sections. The findings of the following section are concerned with the top management support.

Top Management Support

The discussion with the participants (N=17) revealed that senior management motivates the workforce to utilise HRIS (Figure 23). However, the reinforcement of top management was demonstrated by mandatory policies implemented within the organisation. These HR policies enforce the administrative use of HRIS for all employees to book holidays, request training courses, or conduct appraisals. All the participants stated that using HRIS is deemed compulsory and used the terms of "obligation", "not an option," or "mandatory" when making leave requests, for instance. P2 said: "Everybody has to use it for holidays, everybody put their objectives on it, and all line managers use it for the mid-year review and end of the year review. Whoever the line manager is, they have to use it". In the same mandatory scope, P13 said:

“In fact, for any employee who joins us, it's a mandatory for that employee to sit a course. It's only a one-day course to learn about Oracle shortcuts, how to use Oracle properly, how to gain information for their own betterment, how to book different courses as well. How to prove themselves as well and how to communicate with different departments through the system?”.

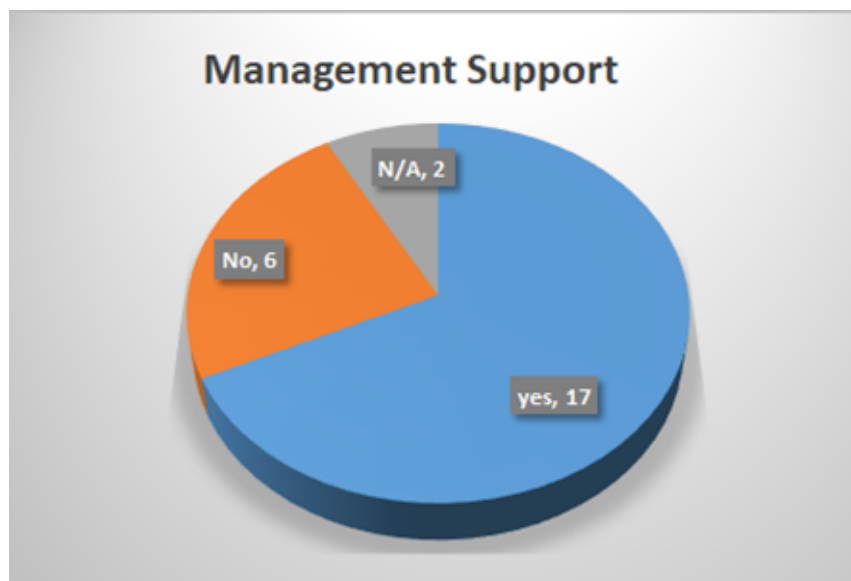


Figure 23: Management Support

In addition to the top management’s support enforced through mandatory policies, P12 stated that top management has supported the “feedback feature” in the HRIS and explained:

“One of the things so cool I would say,..... We have this virtual app, or a virtual bot called “Amber”, the HR system records first month, third month, six month, so they take Feedback. This virtual assistant asks questions, how is your first one month being? How's your three months? What can you improve? Is it good? So, some questions are multiple choice or open-ended, so this gets through the HR

system, the answers from this bot get shared with HR and hence it trickles down and this goes straight up to the CEO and CFO”.

From a different perspective, in response to my question about top management support and encouragement, P21 stated that the top management support to HRIS usage has been realised at his company through emails/notifications and that was due to the benefits that his superiors could gain. He explained:

“Of course, yeah, every time with emails, with the notifications with speaking in the meetings. Yeah, because they can see how many hours staff worked and how many tickets being done. So, they can calculate such figures and do the charts to understand the performance of the company in that week or in that month. So yeah, it's definitely useful for the top management”.

Regarding the negative feedback, some participants (N=6) did not perceive any support from top management and were straightforward in stating that such support was not even necessary. P14 said: “I don't think they care” and P8 added: “The last thing they will think about. They might be not aware of how important the HR is for the organisation”. P5 detailed:

“When it's such a big company, I am not sure the top, top management really have time. That's the point they don't want to be spending time on it. They want system to work and expect them to work, and they will be very supervising and cross if the system causes some real down or problem with the actual running of the business itself”.

In summary, the data shows that the notion of "top management support" for utilising HRIS was a result of the implementation of policies that mandate employees to use HRIS for fundamental tasks, such as reserving holidays and checking payslips. This support does not arise from any necessity for the line manager to gather data to facilitate their business decisions. In other words, top management support was not recognised in terms of insisting on using HRIS for data-based decision making. The following section outlines the outcomes of the second factor in the organisational dimension; organisational structure.

Organisational Structure

Almost all participated line managers (N=23 out of 25) were satisfied with their organisational structure and environment at their organisations (Figure 24). P8 keenly expressed: "We work as a team; we cannot survive without working as a team to be honest. We have team spirit. All the teams want to do their best to achieve the goals of the organisation, they all keen to do that". P6 used the term "social good" and elaborated:

"People are friends outside of work, it is a good culture in that sense. There are two aspects of the culture which we're trying to drive. One is the social good, which is friendly, you feel supported, you feel heard. It is not rigid, if you need something, you just, you know. And then, there is the other aspect of employee retention, excellence, training, and development".

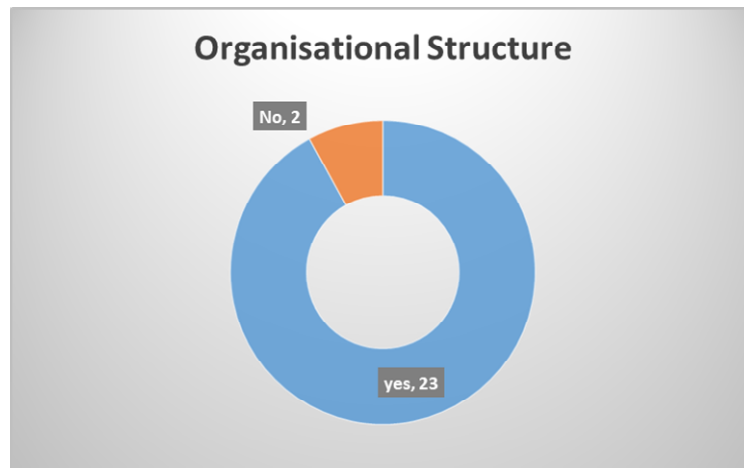


Figure 24: Organisational Structure

P9' statement emphasised the sharing knowledge component and how his company is implementing such culture by saying:

"We run different workshops, different inhouse training session, all employees are invited, sometime there are external presenters. They encourage you to take part in those sessions. They are training sessions and wellbeing sessions as well. It is not only knowledge, wellbeing as well. IT people run sessions for other employees, for example, how to use power point". We communicate, no issues with communication with line managers and directors. It is definitely friendly supportive community".

P23 mentioned some methods that are implemented in his company to enhance employee commitment and motivation:

"We send a weekly email to our employees, you know, just to congratulate them, how they've done, and we include the voucher as well, you know, up to 50 pounds, they can spend it on shops around, whether in the UK or anywhere in the world. Plus, we have a monthly recognition for success where we ask our CEO to take a

picture with the success lifestyle managers.....this picture can be taken and put in the wall of fame for almost for the whole year. We have proper values in terms of our relationship with our stakeholders”.

P2 expressed his point of view about the organisational factor through presenting the internal committee team as the driver for various social events at his company:

“We have intranet, and we share a lot of stories, our internal comm team is very active in that field, they encourage lots of social events, we have a committee for charity events and each employees have five days a year to spend on charity activities even top management they do it themselves, I went several times on these events, so yes we do encourage it”.

Only two participants (P13&P1) had different views and were not really satisfied with the organisational environment and structure. P1 noted: “There is a lot of communication emails coming out about different values and company’s values and team working but not really see a lot of those in real life or in action”. Another participant, P24 was happy with the organisational structure but showed some reluctance to return to the office after COVID working from home measures: “The atmosphere in the office is good, but people are kicking back against coming in to work three times a week, but as we change, people don't like to change the comfort of working from their homes”.

It could be said that most participants were satisfied with their organisational structure and enjoyed a healthy organisational environment. The participants positively reported that their companies adopted positive approaches to maintain enjoyable environments and structure and that clearly reflected on the participants’ insights, feedback, and answers, which included the

terms: “team spirit”, “a lot of policies and procedures about that”, “social events”, “charity events”, “flat structure”, “social good”, “open plan office”, “friendly atmosphere”, “team spirit”, “communication through the dashboard”, “Committee Charity Activities”, “friendly supportive community”, and “healthy employee retention”. The next section investigates the environmental dimension.

6.4.3.3 Environmental Dimension

In this dimension, the participating line managers were questioned about two factors: competitors’ pressure and technological reputation. The participants were asked to explain if achieving competitiveness over their competitors and having a technological reputation were drivers for using HRIS effectively and impacting on their perception of HRIS usefulness.

Competitors’ Pressure

A variety of responses were given when this factor was investigated. Some of the participants (N=8) did not think that competitiveness is one of the reasons to implement HRIS and use it effectively (Figure 25). P21 said: “Not really, no. It can help, but ..., it's not a real reason to have it. It's not because of the competitors, it's because we want to have a system in our own company, yeah”. Similarly, P18 said: “I wouldn't think so. Personally, I wouldn't see that would be a driver”. Likewise, P7 stated: “No, it is to manage the staff, manage the daily work for the company”.

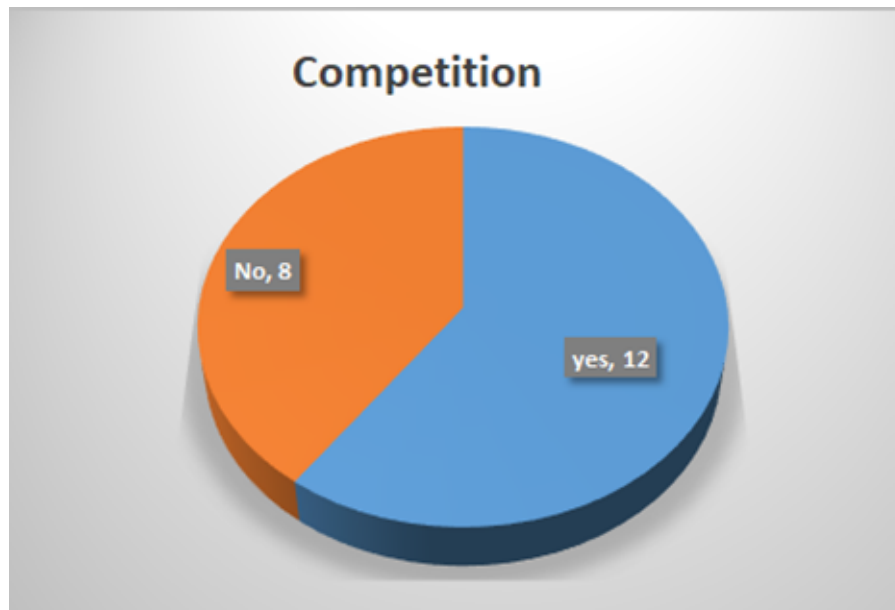


Figure 25: Competition

On the other hand, a group of respondents, comprising twelve participants, expressed their consensus with the idea that gaining a competitive edge over rivals is among the reasons for adopting and utilising HRIS effectively. They highlighted that HRIS can aid in enhancing employee retention, boosting efficiency, improving overall organisational performance and, as a result, increasing the likelihood of achieving a competitive advantage. For example, P9 said: “You are more competitive if you can use efficient system such as HR system I think”. Based on the participants’ responses, it could be said that the majority of the participants have agreed that external competitors’ pressure has been considered as one of the reasons to implement and use the HRIS effectively. However, participating line managers perceived this effective use in an administrative context. The next section displays the findings concerning the factor of technological reputation.

Technological Reputation

The participants provided different answers (Figure 26). For those who did not agree that achieving a technical reputation (N=13 out of 25) was one of the motives for implementing

HRIS and using it effectively in their organisations, different inputs were provided. P9 noted: “It is broader than that”, whereas P6 did not agree and pointed out: “I think it is the practicality of the system”. P5 was a fairly defensive in expressing herself and explained: “Absolutely not when you’re spending billions of billions building things, doing that stuff, the HR system is important but not a consideration in that way”. P2 elaborated:

“I do not agree. For example, I am not sure if you can attract employees by having good system, there are few occasions some employees ask what system you have, may be in finance they will ask you what system you have. If you say Oracle and they have bad experience with Oracle, they might choose not to join you but that is minor element of people joining or refusing to join the company for the sake of the application. It is a small thing”.

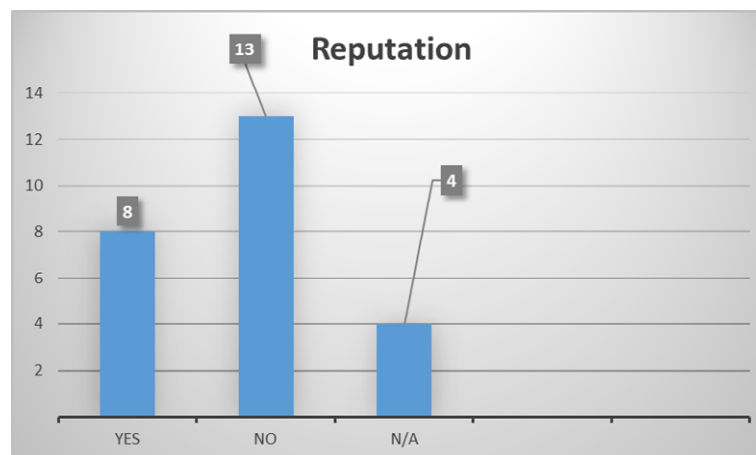


Figure 26: Reputation

On the other side, some participants (N=8) provided different opinions and believed technical reputation to be an important factor in HRIS implementation. For example, P16 said: “I guess yes, you know, some companies do pride themselves on, you know, with best-in-class technology advanced, you know”. It could be concluded based on the participants’ feedback,

that this factor has no major impact on the usefulness of HRIS. A few participants were supportive of the concept that organisations are investing in sophisticated software, such as HRIS, to enhance their technical reputation, which will consequently impact HRIS usefulness. Having investigated the external dimensions that might have an impact on the usefulness of HRIS, the next section discusses the HRM characteristics that might enhance the use of HRIS to contribute to business performance.

6.5 HRM Characteristics

This section presents the findings of the investigation of various related aspects of HRM. The discussion includes issues and concerns related to HRM. To clarify further, the focus is on the findings related to the HR practitioners' characteristics, specifically strategic competency, analytical ability, business knowledge and ethical compliance. The section also presents findings related to line managers' initiatives that emphasise their relationship with HR practitioners, their expectations of the HR role, and the level of empowerment they provide to HR practitioners. The next section focuses on the line managers' initiatives.

6.5.1 Line Managers' Initiatives

Investigating line managers' initiatives revealed the level of enhancement that the line managers provided to the HR practitioners to effectively implement HR practices and activities. The discussion started by exploring the relationship between the HR practitioners and the line managers.

HR-Line managers relationship

Fourteen participants provided feedback indicating that their relationships with practitioners were not being properly maintained (Figure 27). One participant, P7, stated, "We only see them

in the official meetings or any other gathering events they are there, but other than that no”. Similarly, when asked if they had developed a productive relationship with practitioners, P21 responded: “No, because our focus is different from their focus. We are different departments”. Two participants showed a sense of dissatisfaction when P8 complained: “There is delay in processing the request. If the line manager asked about some regulations or some rules regarding specific employee. There is some delay in responding to those requests, we communicate just by email”. Similarly, P9 added: “Lack of communication, we do not know each other very well, huge delay in general. I do not think the relationship 100% working well”. With a sympathetic tone, P11 used the word “only” twice in his statement and commented: “They’re reachable only when we need them. Yeah, they are not reachable as in they’re not in front of me, and only when I need them”.

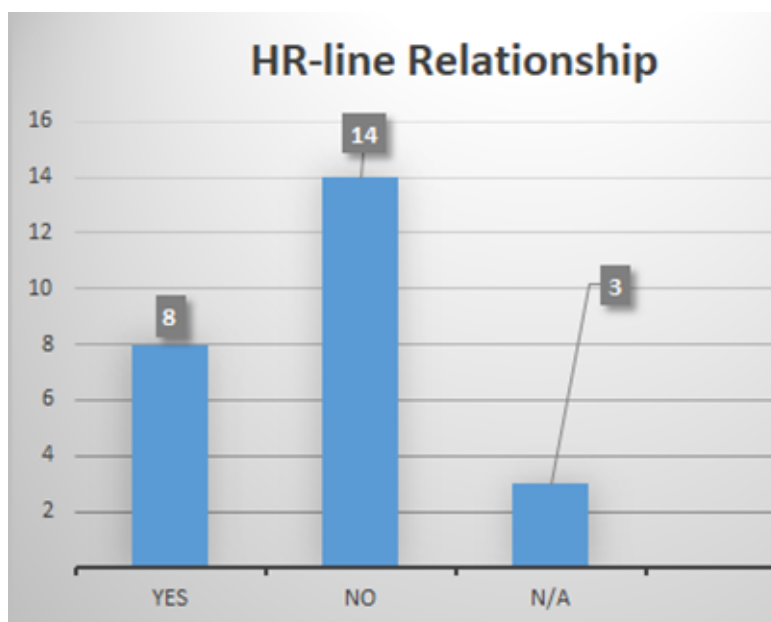


Figure 27: HR-Line Relationship

Participants P5, P17 and P18 noted that in big companies, maintaining a good HR-line relationship is most likely unachievable. P5 in a short sentence stated: “We do not know the people at all in HR anymore, quite often in bigger companies at least”. It is important to

mention that investigating this factor was not easy and it required from me a lot of effort to put the participants at ease to speak. P17 asked me not to share her feedback and explained:

“OK, in the big company that I worked for, it was probably like they would reach out to me on a quarterly basis, but so that's not very often and it was much more bureaucratic. If I needed to get in touch, it was very process focus. ... Yeah, in the small company, yes (good relationship), in the bigger company no”).

P18 gave a hint at the end of her statement that the human element is missing. She noted:

“I don't remember having a relationship with an HR. I don't remember ever meeting an HR person and like in the 15,000-employee company..... I just received an e-mail from them with my contract. That was it, and there was a platform online where I had to track my training, my like onboarding training, but again, it wasn't.... there was no person behind it”).

One of the participants (P6) used the term “hate” when she explained the relationship with the HR: “I think we do not have good relationship with the HR, our managers hate communicating with them. So, I believe there is a slightly toxic culture within the HR department”. The discussion escalated with P13, who openly tackled the authority element and explained:

“Good question. If you ask the same question to any of the HR managers, they will talk huge about: ok we like to delegate authority power as well as responsibilities to different levels. But in reality, that's not the fact. If they give you some responsibility, authority is missing. Or they give you some authority at a very high

level that responsibility factor is not there so, so what HR says is one thing and what's happening in reality on the ground is quite the opposite”.

In summary, the data shows that the HR-line relationship is official or limited and different terms were been used to describe this unstable relationship, including: “disconnection”, “no involvement”, “no connection”, “gap”, “not at all”, “not really”, “limited to official meetings only”, “not visible”, “delay in responding”, “no regular meetings”, “official meetings only”, “unknown people”, “communications through emails only”, “lack of communication”, “very limited”, “very minimum” and “no business communication”. The findings can be concluded with P1, who clearly used the term “gap or disconnection” and said:

“I always see there is a gap or disconnection between HR and management. HR normally get involved when there is an issue or someone complaining or any concerns, then HR will get involved but they are not really involved enough in developing people, supporting the business to improve business and people’ skills and career progression”.

On the other hand, eight participants described the relationship as productive, very good, and healthy. The terms included that the HR practitioners were “visible”, “approachable”, “work very closely”, “reachable”, “chatting” and “close”. In response to my inquiry about the implementation of HR activities by line managers, and the availability of HR practitioners, P23 explained:

“We actually, you know, playing big role in in terms of these responsibilities and for example, you know, update and log in absence, doing interviews, going through,

you know, uh, teams' conflicts and all of that. So, we take a lead in terms of how we deal with these parts of the business..... Yeah, they're all around and we have a regular meeting with them as well. So, I have twice a month, I have one dedicated HR specialist that I can, you know, we have regular meetings just to see the progress of my team and if there are anything I would, you know, require assistance with”.

P2 said: “They are visible. They are easy to reach and easy to talk to..... I think they are really nice. They know what they are doing, they are expert in their fields. They are approachable”. However, although P19 provided positive feedback, he did not generalise the case and commended: “I think at least within my department, we've got a good relationship with our HR business partner. If it was resourcing business partner for example, then we have to contact them because it's requirement from our side”.

It is crucial to note that the findings indicated that the majority of participants were dissatisfied with their interaction with HR practitioners. Furthermore, it was essential to bring up that the devolution concept has been tackled mainly through focussing on the participants' relationships with the practitioners which should be productive and well-maintained to ensure successful devolution process. The data shows that this relationship needs to be improved. The next section presents the various forms of empowerment provided to HR practitioners and the corresponding findings.

HR Practitioners' Empowerment

Based on participant feedback, it was found that most line managers (N=16 out of 25) have provided limited support and empowerment to HR practitioners (Figure 28). This is because HR practitioners are not typically involved in the decision-making process or business

meetings of the lines. One of the participants, P5, clearly presented the debate about this point, empowerment, and explained: “I remember, it was actually a big discussion whether HR was even sort of at the table of the top leaders, or HR was just this service provision that should work”.

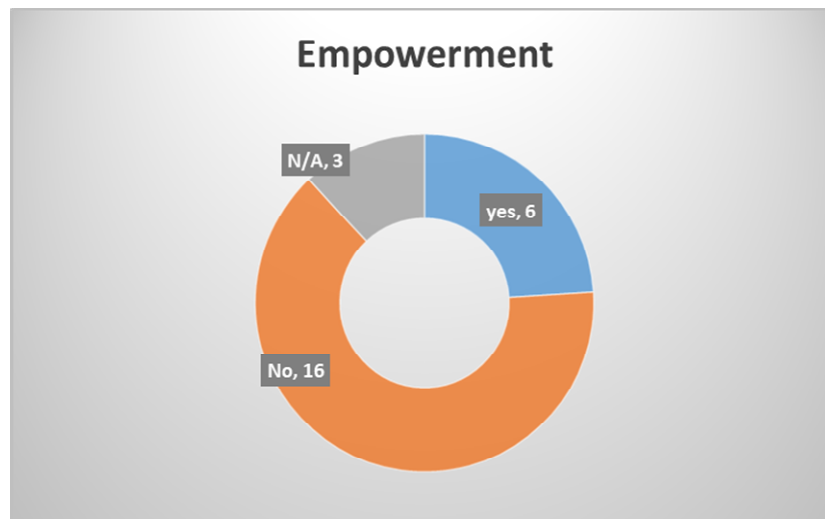


Figure 28: Empowerment

Several participants offered brief comments to demonstrate their position on the controversy. For instance, P8 clearly stated: “We do not invite them. They are not part of the business decision making at all”, while P13 noted: “They don’t have a regular meeting with us, unless there's a problem”. P16 entirely rejected the idea of including HR practitioners in business meetings and said: “No, they don't need to be in our business meeting”. P11 was particularly straightforward, stating that: “There are limitations in terms of how much of, let's say, accountability or how much authority they have. Their authority is so limited”. P18 elaborated her answer by refusing the involvement concept unless there is a need to do so. She explained:

“No, but I don’t see or sort of agree with the fact that they would have had to be, like a specific mean or a specific purpose for them to be there. So, for example, if there was like a debate to somebody was underperforming, or there was a specific issue that was under the realm of HR, then yes of course they would be invited. But

if it's like a technical brief meeting then I don't really see the point of them spending their time there, unless again there's a specific purpose like for example, if they were to say, look, we cannot recruit properly because we don't understand the work well enough. Is it possible for us to attend some meetings so that we understand when the job has to be filled so that we can recruit for it. If somebody approached me that, I wouldn't have a problem doing it. But I never got approached with those types of thoughts".

P17 admitted that there was a gap, but she attributed this gap to shortfalls in the HR function:

"That's a good point. I have not thought about it that way, I think there's an opportunity to do that. So, from a recruitment perspective yes, I have involved them and yes, it was possible. From more the other side of HR, me as being in the same company, no... But yeah, I think there's a gap and I think, as a general thing, that HR function tends to be a cost centre, and I would say my personal experience is that 67% to 70% of people in HR function are very tactical. Perhaps I just thought it was more practical not to waste time with".

On the other side, six participants expressed positive feedback and used terms such as: "meeting attendance", "dedicated business partners" and "informal chats". For example, P19 said: "They are involved in our meetings and calls, so we invite them to our team meetings. So, we discuss HR stuff. We get periodic emails from them". P12 also expressed a positive view of involvement with HR practitioners by saying: "Oh, it's interesting, we even have a sales kick-off. I've never seen that the HR people will also be there, which is completely new...., hence I have a direct line to the head of HR".

Regarding the second part of the question, the participants did not provide valuable information that showed how empowering practitioners would help in effectively using the HRIS and impact the business. Nevertheless, the purpose of the investigation was to investigate to what extent HR practitioners are part of, or involved in, the lines' meetings and their business decisions. Based on the collected data, it could be said that the majority of the participants did not involve their HR practitioners in their business meetings or decisions, which could be considered the second shortfall in the line managers' initiatives. The following section discusses the last initiative of the line managers, which is specifically how the lines perceive the HR role.

Line Managers' Expectations Towards the HR Role

According to the findings, five participants viewed HR practitioners as business partners, while sixteen of the participants saw them as administrators or personnel staff (Figure 29).



Figure 29: HR Role (Business Partner)

This perception was based on their observation of the practitioners' performance and output within their respective companies. For example, P17 expressed a clear opinion as: "Yeah, I see it more in admin and I think that the business leaders are the ones that manage the human

capital. I don't think they are business partners". During the discussion, I felt that the term "business partner" was just a form of "rhetoric", as expressed by participant P13, who stated: "We call them business partners, but I do not think so". Similarly, P14 used the term "claim" and said, "Well, they claim that they're working for the business, but.... I don't have facts and evidence in front of me just to tell you that they're contributing to the business itself or the financial success of the business itself". Participant P11 prefaced his response with the phrase "to be honest" suggesting that he was going to provide frank or potentially unfavourable information. He stated that: "We see them as admin to be honest. We don't see them as they are able to input in terms of giving some business benefits. I think just straightforward thing. For example, if we need people, go to HR say we need certain people".

During the conversation, two of the participants used unconventional terms to describe the HR role. P7 used the term "police officer":

"I do not look at them as business partners". I never see them in the business, I see them as more admin, organisation role. They are like, do not know if it's the right term, but they are like the police officer of the company. They have the regulation; the rules and we have to abide by those rules and regulations. I see them in the admin side in my opinion".

P21, on the other hand, referred to the HR practitioners as thinking of themselves as the "owner of the company":

"I think most of them, they think they are the owner of the company, but they're actually just door holders. They are holding the door, you know. They have power, but their power is different. They just hold the door, open the door, close the door.

But they act like they also own all the property and the door together. That could be a problem”.

P19, commented on how conversations between line managers and HR practitioners would sometimes be unsuccessful:

“Honestly speaking, no, I wouldn't call them as business partners. I would call them as administrative support because if I wanted to go back and check the policy, then I wouldn't go there and take that advice. So, the way I see HR business partners role is someone who can take the problem away from the line manager and act upon that problem based on HR practises, and not put stuff back into line managers quote and say you know what: HR is a grey area. It is a statement we get sometimes from HR. Ahh, it's a grey area and the policy it depends on what line manager wants to do, it's line managers' responsibility to tell us what you want to do. No, I mean if it was our responsibility, we wouldn't have approached you in the first place. We don't want grey area, that's where it is. So, it is more administrative”.

On the other hand, five out of the 25-line managers consider the HR role as a business function. According to P22: “There are some aspects. There can be a business partner because they can offer strategic decisions in the best interest for the business”. P23 revealed that the role is a combination of both admin and business and used the word “indirectly”:

“I think it's; I would say maybe 60 or 70% is an admin role and 30 business. 30% is a business role because they contribute towards the success of the company indirectly. You know in terms of choosing the right people and in terms of, you know, giving support to that team manager. But as well as you know providing

admin assist in terms of providing advice for example in conflict complex situation and so on”.

Expressing a very positive point of view, P2 explained:

“Yes I think we have very good HR department, and we call them business partners, within HR, we have three business partners, each one of them has established partnership with specific department, I work in finance, and we have a dedicated business partner from HR who deals with us, so we work with this lady closely. She attends many meetings like team meetings, every now and then she comes and attends when we have events, she comes and joins us and I personally I had many chats with her”.

P25, in response to my question, he laughed first and provided a logical interpretation of the term “business partner”:

“Well, basically, the thing is, let's get it clear. Oftentimes the concept has been lost with just giving a brand or giving a name, you know. So, whether it's being branded as business partnership or being called administrative, they are embedded in the in the infrastructure of work and in business..... as we know, maybe that's why they call themselves business partners now, because they are really entwined into the full procedure and operation of every business. So, I think that the HR team is really embedded in the pillar of the of the business process, really”.

One of the participants, P18, provided a different opinion from the other participants and defined the HR role as neither admin nor business:

“I see them as I mean, they're workforce management. So, they should be doing learning and development. They should be doing training; they should be doing employee satisfaction. I sort of think it's neither of the categories, it's neither admin nor business strategy. It's more workforce and resource management, so people management. Yeah, so I see them as neither, sorry”.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the relationship between HR practitioners and line managers needs improvement in several areas. The participants did not show a sufficient level of engagement with their HR practitioners, and the perception of the majority of the participants towards the HR role remains within administrative and personnel boundaries. During the conversation, different terms were used to describe the role of HR, such as "admin", "not business partners", "police officers", "service providers", "people focus", "power problem", "door holder", "hiring and firing" and "company owners". These issues may have contributed to HR practitioners remaining within their comfort zones and not making a significant business impact with or without using HRIS. In essence, the findings show that HR practitioners lack practical empowerment. To address this issue, practitioners might need to possess the necessary business capabilities and characteristics to partner with the lines actively. By doing so, the outdated reputation of the HR role can be erased. The next section explores these areas in greater detail.

6.5.2 HR Practitioners' Characteristics

The second area of HRM characteristics focuses on the characteristics of HR practitioners. This HR dimension encompasses four components: strategic competency, analytic ability, business knowledge, and ethical compliance. It is important to note that some participants reported lacking sufficient information about their colleagues' characteristics, and as a result, some of

them refused to comment or provide feedback. This could be due to a lack of knowledge or a reluctance to assess their colleagues' attributes/capabilities. Nevertheless, some participants did provide their insights. Furthermore, most of the participants found it challenging to demonstrate how implementing these characteristics can maximize HRIS usage to positively impact the business. Nevertheless, the main aim of the investigation was to assess the practitioners' skills from the perspective of line managers. The findings of the first characteristic, strategic competency, are presented in the following section.

Strategic Competency

The findings of this question show that the practitioners lack strategic competency. Nine out of twenty-five line managers indicated that their practitioners do not possess strategic competency to align their HR practices with the organisational strategy and objectives (Figure 30). P13 questioned whether HR practitioners possess strategic capabilities: "I think there are many seminars they do to involve employees and inform them about that, but how successful they are, that's another debate". P14 used the word "claim" again in response to my question about the strategic competency and said: "To be honest, they claim they do, but I don't see any evidence of that. So, they do a lot of like.... we do, we do, we do, but we don't see evidence of that". P17 negatively commented:

"Normally the experience they have, has not been operationally strategic enough. Normally they don't come through the ranks through business functions, they come to the ranks through HR only, and a lot of times through admin, so they do not have the experience. Probably they're not well paid. They're probably not well incentivised, they don't have good target in terms of business targets. And I think that's the whole process is broken".



Figure 30: Strategic Competency

Conversely, a group of seven participants claimed that their practitioners possessed strategic competence, but again those participants failed to provide any tangible examples. It could be said that despite the positive reviews, there was a lack of evidence to support their statements. Essentially, if the practitioners truly possessed this competency, it should have been reflected in the participants' responses and feedback. For instance, P3 remarked: "In my particular organisation, yes absolutely. The person he is working at our HR department, he is brilliant, he's got very strategic mind. He is really good". However, there was no concrete evidence provided beyond mere perception.

In summary, the statements above show that there is a debate and some participants could not realise the practitioner's strategic input inside their organisations. The participating line managers reported their perception using terms such as: "No link and alignment with the companies' vision", "no alignment", "not proactive", "Fifty-fifty", and "no evidence". Indeed, P1's comment added to the debate about this strategic characteristic:

“We should have the right level of link between HR and business vision and strategy..... they should do the alignment with the vision and company, there is always a gap, there is always something missing, and the connection is not good as it should be”.

The next section presents the findings of the second attribute, analytic ability. Similarly, the findings revealed lack of practicality and evidence provided by the line managers.

Analytic Ability

Eight participants reported that their practitioners are short of analytical ability, and this is a gap in the HR department (Figure 31). P11 confidently said that: “They are more in people”.

P4 elaborated more:

“So far the HR team I have seen, they are not from business background..... they have not been into how to improve, how to use the business analytics, how to analyse the information in the HR software to get something fruitful out of it. I think they are not trained. This is something lacking”.

However, P17 held a different opinion by associating this analytic skill with senior HR roles mainly. She explained:

“Not at the lower levels typically senior HR role, yes, and maybe some director level people might have that, and I know that because when I saw the HR software which was to help with mental health and stress. That’s what we did, we had HR dashboards for those people who were the stakeholders and the buyers, and they

(HR practitioners) understood it, and it was all about analytic. Yeah, but not mid management and below”.

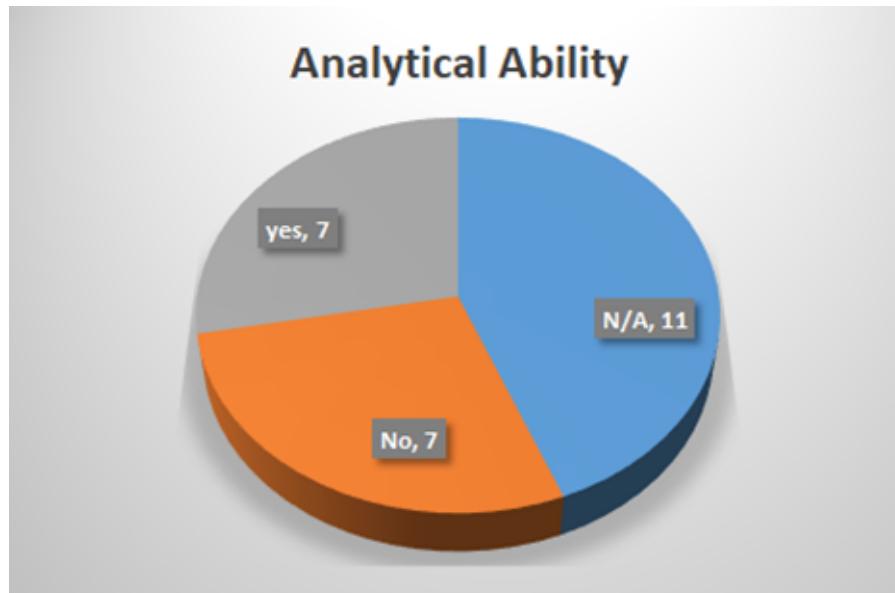


Figure 31: Analytic Ability

Seven positive responses were given about the practitioners' analytic ability. For example, P25 explained:

“Well, in terms of our analytics, what basically they can pull, the data they can pull could be more about training and competence. Now they could pull training and competence. They could pull a number of disciplinarys that have been given before then. They could pull number of compliments. So, they are able to pull these resources together and pull this data, extract all these KPI together about, you know, our competence, learning, our concerns, you know, and of course, queries from people”.

Apart from P25, the lines managers who provided positive feedback about the practitioners' analytic ability were unable to provide examples that show how HR practitioners used statistics and data to drive decision making or influence business choices. P2's comment provides an example of not giving concrete evidence to support the claim that HR practitioners possess analytical ability: "I could judge on the results and when I deal with them I am satisfied. I have seen some statistics coming from HR, it seems to be good".

To sum up, during the discussion, unsupportive terms were captured: "No analytical power", "issues in analytics", "lacking", "I do not think so" and "only senior level". Indeed, P1 described or reflected how the situation is at his company as follows:

"There should be more analytical power to analyse the data.....now the HR systems is cloud base and link multiple areas, and all the centralised data is very important, so they should have more ability to analyse the data.... I think that is some of the gaps in the HR departments. We have very few people in our HR department and their focus is on holidays, salaries, payroll. They should share responsibilities between business and HR. They leave all that completely to line manager".

The following section presents the findings of the third attribute that HR practitioners are expected to possess, which is business knowledge.

Business Knowledge

Nine participants referred to their practitioners as lacking business knowledge (figure 32). For example, P7 offered a definite statement: "They are more in the staff management rather than business management. They are not able to answer questions regarding market or business", while P11 provided an interesting description of the HR practitioners as a "courier person":

“I think if the HR do get involved in the business, I think they can do make a lot of difference.... what I see right now, you know, HR, they act sometime like a courier person. A courier you know the Courier guy giving CVs. We just give CVs and then We see out of 15 CVs they're giving to me, maybe one is going to be what we need for. The remaining 14 is useless, you know. So, the question: Have you really seen the CVs? Have we really seen the description one? We spend a lot of time writing profile of the person. But the CVs that we get are not matching, I think maybe they're not too much connected with the business because of that, they're not performing that well”.

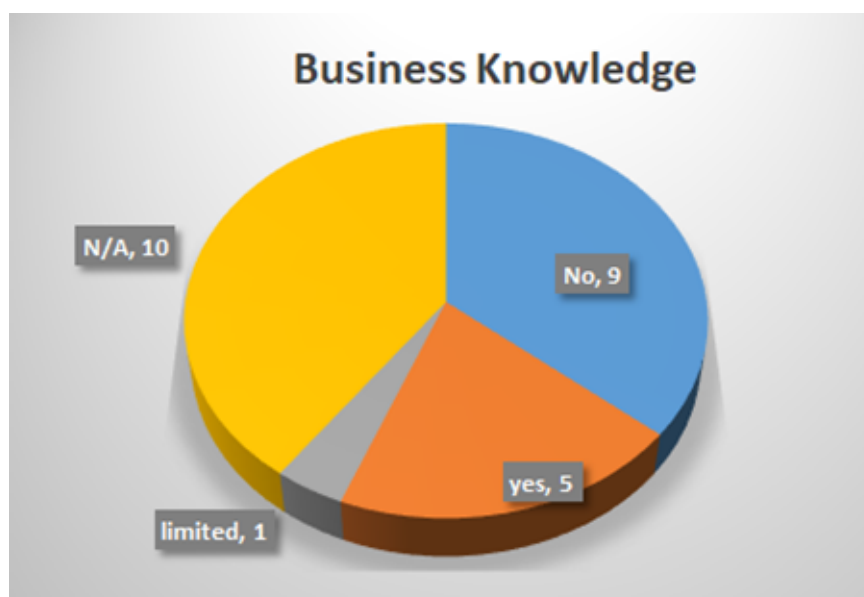


Figure 32: Business Knowledge

The above comments do not differ greatly from how P13 described the practitioners as those who “drive posh cars and getting paid a lot”, he explained:

“It's very strange because, someone who is getting these resources in, getting people in, hiring them up, you expect someone who is highly qualified in terms of engineering. Now someone from HR with no engineering background, with nothing skills like that, that person is sitting on a table, deciding who to hire and who to send back home. So sometimes it looks very awkward that they come here in their posh cars getting paid a lot and you talk to them and then you don't want to talk to them because you say, oh my God, this person there, he has no clue? So, then they ask us, ok, have you sorted out these CVs? Or who is your preferred choice? OK, now if the line manager is really, really good. They'll say OK. I want this person based on these skills, but normally people they say OK we want to hire this person because we met that person in a street where we're living. HR person because that person has limited knowledge to say, ok, that's fine as long as you like him. We don't have any problem hiring him or her”.

On the contrary, five participants pointed out that their practitioners possess a comprehension of the fundamental business aspects. However, they were unable to furnish any statements that establish a connection between this comprehension and real-business examples or events. For example, P2 said: “They know, they understand the business, they understand the core of the business and what we do, they are aware of what is going around them definitely”. This is confirmed by P19 who elaborated:

“They have sufficient business knowledge, so when we have new business partners, joining us. What they do is, they meet each of the teams, understand what they do, what HR challenges they're facing, what business challenges they're facing. I can't talk about the entire company because the company is big, and they have different

business partners. But three of the business partners who work with us, we encouraged them to understand our business. They do the activity. And the ones I've worked with I've worked with at least three within my capacity, they've moved on, and all three of them had a good level of business understanding. So, what we do, what challenges we face, what are in and out, and stuff like that at a level that they need to understand, not every single detail”.

In summary, the discussion did not reveal any indications of the practitioners comprehending their customers' needs, sales strategies, competitors' standing, revenue generation, or stakeholder expectations. Furthermore, the practitioners' limited business knowledge was demonstrated by various terms such as “gap in business”, “no business background”, “no engineering background”, “no clue”, “does not know about the business” and “not too much connected with the business”. The following section presents the ethical compliance findings, the final aspect of the practitioners' characteristics.

Ethical Compliance

All the participants, except P21, reported that their organisations are ethically compliant. For example, P19, in relation to employee right or wellbeing, commented:

“They are the ones who track our well-being records as well. So, are you working excessive hours if you're working? If someone in your team is working excessive hours? Then they encourage line managers to have that level of discussion for well-being, talks and stuff. We have HR business partner to the department. The one I deal with or the last three HR personnels I've been dealing with”.

It is important to mention that the participants refrained from providing specific details about this particular factor but emphasised that their companies uphold ethical standards. The reason for their reticence could be attributed to a perceived reluctance to discuss sensitive topics or to criticise their own organisation's practices. Besides, the participants did not provide examples of how their organisations addressed challenges related to issues such as employee rights, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, recruitment processes, or salary scales. Only one participant (P21) commented that “If the boss said I don't want this person to work here anymore. They will not challenge the boss. They will send him away or send her away, you know. At that time, you understand the situation”.

In summary, the section discussing the characteristics of HR practitioners and the initiatives of line managers concluded by highlighting the lack of essential skills among HR professionals, as well as a lack of the required initiatives of the lines. This shortage of critical skills and initiatives may hinder their ability to effectively partner with business leaders, contribute to organisational success, and add business value. While the participating line managers were unable to explain how these initiatives and characteristics would enhance the impact of HRIS on business, a relationship can still be established between the shortages of these initiatives and characteristics and the limitations of HRIS to impact the business. The findings suggest a link between the scarcity of these HRM characteristics and the limited contribution of HRIS to business performance. Building on the findings above, the following section will detail the relationship between the discussed factors to enhance the conceptual framework and present a revised research framework.

6.6 Framework Finalisation

It is important to emphasise and remind that this research HRIS framework was developed based on the feedback from line managers. They shared their thoughts, views, and perceptions

on HRIS, including its usefulness and ease of use. In addition, their insights into HRM characteristics, business performance, and the external dimensions that impact HRIS usefulness, were combined to finalise this research framework. This section presented two accounts to clarify the perspectives of line managers on HRIS. The first focuses on their general views of HRIS use, while the second explores the utilisation of HRIS in the pursuit of business success.

6.6.1 Line Managers' General Views About HRIS

Most of the participating lines managers' views about HRIS were centred around the administrative context, such as streamlining the HR daily transaction, facilitating efficient onboarding processes, filling vacancies, or controlling travel expense and claims. During the discussion about HRIS usefulness and usage, the participants focused on administrative benefits, which enable them to apply for leave, access their payslips, approve their subordinates' timesheets, and assign employees to their upcoming projects. Most of the general views about usefulness of HRIS revolved around efficiency, enhancing responsiveness, rapid access to real-time data, unified data storage, employee file maintenance, and payroll management.

Regarding HRIS ease of use, the overall outlook of most of the line managers was that their HRIS is user-friendly and easy to use, particularly for accomplishing straightforward administrative HR activities. This is practically evident in various transactions, such as applying for leave, retrieving payslips, reading the latest company news, and signing documents that require acknowledgement. Concerning the security factor, the general views of the line managers confirmed that their HRIS is secure to maintain basic functions related to HR personnel. They highlighted the implementation of various security standards and methods, such as authority configurations and session expiration for login. Besides, the line managers

provided a unified positive opinion about the compatibility of HRIS with their companies' software, hardware and infrastructure. No issues were reported regarding the responsiveness and the performance of HRIS to perform the administrative activities.

Another viewpoint presented by the line managers was top management support, which was implemented through mandatory usage for certain HR activities such as clocking in and out, timesheet submission, and training or travel requests. This support from management was mainly geared towards streamlining various HR administrative activities. In terms of organisational structure, most of the line managers provided positive feedback about the organisation set up, citing open communication, teamwork and knowledge transfer. This was manifested through the utilisation of the HRIS chatting system, employee of the month online voting, and online employee satisfaction surveys. Concerning the external environmental pressure, most participants suggested that the competition with rivals directly imposed the necessity of using HRIS for administrative purposes. They believe that automating HR routine tasks will ultimately contribute to a competitive advantage.

To conclude, most participants agree that implementing HRIS at their companies would enhance efficiency and improve employee retention, especially through implementing the core modules such as personnel data management, leaves, attendance, and payroll. In addition, based on the feedback from line managers, the findings revealed that various factors, such as security, compatibility, top management support, organisational structure, and competitiveness, positively impacted the administrative use of HRIS. However, the business impact of HRIS or its contribution to business success was not fully demonstrated or even perceived by most line managers. The next section discusses this matter.

6.6.2 HRIS in Pursuit of Business Success

This section will present the line managers' views about HRIS usefulness in relation to achieving success in business performance. The association between HRIS and business seems to be uncommon for most businesspeople who hold their own views about HRIS and HR in general. Most of the participating line managers became conservative when discussing the potential impact of HRIS on business performance. Only a few participants recognised the analytic potential of HRIS without demonstrating how HRIS could be analytically beneficial. However, all participants provided perspectives on the usefulness of HRIS, with a mainly focus on personnel and people management. This limited perception of HRIS benefits categorises the innovation as a semi-functional instrument, with reporting and analytic features restricted to results of performance appraisal, attendance, overtime, off/onboarding employees, or employee engagement assessments. Despite the implementation of HRIS in the line managers' companies, some fail to perceive its usefulness in providing HR practitioners with more time to work strategically, partner with them, and contribute to the formulation of organisational strategy and vision. On certain occasions, the line managers advocated the concept of HRIS and its potential business impact, yet without practical evidence supporting their statements, except in a few specific areas such as performance appraisal, timesheets and project management practices. During the discussion, there is a lack of evidence demonstrating an understanding of how the centralised data of HRIS could be transformed into information to assist line managers in making educated business decisions. For example, by reviewing the completed disciplinary cases over a period of time, that caused the company financial loss or business disturbance is a vital practice. Based on this data, both HR and finance managers could forecast a budget to respond to such occasions. However, line managers did not provide similar examples as evidence of HRIS business impact.

By neglecting HRIS data, most of the line managers proved a lack of awareness regarding the usefulness of HRIS in forecasting budgets, monitoring expenses, and lowering the cost of manpower. None of the participants expressed interest in collecting data to better understand the productivity of their subordinates. Most participants did not fully appreciate the potential benefits of HRIS and the impact of data-driven HR decisions on business performance. When it comes to the ease of use in HRIS, participants reported that HRIS becomes more challenging to achieve certain business advantages, such as extracting data from the performance appraisal module or dealing with multi-screen interfaces. Considering the integration factor as a pressing requirement, the line managers revealed the importance of this factor in impacting the business performance, which, at some point, is still not implemented in their companies. They emphasised the need to work under one screen to eliminate the necessity for other platforms and database, aiming to achieve strategic and business objectives. Some of the participants (finance and accounting managers) have directly linked the positive business impact of HRIS with the integration requirements, where the finance system and HRIS are sharing the same database. Although no issues were reported by line managers about the security and compatibility factors, the contribution of HRIS to business performance remains unattained.

From different perspectives, while discussing the organisational dimension impact on HRIS usefulness, it could be deduced that the mandatory implementation of various administrative tasks, imposed by top management policies, lacks encouragement from top management to utilise HRIS in the pursuit of business success, including planning and analysis features. This observed limited support underscores the significance of promoting a more business-oriented use of HRIS among line managers. Besides, most participants reported that their organisations are well-structured with effective policies and supportive environment. However, no direct connection could be established between such positive feedback and HRIS contribution to business performance. In terms of the external environment pressure, participants agree that

database is a powerful source of competition if it is effectively maintained, processed, and transformed into information. However, no evidence was provided to substantiate their statements.

In conclusion, it could be stated that most participating line managers either significantly underestimated the analytical and planning advantages of HRIS data in impacting business performance or did not provide evidence of implementation. Therefore, the relationships between the external dimensions, ease of use, and the perceived usefulness of HRIS are established in the context of line managers' general views about administrative HRIS. More details about constructing the relationships of the conceptual framework will be discussed in the next section.

6.6.3 Factors Correlations

It is important to clarify that the relationships among the factors of the research framework were established based on the line managers' perceptions and insights. They perceived the usefulness more prominently in an administrative context. However, if the focus shifts towards perceiving this usefulness in the pursuit of business success, it becomes challenging, and it is essential to consider HRM characteristics as enabling factors in this respect.

Regarding the perceived ease of use, a relationship has been established between this factor and HRIS usefulness. The majority of the participants in the study expressed satisfaction with the ease of use and usefulness of their HR software, and this relationship has been previously discussed in the literature (Fattahi & Afshar, 2006; Troshani et al., 2010; Jitnupong & Jirachiefpattana, 2018; Safaâ, & Mohamed, 2020).

With regards to external dimensions, the findings of the external dimensions' factors section also reveal a relationship between the security factor and the perceived usefulness of the HRIS. The majority of the surveyed employees expressed a sense of security regarding their HRIS

software, and they also perceived the software as being useful. This relationship indicates that a more positive perception of the software's usefulness is likely when it is perceived as secure, as supported by previous research (Kovach et al., 2002; Lippert & Michael, 2005; Hagan, 2021).

With reference to the integration factor, the findings show that only four participants confirmed that their HRIS is integrated. Regardless, during the discussion, the participants explained that integration is essential to maximise their perceived HRIS usefulness, which is consistent with the previous literature (Bedell et al., 2008; Puspitarini, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to consider the relationship between the integration factor and the perceived usefulness. Regarding the compatibility factor, it is imperative to mention that a relationship can be formed between compatibility and HRIS perceived usefulness where most of the participants' feedback about compatibility and HRIS usefulness were positive. This relationship has been confirmed by Safaâ, & Mohamed (2020).

Regarding the organisational dimension, this study has maintained the relationship between top management support, organisational structure, and HRIS perceived usefulness. According to the participants, top management support is demonstrated through the mandatory implementation of HR policies that require employees to use HRIS for handling their leaves and other HR requests such as viewing their payslips and updating their personal records. This form of management support (mandatory use) plays a critical role in maximizing HRIS usefulness (Troshani et al., 2010; Al-Harazneh & Sila, 2021). The participants also reported that they enjoy their organisational structure and environment, in addition to perceiving their HRIS as usefulness, which suggests a relationship between organisational structure and HRIS usefulness ((Tansley et al., 2001; Yeh et al., 2012, p.209).

From different perspectives, the environmental dimension is composed of two factors, namely competitiveness and technical reputation. The majority of participants in the study emphasised

the importance of competitiveness as a critical factor that determines the usefulness of the HRIS in terms of contributing to competitive advantage. However, they did not show a lot of interest in the impact of the technical reputation as a driver to impact HRIS usefulness. Based on the study results, it can be assumed that being aware of competitors and the importance of achieving competitive advantage will maximise HRIS usefulness. In other words, the finding suggests that there is a relationship between achieving competitiveness and HRIS usefulness, which is supported by relevant sources (Kovach et al., 2002; Burbach & Dundon, 2005; Beadles et al., 2005; Ruel et al., 2007; Hussain et al., 2007; and Aggarwal & Kapoor, 2012). In terms of the relationship between HRIS usefulness and its contribution to business performance, a weak link exists and is represented in the framework by a dashed line. Despite the acknowledgement by participants of the usefulness of their HRIS, they did not demonstrate a clear understanding or confidence in how HRIS could contribute to business performance. This lack of clarity surrounding the impact of HRIS on business performance has been discussed in previous studies (Sadiq et al., 2013; Beadles et al., 2005). A limited number of participants in the study perceived a connection between HRIS and business impact, but only through the implementation of performance appraisal and project management modules. Thus, perceiving HRIS as useful does not necessarily contribute to the profitability or customer satisfaction, since most of the participants perceived HRIS usefulness in an administrative context. Shifting the use of HRIS towards more strategic and business purposes might necessitate consideration of HRM characteristics.

During the discussion on HRM characteristics, most of the participants' feedback was not positive. The absence of HR practitioners, with their presence limited to formal meetings or being available on call, was highlighted as a significant issue. Participants also noted that there were limitations in involving HR practitioners in management meetings and business decisions. This shortcoming was evident throughout the discussion and exposed a problem in empowering

HR practitioners. Additionally, the HR role was viewed as being primarily administrative in nature, with the HR-line partnership concept not being fully established. This suggests that lines' initiatives are lacking practicality and need improvement. A relationship can be deduced between the shortage of such initiatives and the limited contribution of HRIS to business performance. Furthermore, some participants acknowledged that the development of line initiatives could improve HRIS usage and have a positive impact on the business. To activate those initiatives, practitioners, in return, must possess certain skills.

However, according to most participants, their HR practitioners lack strategic competency, analytic ability, and business knowledge. It was emphasised that these skills are important in impacting the business in general; therefore, practitioners possessing them will add value. A relationship could be built based on the link between the shortfalls of those skills and HRIS deficiency to impact the business performance. Participants agree that if practitioners possess these skills, the potential of the HRIS to impact the business is more likely to be recognised.

It is imperative to mention that three factors have been removed from the conceptual framework. None of the participants provided any unethical activities carried out by their HR departments (except one respondent) and that passive behaviour by the participating line managers could be interpreted in two ways. Either this aspect (Ethical Compliance) is a sensitive topic, which the participants are reluctant to discuss, or the British ethical control is strongly implemented at the organisations and maintained by governmental bodies such Trade Unions or ACAS and, by breaching such standards, employees can raise free claims to the Employment Tribunal Court. Accordingly, this aspect (ethical compliance) has been removed from the framework. In addition, the study did not consider the impact of technical reputation on HRIS usefulness, as a limited number of participants regarded this factor as significant. Similarly, brand recognition, identified by a few participants as one of the business success

aspects, has been accordingly removed from the revised research framework. In the light of these relationships, the next section presents the HRIS framework.

6.6.4 Research Framework

The revised framework has been presented in light of the constructed relationships above, and introduced as the research HRIS framework (Figure 33). It is crucial to emphasise that the connections among the factors in Figure 33 were built according to the line managers' input and feedback. As the figure shows, this empirical field-based study has established a quality relationship between factors. It is important to note that this framework is built on the TAM model, which “has diverted researchers' attention away from other important research issues and has created an illusion of progress in knowledge accumulation” (Benbasat & Barki, 2007). This concern about the TAM model has been addressed in this research framework by proposing additional HRM characteristics that could be considered as new insight that helps unlock the potential of the HRIS to impact the business.

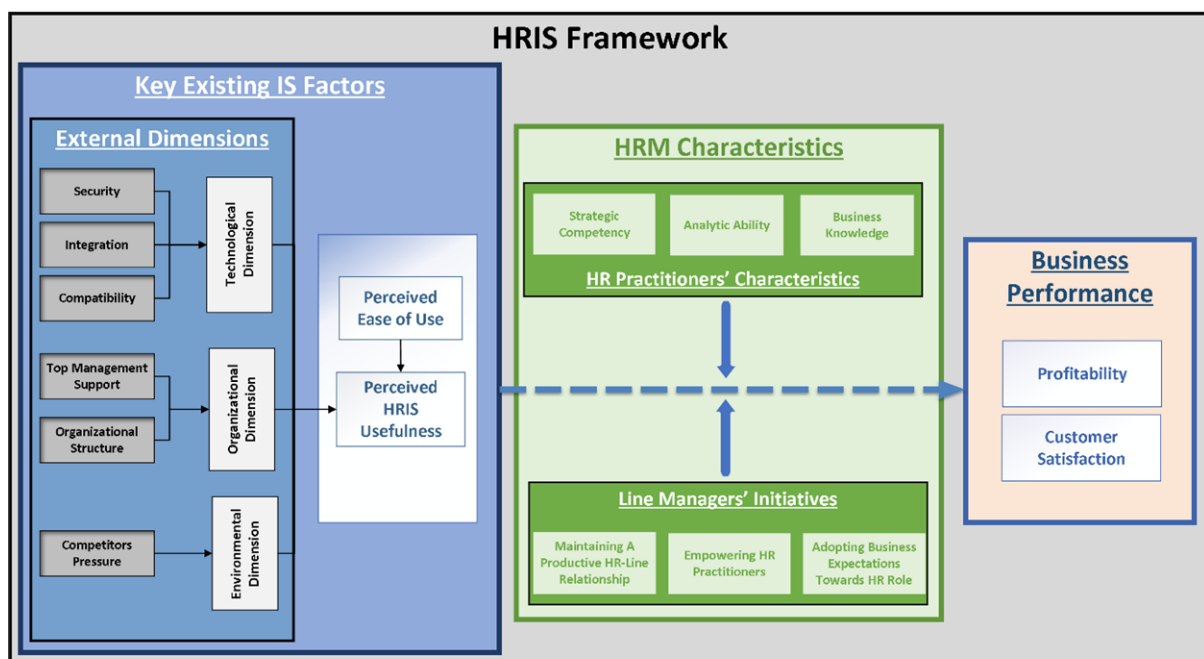


Figure 33: Research Framework

6.7 Summary

The findings of the interviews have been presented in this chapter. The business performance success aspects have been identified in terms of profitability and customer satisfaction. HRIS usefulness has been better understood in an administrative context. The external dimensions and the perceived ease of use have an impact of the perceived HRIS usefulness. The HRM characteristics have been discussed in terms of the line managers' initiatives, as well as the HR practitioners' characteristics. These findings about the line managers' initiatives and HR practitioners are not encouraging. The findings show that the HRM characteristics need to be improved. In addition, the participants agreed that with the prevailing HR characteristics and line's initiatives, the HRIS effect on the business performance would be more realised to impact both the organisation's profitability and customers' satisfaction. The next chapter will demonstrate how the research framework factors could be implemented in a professional context.

7. Chapter Seven: Validation

This chapter focuses on the implementation of the research framework in a professional context through designing a tool based on the factors and aspects of this research framework. This study proposes the utilisation of a Readiness Assessment Checklist tool (RAC) to validate the research framework by implementing its content at one of the British companies and will assess the company's readiness for implementing HRIS. Based on the results of this assessment, training courses and consulting packages will be advised to address any concerns and maximise the benefits of HRIS.

7.1 Introduction

RAC is a structural instrument designed to evaluate the pre-start-up requirements for the successful implementation of HRIS. The adoption of RAC prior to HRIS installation will demonstrate whether the organisation is ready for the change that is associated with a new HRIS implementation. By conducting this evaluation before automating HR activities, the risk of HRIS implementation failure, fear of technology, and doubts regarding change can be reduced. The factors and aspects of the research framework will be represented as checklist points/items in RAC, and the company's preparedness will be assessed against those criteria prior to installing the new product (HRIS). The adoption of RAC prior to HRIS installation will demonstrate whether the organisation is prepared to deal with the change that occurs with a new HRIS implementation. It is critical to note that RAC could be utilised by a variety of people, including the HRIS sales team, to ensure that their clients are ready for the HRIS installation. In relation to the sales team, it is relevant to note that one of the interviewees indicated that their HRIS is not the best quality software, and that they are unsure of who is to blame. P 2 mentioned:

“Why they have not noticed that it is not the best system, I do not know. May be the provider has very good sales team who convinced us that all those functionalities would work nicely”.

Therefore, it would be more useful if an HRIS provider used such tools (RAC) before the HRIS installation to ensure that a pre-checking phase has been carried out before supplying the client with the log-in information so that they could begin using the platform. It is also recommended that business owners/managers or HR practitioners who are interested in implementing HRIS at their companies use RAC in addition to software vendors.

With regards as how to implement RAC, it would be more effective to perform onsite face-to-face implementation with the relevant people at the organisation, instead of sending the tool to be implemented by email or conducting an online method session to complete the feedback. This onsite face-to-face implementation with the organisation’s relevant people will help the evaluator to understand the issues under investigation, and how to eventually deliver a detailed tailored report.

Implementing any new system requires the consideration of pre-adoption determinants. This initial step is crucial for companies to assess their existing competencies, policies, and communication channels. In certain cases, the use of professional websites that compare and rate various HRIS providers can be beneficial. However, it is still necessary for organisations to implement RAC to identify any deficiencies and determine how to address them prior to software installation. The next section focuses on designing RAC measures/items in accordance with the research framework components.

7.2 RAC Design

This section discusses the items that were used to design the tool. The items/checkpoints are constructed in the light of existing literature or developed based on the interviewees' feedback and language. The interview participants provided practical and technical language which helps with the tool creation. It is imperative to mention that some HRIS providers have previously used different pre-implementation checklist items at various companies to include, for example, scalability, infrastructure, functionality, compatibility, and cost (Kovach et al., 2002, p.47). However, those tools do not consider the HRM components mentioned in this research, which impact the HRIS's ability to contribute to business performance. This tool considers certain HRM characteristics, which contain the following 35 items (Appendix 3), as follows:

1-Business Performance

Business success is represented by two themes: profitability (PF) and customer satisfaction (CS). The first four measures were implemented in this section as the following:

- The new HR software helps to achieve customer satisfaction by aligning HR practices to meet customers' needs. ☒
- The new HR software will help the company become customer centric. ☒
- The new HR software assists in increasing net sales at your organisation. ☒
- The new HR software reduces the cost by implementing HR practices and transactions more efficiently and effectively. ☒

The items in this section aim to evaluate the software's ability to fulfil the company's objectives regarding profitability and customer satisfaction. It is necessary to check the elements to raise awareness of the HRIS impact beyond administrative responsibilities. Consequently, the evaluation instrument encompasses these four items to focus on the HRIS' contribution to customer satisfaction (CS) and profitability. (PF) (Appendix 3).

2- Usefulness of HRIS (US)

The purpose of this section is to discover whether the new HR software can meet the company's expectations and requirements. This initial evaluation of the usefulness and potential of HRIS could help to avoid serious issues and frustration further down the line after deploying the software. Item 5 (US) (Appendix 3) is adopted to discuss HRIS usefulness:

- The new HRIS software meets your company's needs and requirements. ☒

This item investigates the companies' necessities, problems, and concerns, as well as assess whether the new HR software features could address these issues. In the light of the research interview findings, the HRIS potential to meet the companies' requirements has a major impact on the perceived usefulness.

3-HRIS Ease of Use (EU)

The purpose of this section is to investigate whether the software is complex or easy to use. The user interface and the software features should be tested to discover how easy it is to use the system, or what training is required once the software is deployed. Item 6 (EU) has been stated as the following:

- It is easy to use the new HR software demo. ☒

The early examination for this item (easiness) is vital and helps the company to avoid future training costs, or employees' resistance to use the application. The research findings show that ease of use has a direct impact on HRIS perceived usefulness. Therefore, implementing this factor in the assessment tool is required before investing in the HRIS, and signing the contract with the HRIS provider.

4-Technological Dimension

To cover this dimension, three statements about security, compatibility, and integration have been considered in the tools.

Item 7 (SEC) (Appendix 3) discusses the security of the software:

- The new HR software has security features that maintain authentication, audit tracking, user management (Admin & ESS (Employee Self Service)), and CRUD. ☒

Item 8 (INT) to assess the integration:

- The new HR software APIs can be integrated with existing software applications. ☒

Item 9 (CPT) to evaluate the compatibility of the software:

- The new HR software is compatible with our hardware and network facilities (for example, internet connection, computers/laptops). ☒

These measures are used to evaluate whether the new HRIS software maintains certain security standards, such as role configuration and audit or history tracking. Secondly, the tool will check if there is potential to integrate the new HRIS with other existing applications at the company. Thirdly, these measures will also evaluate whether the organisation's IT infrastructure (software, hardware, network facilities) supports cloud adoption solutions.

5-Organisational Dimension

This dimension is evaluated due to its impact on the utility of HRIS. To account for this dimension, three factors have been considered. Top management input/support is a key factor in HRIS implementation. Items 10 and 11 (Appendix 3) will be used to assess the top management support (TMS):

- Top management is aware that automating HR practices at our company is important. ☒

- Top management is willing to allocate adequate resources for the HRIS use (for example, fingerprint/facial recognition or QR for tracking attendance, server provider's cost, and workforce with the required skills). ☒

The support of senior management is vital for the successful adoption of HRIS. Examining these metrics will reveal the extent to which senior management is committed to the success of the HRIS initiative. The second element of the organisational dimension to be evaluated in RAC is the organisational structure (ORG), items 12 and 13:

- The environment at our company is healthy and positive and I am satisfied with our organisational structure, collaboration, and communication. ☒
- Employees at our organisation share knowledge through training courses and employee rotation schedules. ☒

The discussion includes points related to the organisation's values, collaboration, teamwork, sharing knowledge, flat structure, and employee interaction strategies.

6-Environmental Dimension

This dimension will cover the competitor's pressure (COP) factor to assess where the company is positioned regarding HRIS implementation. Items 14, 15, and 16 are used as follows:

- Competitors use sophisticated applications to manage their workforce transactions (for example, online assessment training courses, fleet administration). ☒
- Competitors have smart recruitment solutions that help fill vacancies efficiently and quickly, and attract job seekers. ☒
- Competitors have automated most of their HR practices, transactions, and services. ☒

These three measures will help assess how competitors manage their HR services, and what is required from the company to compete in reference to HRIS.

7-HR Practitioners' Characteristics

The purpose of this section is to assess practitioners' attributes and the skills as the results of this evaluation have an impact on HRIS effectivity. In other words, this evaluation helps predict the extent to which HRIS features could be effectively utilised to impact the company's business. The first HR practitioner aspect is the strategic competency (STG), which is evaluated by item 17:

- HR practitioners successfully align and integrate HR practices with the organisational objectives. ☒

This measure assesses the practitioners' ability to integrate the HR practices with the organisational objectives and goals. The second HRM aspect of the practitioners' characteristics is analytic ability (AAB), where three measures (18, 19, and 20) have been used in RAC, as follows:

- HR practitioners provide data to influence business decision making at our organisation. ☒
- HR practitioners use HR analytics to predictively identify business problems and propose solutions based on relevant data. ☒
- HR practitioners can interpret statistics and numbers professionally. ☒

Assessing practitioners' analytical ability shows the extent to which practitioners enhance the company's decision making, as well as predicting potential issues in advance based on HRIS data. The third aspect of the practitioners' characteristics will assess the practitioners' business knowledge (BKN) by designing the following four measures (21, 22, 23, and 24):

- HR practitioners have a good understanding of company products and services, competitors, customers' needs, and shareholders expectations. ☒
- HR practitioners can talk business, demonstrate the return on investment, and prepare budgeting. ☒

- HR practitioners can identify risks and problems that are central to the business processes, and how such problems could impact business performance. ☒
- HR professionals can anticipate sales opportunities and generate HR solutions. ☒

Assessing the practitioners' business knowledge will demonstrate to what extent they are likely to be willing to utilise the HRIS features, specifically the reporting service, to anticipate solutions for business problems or opportunities.

8- Line Managers' Initiatives

The objective of assessing the initiatives of line managers is to determine their approach to company practitioners. In other words, the objective is to determine whether the line managers are sufficiently proactive to support HR practitioners and their developed HR practises. Those initiatives must be evaluated because of their effect on HRIS effectiveness. The initiatives are categorised according to three factors. The first aspect relates to the relationship between HR and line managers (HLR), with five measures (25 ,26 ,27, 28, and 29) as follows:

- The boundaries between line manager's responsibilities and HR practitioner's tasks are not well defined. ☒
- Line managers do not treat delegated HR responsibilities seriously enough. ☒
- Line managers believe that HR practitioners are reluctant to delegate HR tasks. ☒
- HR practitioners are perceived as possessive data owners and withhold employee data from line managers. ☒
- HR practitioners are isolated, and we do not feel their presence among us. ☒

Assessing the above checkpoints will determine the relationship that practitioners and line managers maintain. In other words, investigating the quality of this relationship helps predict the extent to which line managers and practitioners cooperate, which will impact positively or negatively on HRIS utilisation.

The second aspect relates to empowering practitioners (EMP). Four items (30, 31, 32, and 33) have been designed in RAC to assess practitioner involvement and contribution to decision making.

- The HR presence is welcomed at line management meetings. ☒
- There is a strong top-down culture that is shaped by large egos; this negatively impacts practitioners' ability to perform. ☒
- HR representation at board meetings is limited or non-existent. ☒
- HR professionals are not sufficiently involved in business decision-making. ☒

Assessing these points will determine the level to which HR practitioners are empowered, and the level to which their input is appreciated at the company. The final aspect of the line managers' initiatives relates to the line's expectations of the HR function (EXP). Two items (34 and 35) have been devised to assess the perception/expectation of line managers regarding the HR practitioners as follows:

- HR practitioners are primarily viewed as back-office employees by direct managers. (administrative activities, paperwork etc). ☒
- HR practitioners are business partners at our company. ☒

These two measures evaluate the mentality adopted by line managers towards HR practitioners' roles. According to the findings of the interviews, deficiencies in the HR practitioner characteristics and line initiatives influence the HRIS business impact; therefore, these factors were considered in the design of the RAC.

7.3 RAC Implementation

After designing the RAC components in the preceding section, the next stage is to implement the tool. A stone supplier company, named BCC, has the intention to install a cloud HR platform, named Screen HRM, and is willing to implement RAC prior to the installation. BCC

is a wholesale stone supplier with 50 employees. The HR manager, finance manager, and the general manager were interviewed separately at the BCC offices by me. Access to the HR software demonstration and mobile application was granted to the relevant BCC participants. The demo helps the company gain initial thoughts about the software and demonstrate its functionality. In addition, the demo allows the relevant participants to gain some knowledge to provide their statements in response to RAC items. It is important to highlight that BCC granted approval to implement this assessment tool prior to the installation, and an onsite visit was arranged. During this visit, the relevant participants at BCC were keen to report their HR and business problems/issues in the view of the RAC checkpoints. The main points were noted and an evaluation report was issued, which will be presented in the following section. The evaluation process followed a structural order, starting with assessing the company's business success objective.

1- Business Performance

The participants were questioned as to whether the company's desired business objectives of profitability and customer satisfaction are the objectives that the company is keen to achieve. In addition, I investigated whether the new software was capable of contributing to the achievement of those objectives. In other words, as well as the administrative benefits that HRIS would deliver, I wanted to discover if the new HR system would be capable of impacting the business. It is quite important to mention that I was aware that the users of the demo would not be able to provide valuable feedback at this early stage (before the installation) regarding how HRIS will function to impact objectives such as profitability and customer satisfaction. Regardless of this difficulty, it is essential to investigate this matter (HRIS business impact) early on, and raise management awareness about this matter. Therefore, I questioned participants as to whether they had tested the effectiveness of the software's reporting and

analysis capabilities, which enable them to make profitable and customer-satisfying business decisions. The results of this investigation are presented in the evaluation section of this chapter.

2- HRIS Usefulness

Individual interviews were conducted with BCC participants to determine if the new software met their needs and expectations (perceived usefulness). The utility evaluation considers whether the new software can address the company's issues and concerns. It was challenging to explain all issues in this interview; thus, the essential criteria and demands were considered with less emphasis on the details. Although the software is not yet live, those involved have their first impressions of HRIS usefulness and were able to disclose various shortcomings concerning the software, which are described in the evaluation report.

3- HRIS Ease of Use

I investigated whether the participants at BCC had evaluated the system's features, such as requesting leave, adding and terminating employees, identifying skills, designing the organisational chart, configuring formal holidays, generating reposts, submitting timesheets, and creating training courses, etc. Such practices would show to what extent the software is easy to use. The assessment also includes whether the software design, UI, theme, colour, and structure are user friendly and eye-catching. In addition, the discussion includes the amount of training and time required to allow employees to use and navigate through the HR application. The interviewees raised some complexity-related issues by specifically referring to certain features in the software.

4- Technological Dimension

The assessment first covers whether the software maintains certain security features, and whether the authentication measures are secure enough. The role configuration, accessibility, timeout session, and CRUD functions have been evaluated. The IT representative only assessed the item of compatibility requirements (internet, servers, and hardware status), and the potential for the new HR software to be integrated with the existing IS applications at BCC.

5- Organisational Dimension

This section covers two key areas of assessment. First, I examined the top management's stance towards the HR software project, as their support is essential to ensure the successful implementation of the HRIS system. This software will bring significant changes to the company's HR procedures, including the application process for leave, travel expense claims, staff appraisals, and onboarding new candidates, hence, management support is required. Second, I evaluated the company's organisational structure by investigating key factors such as teamwork, culture, reporting methods, knowledge sharing, and employee interaction.

6- Environmental Dimension

This section investigates whether the company is aware of its competitors, what is required to compete with them, and what HRIS has been used by them. Being aware of how competitors handle their HR activities will provide guidance for what should be implemented to compete.

7- HR Practitioners' Characteristics

During the interviews held at the management offices, questions were asked to determine whether BCC HR representatives had maintained alignment between HR goals and overall business objectives, including recruitment, training, health and safety competence, and more.

In addition, the assessment includes practitioners' abilities to analyse HR data and provide measurable evidence to support decision-making. To make it clear, I gave the managers an example of how HR practitioners could provide data regarding employee turnover to identify trends and patterns to understand why employees leave the company. This section has also assessed the HR representative's business knowledge, such as his involvement in forming sales and marketing strategies rather than implementing it. The assessment also investigated whether practitioners had a say in matters such as balance sheets, risk and crisis management, and budgeting control. Interviewees' feedback was documented and will be presented in the evaluating report section.

8- Line Managers' Initiatives

The assessment in this section was about whether line managers provide a productive HR-line relationship, empower the practitioners, and adopt business expectations about the HR role. Both HR and the line representative were informed that the purpose of investigating this area is to highlight any issues and rectify them rather than reporting the details and blaming certain parties. It is essential to note that assessing this sensitive area at BCC was difficult, as RAC's assessment language is cosmetic-free. In other words, the checkpoints were direct to the point regardless of how that may sound to the practitioners and the lines. For example, regarding the empowerment section, the term "large egos" was used to assess if the lines have adopted such approaches. I have asked frankly if the lines see the practitioners as "back-office employees" and "possessive people" unwilling to share the data with the lines. Both the lines and the practitioners have been asked to provide objective feedback, as this will aid in avoiding the identified obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of the HRIS.

7.4 Evaluation Report

It is essential to note that I received permission from the BCC managers who participated in the evaluation to include their concerns and issues in the evaluation report that will be sent to them and the owner of BCC. They have confirmed that their superior is aware of the issues they are facing at the company, and they maintain a friendly transparent relationship with him. The evaluation report starts with an introduction, followed by eight sections, as follows:

Introduction

This report's objective is to provide a description of the BCC's readiness for the new HRIS implementation as well as some recommendations. This assessment is intended to help BCC improve its readiness by overcoming the challenges that the company currently undergoes, as well as meeting the standards required for the new HR software successful implementation. This evaluation report consists of eight sections, and a brief description about each section is presented individually. Furthermore, each section will conclude by stating what steps must be taken to resolve the issues (recommendations). These required actions are recommended training courses, seminars, workshops, or consultancy packages. In light of the RAC assessment, the main outcome statement about BCC readiness status is that BCC is familiar with cloud applications and has previously streamlined various workflow/operations by implementing IS technology such as QuickBooks, CEM, RAM (fleet tracking) and Credit Safe (company credit reports & compliance screening), BCC is eager to move forward and sign a one-year contract with the HR software vendor (Scree HRM), taking the evaluation report's recommendations into account.

1- Business Performance Assessment

It was agreed that achieving customer satisfaction and profitability are two of the main objectives that BCC aims to achieve by investing in the new HR software. The efficiency that HRIS would create by reducing the cost, avoiding errors, saving time, storing data, and centralising information, has been realised by the HR representative at BCC. However, the HRIS reporting services are not actually utilised/tested yet by the company.

Recommendation

The company must learn more about the reporting capabilities of the new HRIS and what statistical and analytical reports can be generated. The reporting services have not yet been thoroughly tested in order to determine various features such as filtering dialog box, pagination, and data exporting. In addition, it is recommended that the demo alone is not sufficient to clarify software benefits. A presentation about the software's features and reporting services should be requested from the vendor before signing the annual contract or closing the deal with the vendor.

2- Usefulness Assessment

The new HR software has features that could meet BCC requirements, including attendance tracking, leave management, and employee timesheet management. The software is dynamic, allowing users to customise certain pages by adding extra input fields in the employee page. The HR practitioner revealed that through the new HR software, the company's documents and procedures could be stored in one place and accessed remotely by users with configurable levels of accessibility. However, some of the required data is currently unavailable, such as employee contracts, job descriptions, employee handbook, organisational structure, and therefore, further work needs to be carried out in these areas. This is identified as a significant issue. Specifically, the discussion reveals that many of the organisation's procedures are

missing or outdated due to a variety of factors. This represents a significant challenge that needs to be addressed promptly. The new software is expected to enhance communication among employees through its announcement and news features.

BCC requirements are classified as administrative and HR transactional everyday activities which the new HR software has the potential to respond to. HR and management representatives have raised various concerns. The HR representative mentioned that BCC has multiple sites, and employees such as sales representatives must sign in and out at various sites, which might be a shortfall in the system to track employee attendance at multiple sites. The new HR software addresses this concern by incorporating a geolocation service (based on Google) that allows employees to sign in and out multiple times a day and at various locations. The finance manager requested an email notification when self-employed employees submit timesheets that require his approval, which the new system will provide. Overall, the initial assessment for the new HR software utilisation is positive, and it is anticipated that its features and functions will meet BCC's expectations, such as gaining accurate transactions, live access, fast HR processes, and reducing the frustration of waiting time.

Recommendations

To activate the implementation process, BCC needs to complete several preparatory steps, including the creation of procedures, HR policies, job descriptions, job titles, and employees' contracts and KPIs. Besides, BCC must ensure that information relating to working hours, employees' employment status (full-time, part-time, self-employed, contractors), and company locations/sites is available.

Furthermore, BCC must compile a list of all employees' names and personal information and send it in CSV format to the software provider for data migration. To begin using the software, all employees must install the software mobile app from either the Play Store or Apple Store. If necessary, BCC may seek consultancy services to ensure that all required information

(business procedures, HR procedures and policies, etc) is prepared to set up the software and perform the necessary configurations.

3- Ease-of-Use Assessment

Based on their BCC user experience, the HR and finance representatives found it simple to log in and navigate through the demo modules and functions. Generally speaking, Screen HRM software embraces simplicity where having previous software experience is not a condition for application use. The demo software design, structure, and colour is visually attractive. The relevant participants agree that the new HR software has an easy-to-navigate interface that requires minimal explanation for use. They have reported that it is easy to learn, use, understand, and deal with the new HR software. Feelings of frustration or confusion were not reported. However, they have referred that the Help Manual or tutorial videos are still required to understand certain features. In addition, it is reported that figuring out “the disciplinary process” or configuring “the users’ role” or assigning “company’s asset” is not straightforward. The HR representative also mentioned that many part-time employees work flexible hours that change on a weekly basis, and therefore it would be confusing to create multiple work-shifts and assign the correct shift every week to the relevant employee. In response to this issue, the HR software provider has resolved this issue by adding a feature that allows the manager to customise employees’ working hours individually without the need to allocate the employee to the company’s fixed working hours or the company’s fixed work shifts. In other words, setting the method of employee tracking attendance becomes easier by adopting one of the following options: company working hours, specific work shift hours, or individual customised working hours.

Recommendation

It is necessary to request help materials directly from the software provider. In addition, online or in-person training by the vendor is essential to set up the application and define the users' role within the Admin Module. Furthermore, step-by-step support is required from the HR unit to demonstrate to employees how to use the new application and avoid any confusion that may occur.

4- Technological Dimension

The HR software maintains certain security constraints such as log in credentials, password creation authorisation, audit tracing features, and the SSL secured domain. BCC is willing to host their database on AWS server. It should be considered that the HRIS provider indicated that hosting space is limited and that additional 1GB storage increments will be charged at GBP 32.00 per month based on the proposed offer. The internet connection speed at BCC is sufficient for downloading purposes, and software performance and responsiveness are unaffected. The company's hardware equipment (laptops and computers) are compatible with the cloud-based software. The technical team at Screen HRM confirmed that the new HR application is integrable subject to the third-party APIs (QuickBooks, Outlook, Slack). At the present time, the company is not interested in integrating their new HRIS with any of their existing software until they are fully confident with the utilisation of the HR software. No concerns or issues have been identified in relation to this factor.

Recommendation

Integration with the accountancy application is recommended as this will facilitate the payroll process in relation to the timesheet module in Screen HRM. In addition, it is recommended to enforce a password expiration period of three months, requiring employees to alter their passwords after a predetermined period of time.

5- Organisational Dimension

The assessment highlights several key findings. First, the top management is not fully aware of the benefits of HRIS. In the discussion with the BCC manager (owner), however, he expresses a great desire to provide support for HRIS deployment, automate HR processes, and urge all workers to use it. Secondly, the organisational culture and structure needs to be improved. Although the HR department is known for adopting an open-door policy, allowing employees to discuss their issues at any time, it is reported that areas such as communication, teamwork, and sharing knowledge need improvements.

Recommendation

The HR manager should provide the top management with weekly, monthly, or quarterly reports that assist in assessing organisational performance such as absenteeism, turnover, employee succession planning, and workforce planning. Such reports will raise top management awareness of organisational performance and enhance them to take the required decisions that improve the environment at the organisation. Conducting an employee voice survey is recommended to measure employee satisfaction.

In addition, implementing an employee rotation strategy is recommend as this will assist in sharing knowledge among employees. In addition, it is recommended to organise workshops that enhance the communication skills of the employees, build a teamwork spirit, and strengthen employee engagement. Besides, it is recommended to firstly establish performance metrics or KPIs to measure the effectiveness of each business process. Secondly, identify opportunities for improvements based on employee feedback. Thirdly, implement changes and monitor results. A consultancy package could be provided to define, monitor, and document BCC procedures. This will help to ensure that the company operates efficiently and effectively, and its process are documented in a centralised repository on HRIS. Such practices will qualify BCC to apply for ISO 9001 or 1400.

6- Environmental Dimension

The feedback in this area highlights that BCC is not aware of what HRIS their competitors have adopted to manage their HR practices. By obtaining various information about BCC's competitors' HR software, BCC can utilise this information to guide their own choices. Implementing an HRIS successfully in a similar business setting can save BCC significant difficulties.

Recommendation

It is recommended to carry out market research to gather information about the HR software adopted by BCC competitors. Purposive market research could be provided to BCC to close this gap.

7- HR Practitioners' Characteristics

During discussion, it was revealed that HR practices at BCC are not aligned with the organisation's objectives. There is a lack of integration between HR activities and organisational goals, and a shortage of data-driven insights that can be used to make informed decisions. This deficit of data-based evidence hinders the management at BCC to set up effective and strategic plans. Additionally, the assessment indicates that HR is not considered a strategic function, and HR practitioners lack sufficient business knowledge to effectively communicate with the company's business leaders. The finance manager noted that the HR unit at BCC lacks the business language necessary to provide metrics, such as the time it takes to fill a specific role, when the need to hire arises. Overall, there are shortages in the characteristics that the practitioners should possess. These shortcomings may impede the successful implementation of the HRIS and limit its potential to contribute to business outcomes, such as profitability and customer satisfaction.

Recommendation

To effectively communicate with numbers-driven functions, such as research and development (R&D), sales, and finance, HR managers require specific skills. To enhance their capabilities, it is recommended that the HR manager attend courses designed to develop relationship building competencies, data analysis, business analytics, statistics for non-statisticians, strategic thinking, and business writing skills. These courses are available upon request.

8- Line Managers' Initiatives

The evaluation indicates two areas for improvement at BCC: communication between lines and practitioners, and clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the line managers and HR professionals. The HR responsibility needs more commitment from line managers, including candidate selection and follow-up on HR policies, such as dress code and safety procedures. HR currently has no presence in line management meetings or business decisions; however, such involvement is necessary to address issues that may affect business operations. The line managers' expectations of HR are limited to administrative duties, which can hinder the effectiveness of HR service delivery and HRIS utilisation.

Recommendation

Consultancy packages can be tailored in this instance to strengthen HR-line manager relationships, and empower practitioners.

7.5 Client Feedback

The assessment feedback is presented in this section. The relevant BCC participants were thankful for the on-site visit and the assessment that helped to identify the issues and concerns that need to be considered prior to granting the licence from the supplier to use the application.

The financial manager at BCC said:

“Although we are familiar with other software at BCC such as QuickBooks, the assessment draws our attention to some points that we should care about before the actual set up phase. The weaknesses about communication and other points will be developed, and most importantly there are some recommendations that we will think about”.

The HR representative commented:

“I read the report and I think this is quite important and will help a lot in using the software effectively. I Think you mentioned a lot of the points that will help our company to focus more on HR in general and the software in particular”.

The BCC director stated:

“We have received an offer. The offer is based on the number of employees and the required modules, but still not sure if it is the best offer for us or not. I think the point about what our competitors use is important.... We will focus on the ideas that you said, and I am sure it will save us a lot of headaches in the future”.

In summary, the positive feedback from BCC about the RAC evaluation report confirms that RAC has pre-checked the readiness of certain critical areas and proposed solutions that require immediate action before going any further with the HR automation process.

7.6 Summary

Implementing RAC could save the business a great deal of difficulty and unnecessary cost. Additionally, the evaluation report reflects RAC's assessment by recommending training courses and consulting packages that address prospective issues and essential requirements.

Johannesson and Perjons (2014) concluded that “Design science is the scientific study and creation of artefacts as they are developed and used by people with the goal of solving practical problems of generic interests”. This study advocates this scientific approach by designing and implementing a tool that specifically addresses the factors that would cause HRIS deficiency. Moreover, implementing RAC has helped validate the research framework since the checkpoints of RAC have been designed based on both the research framework’s key IS success factors and HRM characteristics on one hand, and the findings of the field study interviewees on the other hand. It is imperative to mention that RAC can be used by many parties, such as company owners, business leaders, HR professionals, and HRIS providers. To sum up, this study validates the research framework by designing RAC and implementing it at an organisation. The purpose of RAC is to help raise the flag and warn the company well in advance that certain issues need to be handled early to avoid HRIS deficiency or implementation failure, as well as achieving the required benefits. Before diving into the deep end, it is recommended that a pre-installation checklist be implemented. This will make it simpler to address any obstacles or problems.

8. Chapter Eight: Discussion & Professional Implication

This chapter discusses the research findings in the light of the literature and the research framework. This includes discussing the HRIS contribution to business performance which is the research aim. In addition, the HRIS usefulness and the external factors that impact this usefulness are elaborated. Finally, the line managers' initiatives and HR practitioners' characteristics (HRM characteristics) are explained to understand their impact on the HRIS contribution to the success aspects of the business performance.

8.1 Business Performance Success

As the findings show, most of the line managers (21 participants) defined business performance/success under two main themes: profitability and customer satisfaction. They declared that achieving financial results, high sales figures, workforce productivity, global distribution, business growth, and customer loyalty are the main objectives of the business owners and leaders. Those terms are in line with the common literature's definitions of business success (Ahmad et al., 2011; Jankalová, 2013; Ishaq et al., 2014; Akeem, 2017; Ietnev & Nikolaeva, 2019).

Whether HRIS contributes to achieving those or not, different answers were provided. Ten participants out of twenty-five recognised the potential of HRIS, while the rest could not recognise what has been documented in HRIS studies about the power of HRIS features that help companies streamline their time-consuming administrative tasks and free up HR practitioners to rethink and improve their core HR initiatives to impact the business and become strategic business partners (Mohrman & Lawler, 2003, p.16).

Regardless of the participants' answers (positive, negative or limited) about HRIS and their impact on business, the discussions with the participants revealed that even those who agreed

with the school of thought defining HRIS as a business contributor did not provide explanations or evidence to support their views, apart from mentioning performance appraisal or other automation services that help manage employee personnel activities efficiently. During the interviews with the line managers, there were no insights into how the data exported via HRIS can be analysed and transformed into information that aids in making informed business decisions. This gap in recognising the analytic potential of HRIS has been extensively debated in HRIS research, which has revealed that the potential of HRIS to impact on business decisions is not yet fully realised by line managers (Kovach et al., 2002; Burbach & Dundon, 2005; Beadles et al., 2005; Ruel et al., 2007; and Hussain et al., 2007). While the performance module with its advanced features, such as 360-degree appraisal, may help retain high-performing employees who contribute to the company's profits, the potential of HRIS goes beyond just employee appraisal features, efficient onboarding processes, or expense and claims management.

What is missing in the discussion with the participants is their recognition of the HRIS reporting features that show, for example, the cost and the hours spent on customer care courses and how such figures could be read/analysed in light of customer satisfaction surveys. Line managers should be aware of or open to such information. Their HR departments should conduct conferences/seminars to explain and show how the impact of such training courses on the satisfaction levels of external customers has been measured. This will enable line managers to take appropriate action based on data. None of the HR practitioners reported, for example, that they have identified trends and patterns, based on turnover data analysis, about why employees quit the organisation and shared with them how such information impacted organisational financial performance. HR departments should conduct seminars to expose line managers to information about HR planning based on HRIS skills inventory, HRIS training needs analysis, HRIS succession planning, and HRIS labour demand and supply analysis

(Nagendra and Deshpande, 2014). In other words, it could be said that the analytical and planning benefits of HRIS were notably ignored or underestimated by the participated line managers.

By asking the line managers why HRIS is limitedly used to impact on the business, many reasons were provided, including integration issues, resistance to change, time constraints of the line managers, the quality of the system and its design (Ruel et al., 2007; Bedell et al., 2008).

All the reported reasons are documented factors in the HRIS failure implementation studies and have been identified as existing IS factors that impact the usefulness of HRIS. Few participants reported issues related to HRM characteristics; however, no exact identification was provided about the initiatives that those managers have taken or the skills that are required from the practitioners to be implemented.

This section explores the various insights of the line managers on HRIS effectiveness from a business perspective. It could be said that there was some confusion or ambiguity when the discussion turned to HRIS's business impact. This is in line with what some authors have expressed: that although with powerful HRIS analytics features, companies are in a good position to obtain valuable information that helps in forecasting budgets, monitoring expenses, lowering the cost of manpower, and taking informed business decisions that impact on business, this is still not clearly realised by business leaders (Marler & Fisher, 2013; Parry & Tyson, 2011; Beadles et al., 2005). This lack of recognition of the business impact of HRIS, has been linked to the participants' limited perception of HRIS usefulness, which is discussed in the next section.

8.2 Key Existing IS Factors

The discussion in this section will tackle three main criteria: HRIS usefulness, HRIS ease of use and the external dimension in terms of technology, organisation and environment.

8.2.1 HRIS Usefulness

The purpose of investigating HRIS usefulness was to gain insights into how the line managers perceived the usefulness of HRIS. Exploring the line's perception of HRIS helped in understanding more about the HRIS deficiency/limitation problem. The findings of this section revolved around four points: HRIS usage frequency, line managers' access to HRIS reporting services, HR department reporting services delivery, and the participants' perception of HRIS usefulness.

First, regarding HRIS usage frequency, almost all the participants reported that HRIS usage was mainly limited to booking holidays, conducting employees' appraisal, checking payslips, managing personnel data, approving timesheets and checking employees' availability for projects' assignments. This limited/basic use has been discussed by many authors who revealed that most of the HR software are semi-functional instruments used limitedly by the companies (Beadles et al., 2005; Ngai & Wat, 2006; Hussain et al., 2007; Krishna & Bhaskar, 2011; Marler & Fisher, 2013, Sadiq et al., 2013; and Kavanagh & Johnson, 2017).

Second, the participants noted that the HR department's service of delivering business reports is almost absent or limited to forms of performance assessment, absenteeism, sickness, overtime, new hires, or employee satisfaction surveys. This could be understood in light of what P4 expressed in response to the question about the causes of HRIS limitations in section one. P4 commented on the outdated, old-fashioned HR activities that are still being done by practitioners today. This is in line with what Fallon Jr and McConnell (2013, p.25) argued that

HR practitioners tend to act within their comfort zone of hiring and firing, compensation, employee welfare, and advising management on labour issues.

Third, as the figures showed in the findings, the majority of the participants revealed that their ESS role (Employee Self-Service) is limited or blocked. Although, in theory, HRIS has decentralised HR data where line managers have free access to check, monitor and export data to CSV or any other formats (Mane, 2016; Lischka, 2017; and Rahmayanti et al., 2022), this is still not applicable at most of the participants' companies. The participants did not provide a justification for this blockage. I expected to receive some justifications from the participants for this denied access in relation to HR practitioners' behavioural issues or authority challenges, but that was not the case. The participants did not refer to the authority challenges that Kinnie and Arthurs (1996. p.14) long ago argued: "the use of IT exaggerates these challenges and act as a disincentive to the use of a HRIS, where personnel specialists are not really with allowing the accountants or line managers to have a data access as this will cut out the "personnel middleman or woman" since the use of an expert system to assist line managers in making personnel decisions may undermine the role of the HR specialists as a provider of advice". Possibly, such insights are not reported directly by the participants due to their sensitivity.

Finally, although all the participants reported that HRIS is useful and has provided their companies with fresh insights, they added there is room for "improvement". The fundamental point is that the perceived HRIS usefulness was mainly subject to administrative benefits. These findings were in line with previous HRIS studies, where the usefulness has been recognised in terms of improving responsiveness, fast accessibility to live data, data storage in one place, decentralising the data, record-keeping of employment, payroll administration, automated disciplinary process and efficiency (Gupta, 2013; Nawaz & Gomes, 2014; and Kavanagh & Johnson, 2017). Beyond this administrative usefulness, none of the line managers

referred to the theoretical views of the HRIS studies that advocate the HRIS role in driving the business leaders' decisions to impact the business. A small number of participants (accountants and project managers) reported that they partially use HRIS in their work for payroll and employee project assignment purposes. None of the participants had collected data to better understand, for example, the status of their subordinates' productivity and engagement. None of the participants referred to or highlighted the importance of the retrieved HR data via HRIS in taking informed decisions that impact their business directly. The collected data does not match with what some authors have documented about HRIS since 1990s. For example, Kinnie and Arthurs (1996) considered HRIS as an "Expert Systems applications or decision support systems with unlimited strategic potential". The participants of this study did not recognise that potential yet and how to effectively deploy "data-driven HR decisions". One of the participants P9, (Marketing manager) clearly stated:

"I am not sure how much HR system contribute or actually related to my line of work, for me CRM is more important than the HR system to be honest".

From a professional implementation point of view, HRIS has the potential to impact business and many examples can be provided in this respect. According to some companies, the leave policy does not allow the employees to carry over their annual leave for the coming year, and in certain occasions, some employees are not able to take their annual leaves due to staff shortages or unexpected emergency situations. HR practitioners and finance managers, based on Usage Entitlement Reports from the leave module, can instantly generate the figures that help estimate the cost that the company has to pay for those untaken days off and consider it in their budgeting report. Another example could be demonstrated by the finance manager who can review the actual cost of selected training courses per employee, monitor employee claims and travel expenses, or capture data related to asset and inventory management, such as written

off cars or decommissioned computers. Many elements can be captured and be fruitful for the finance department and help them in preparing profit and loss statements, asset depreciation reports and more.

In addition, it is imperative to mention that the findings of this section showed that the relationship between HRIS usefulness and HRIS contribution to business performance is not solid. The vast majority of the participants agreed that their HRIS is useful. However, the HRIS contribution to business success is not evident yet, as most of the participants see HRIS benefits through administrative lenses. Obviously, daily transactional routine activities are the means to achieving business outcomes indirectly, but HRIS potential is beyond the efficiency of transactional/tactical purposes. Moreover, identifying HRIS as “useful” does not necessarily mean that the HR platform will be used to support business decisions making. In other words, the company that aims to implement HR software is not guaranteed to achieve business impact due to this investment. When HRIS usefulness is perceived in a business context and the reporting features is utilised and aimed at business purposes, then the contribution to business success could be recognised, and a relationship between HRIS usefulness and HRIS contribution to business success attainment could be predictable. However, other important factors should be considered for successful HRIS implementation are discussed in the following sections.

8.2.2 HRIS Ease of Use

As the findings showed, most of the participants reported that that their HRIS systems are easy to use. They explained that their user-friendly employee portals allow them to navigate smoothly through the modules, review and update their information, easily request time off and receive approval, and be up to date with the news of their companies, and this perception is usually associated with HRIS successful implementation (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2017). Some

of the participants noted that their HR software is easy to use with limited training and there was no need to call or visit the HR office to ask about the features once the training has been delivered. However, some of the participants reported that having multi-pages or many interfaces to accomplish one activity through the software, performance appraisal for example, can cause the user to get lost (difficult to use). None of the participants provide examples of what technique, design, or features are required to facilitate the use of HRIS and make it easy to use. For example, different features could be implemented to simplify the software usage, such as wizard style (slider), mouse click feature to open the records, mouse hover feature, dynamic show and hide tables and dropdown token style. Regardless, the participants' feedback was adequate to cover the point under investigation.

To conclude, it is imperative to mention that the findings suggest that there is a relationship between the perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness of HRIS, and this is consistent with the literature (Fattahi & Afshar, 2006; Troshani et al., 2010; Jitnupong & Jirachiefpattana, 2018; and Safaâ, & Mohamed, 2020). The next section discusses the external dimensions that impact on HRIS usefulness.

8.2.3 External Dimensions

This section discusses factors related to Technological, Organisational, and Environmental dimensions. Each dimension and its related factors are evaluated in the light of the participants' findings.

8.2.3.1 Technological Dimension

Relating the conceptual framework to the findings, the technological dimension has three factors which have direct impact on the HRIS usefulness. Firstly, concerning the security factor, almost all the participants (except P20) agree that their HR software are secure. They

are aware that the information/data stored in HRIS applications is sensitive and confidential, as it belongs directly or indirectly to employees' records such as employees' payslips and medical information (Zafar, 2013). They reported that different security measures have been implemented at their companies, such as role configuration, single sign-on, two factors authentication, and IP address identification (Bedell et al., 2008). It is important to mention that there is a relationship between HRIS security and usefulness, as most of the participants agree that their HRIS is secure and useful and that finding is consistent with the IS research (Kovach et al., 2002; Lippert & Michael, 2005; Hagan, 2021).

Regarding the integration factor, according to some participants, their company's HRIS has been integrated with some existing software applications. However, it was challenging to determine why some companies had not implemented integration, whether due to technical issues or top management decisions. Most participants stated that the lack of integration had limited the HRIS usefulness, resulting in a negative impact on its utilisation (Bedell et al., 2008; Puspitarini, 2018). They also agreed that integrating the HRIS with other existing applications would significantly enhance the perceived usefulness of the HRIS. The participants concurred that integration would provide a unified single system, eliminating the need for multiple software solutions and databases, which is crucial. For example, by integrating the HRIS with finance systems, finance managers are more likely willing to use the HRIS in budgeting, asset depreciation calculation, planning, HR cost and much more. Therefore, a relationship between integration and the participants' perception of HRIS usefulness can be established based on the participants' feedback (Bedell et al., 2008; Puspitarini, 2018).

Regarding the compatibility factor, all participants indicated that their HRIS was compatible with their company's software, hardware, and infrastructure. They also reported that their cloud HRIS systems performed well and were highly responsive, with no issues reported. The high-speed and stability of the internet in the UK (average speed of 51.48 Mbps) is an important

element in the technology compatibility (Sebetci, 2018). In addition, most of the hardware equipment vendors supply the UK market with high-performance processors, motherboards, and high-resolution screens necessary for cloud software applications. The availability and affordability of this equipment, coupled with the internet's reliability, have positively impacted on the participants' perceived usefulness of HRIS (Safaâ & Mohamed, 2020). In the following section, the organisational dimension is discussed.

8.2.3.2 Organisational Dimension

This section will discuss two factors in the organisational dimension, namely top management support and organisational structure. Regarding top management support, the participants had varying opinions regarding top management support for HRIS implementation. Most of them reported that their top management was aware of the benefits of HRIS, had positive attitudes towards it, and actively supported its use. However, others did not perceive this support as essential, believing that top management had other business priorities to consider. Despite these differing opinions, all participants agreed that the use of HRIS was mandatory for certain HR activities such as leave booking, timesheet submission, or attendance tracking. While this mandatory implementation is due to top management policies, it falls short of encouraging the full utilisation of the planning and analysis features of HRIS. The limited top management support observed in this study highlights the importance of encouraging line managers to use HRIS in a more business-oriented manner. For example, GMs and CEOs could positively encourage line managers to utilise HR data when making informed business decisions. By considering subordinates' skills, attendance, productivity, performance, qualifications, and engagement, organisations can leverage HRIS to gain valuable insights/knowledge (Sitompul, 2016). However, none of the participants reported top management support in this regard. Despite the limited support, it is crucial to acknowledge the impact of mandatory

policies implemented by top management for certain HR activities. This has positively impacted on the participants' perceived usefulness of HRIS, which suggests a positive relationship between top management support and HRIS usefulness (Troshani et al., 2010; Al-Harazneh & Sila, 2021; and Hagan, 2021).

In conclusion, top management support for HRIS implementation has been demonstrated through implementing the related HR mandatory policies. While this support has positively impacted the participants' perceived usefulness of HRIS to accomplish the administrative tasks, it is necessary to encourage further support for utilising HRIS reporting and analysis features for their informed business decisions and pursuit of business success. The next section presents the organisational structure.

Organisational Structure

Regarding the organisational structure, most of the participants expressed that they enjoy a healthy organisational environment, flexibility, teamwork, and open communication. Apart from two participants, no issues were highlighted about the reporting methods (hierarchy and org chart), employee involvement or sharing knowledge. No negative feedback about poor employee' relations or insecure feelings about unstructured organisations was provided. The participants reported that their companies had activated effective policies and social events that enhance the communication among employees (Lo et al., 2015).

In addition, teamwork, friendly relationships, open space workplaces and social good are the terms that were used by the participants. These findings match today's new HR approaches that enhance flexibility, self-management, employee loyalty programs, employee experience and personal self-responsibilities (Tracey & Nathan, 2002; Yeh et al., 2012, p.2009). Organisations today are striving to implement a friendly cooperative environment inside organisations, as this will help leverage organisational performance and drive business results

(Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., 2018.). Most importantly, this feedback from the participants about the organisational structure and environment could refer to a relationship between the positive insights about the organisational structure and the perceived usefulness of the participants. In other words, a relationship could be constructed between the employees' inter-personal relationships, organisational culture, and social good on one hand, and the participants perception of HRIS usefulness on the other hand. The results of this study are consistent with what has been documented about this relationship (Tansley et al., 2001; Yeh et al., 2012, P.209).

8.2.3.3 Environmental Dimension

The discussion in this section concerns about the participants' feedback about the competitor pressure factor's impact on HRIS. The majority of the participants stated that competitiveness is one of the motives for implementing HRIS. The participants explained that HRIS is a valuable instrument that helps to maintain employee retention, improve efficiency, and improve organisational performance and will eventually bring competitive advantage. These insights have been advocated in previous HRIS studies (Ngai & Wat, 2006; Batool & Raza, 2012; and Sadiq et al., 2013). The participants stated that the database can be turned into a competitive information source, if effectively processed and analysed, and that has also been confirmed by many authors (Kovach et al., 2002; Burbach & Dundon, 2005; Beadles et al., 2005; Ruel et al., 2007; and Hussain et al., 2007). It is imperative to mention that there is a relationship between the competitors' pressure and the participants' perceived usefulness of HRIS. Most of the participants agreed that the competition is an external pressure to deploy HRIS and they perceived their HRIS as useful. The discussion with the participants helped in explaining that using HRIS to manage HR effectively and efficiently is the path to achieving competitive advantage over competitors (Aggarwal & Kapoor, 2012).

8.3 HRM Characteristics

Discussing the HR dimension is useful for exploring the proposed relevant aspects that could enhance the HRIS contribution to business success realisation. The HR dimension in this study is mainly concerned with two areas: the required initiatives of the line managers and the required characteristics of the HR practitioners (MEA and SAB). Investigating the HR dimension in this study is driven by the need to explore whether such HR aspects have been effectively maintained and implemented at the organisations or not, and also, if it is possible to form a relationship between the implementation of those aspects and the business impact of HRIS. The findings of the HRM characteristics have highlighted the weaknesses and the issues that the participants encounter at their companies. It is imperative to highlight the difficulty the line managers had in demonstrating how implementing such aspects would enhance the effectiveness of HRIS contribution to business success/performance.

Although it was difficult for the line managers to demonstrate how such initiatives and characteristics would enhance the effectiveness of the HRIS in making an impact on business, the investigation helped in mapping the relationships between the shortfalls of HRM characteristics and the HRIS deficiency problem. It can be concluded that the HRIS potential to impact the business can be unlocked when the line managers take the required initiatives, and when the HR practitioners enrich their bank of skills. This combination is vital and implemented in the research framework. The next section focusses on the line's initiatives.

8.3.1 Line Managers' Initiatives (MEA)

The discussion about line managers' initiatives was concerned with three aspects: the HR-line relationship, empowering practitioners, and the lines' expectations of the role of HR. The discussion was mainly about those three initiatives taken by the lines. It is important to highlight that upon asking about how these initiatives could be implemented to enhance HRIS

contribution to business performance, most participants lacked knowledge to explain how. Some participants, such as participant 14, explicitly stated, “I am not quite sure how.” Despite this lack of knowledge, the main goal of the question was to explore if those initiatives are in place or not. The next section discusses the first initiative.

8.3.1.1 Maintaining A Productive HR-Line Relationship

The findings show that the HR-line relationship was not really productive and needs to be improved. It is helpful to consider that the productive HR-Line relationship was discussed in terms of the devolution concept and practitioners’ isolation. What has been perceived from the discussion with the participants, is that they are not maintaining a good relationship with the practitioners that helps in implementing, for example, the organisational policies or supporting in the development of their teams. Decentralising HR responsibilities requires the lines’ commitment and healthy relationships between the lines and the practitioners, evidence of which I could not find during the discussion with the participants. Although it has been suggested that delegating HR responsibilities to the lines has the potential to minimise expenses and allow HR practitioners more time to enhance the effectiveness of their strategic contribution (Graham et al., 2015, p. 451; Fisher, 2009, p. 349), the participants did not really show good understanding of this devolution concept and how such HR responsibilities should be appointed to them and managed practically, and this is identified as an issue in the HRM studies (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Caldwell, 2003).

In addition, the participants avoided the negative discussion about the delegation and its challenges with the practitioners, except for a few participants (N= 13). These challenges that associate the delegated responsibilities to the lines such as power, control, threat, authority, were not reported by the participants. They did not refer to what, for example, Perry and Kulik (2008) stated about the devolution challenges where the regular devolution of HR functions

and tasks to line managers would diminish the utility of the HR practitioners and threaten their existence in the organisation. This is because line managers would gradually learn how to cover the want of the practitioners.

Besides, the participants referred to the isolation of the practitioners and highlighted the lack of communication and the gap between the HR practitioners and the lines. This is a major concern that deconstructs the relationship between the lines and the practitioners (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003, p.256; Lo et al., 2015, p.2319).

The argument for enhancing the business impact of HRIS through maintaining a productive relationship can be justified from a professional implementation perspective. This is because when the boundaries of HR responsibilities are clearly identified and devolved to the appropriate lines, HR activities and processes will be clearly automated and the potential to use HRIS effectively by both the HR practitioners and the line managers is more feasible. Gollan et al. (2015, p.148) suggest that the precise definition of developed responsibilities eliminates potential conflicts of interest and competition that may arise during the implementation of HR practices. A healthy productive relationship between the line managers and the HR practitioners is supposed to enhance the cooperation between them and that will positively impact the usage of the HRIS data. Both the line managers and the HR practitioners will transform this data to information that impacts the business decisions. Technology and management approaches have evolved, and HR managers no longer play an oversight role. Rather, they provide managerial guidance and encourage online collaboration. When these changes in HR-line relationship are implemented, this would cause an effective utilisation of HRIS to enhance business impact.

In summary, a relationship can be established between HRIS deficiency in contributing to business success and the shortfall in the HR-line relationship. The feedback received suggests that the line-HR relationship is limited to official meetings and lacks a proactive approach from

the lines in implementing delegated HR responsibilities, which has led to unsatisfactory results about the HRIS business impact. To address this issue, it is necessary to implement positive communication between the line managers and the HR practitioners. This will break the isolation norms of the HR practitioners and free them to work outside the administrative context, effectively utilising the HRIS to execute data that helps to reduce costs and increase customer satisfaction. In the next section of this research, the second initiative is discussed.

8.3.1.2 Empowering The HR Practitioners

The study findings indicate that HR practitioners are not effectively involved in the line managers' business meetings and their decision-making processes. A significant proportion of the interviewees reported the limited role of HR practitioners in the line managers' decision-making and meetings. The absence of HR representatives in key line management meetings to contribute to planning and setting up the departmental objectives and strategy was confirmed by most of the participants. The feedback from the participants regarding the limitations of HR practitioner empowerment is consistent with previous HRM studies (Ulrich et al., 2009; Fallon Jr & McConnell, 2013; Hyman, 2018; Kryscynski et al., 2018).

According to Tracey and Nathan (2002, p.17), HR is viewed primarily as an "enabling" function, responsible for executing "the plan" and is often disregarded during the initial planning stages. Despite the HRM studies urging the involvement of HR practitioners in business decision-making to achieve the company's long-term goals, such an approach was not implemented by the participants. Ulrich (1998, p.129) argues that for HR "to be truly tied to business outcomes, HR needs to join forces with operating managers to systematically assess the impact and importance of initiatives". However, during the discussions with the participants, it was evident that the majority did not fully comprehend the necessity for HR practitioners to play an active role in shaping and sharing the vision for the company's market

position and establishing an overall strategy to achieve the business's vision, as emphasised by Ulrich et al. (2009, p.26) and Labedz and Lee (2011).

The participants did not provide a clear explanation for the limited empowerment of HR practitioners in participating effectively in their business meetings and decision-making processes. P5, for example, suggested that the lack of empowerment might be due to the confrontation it could cause with line and other management members, given that HR departments consider the human element in all decisions (Caldwell; 2003). P4, on the other hand, noted that HR practitioners are not adequately trained and lack analytical skills. From the participants' feedback, it is apparent that the practicality of line managers limits HR practitioner involvement as one of the participants, P17, explained as something “not to waste time with”.

Practical implementation has shown that involving practitioners in line meetings can significantly impact the business by utilising the HRIS. This approach exposes HR practitioners to business strategies, goals, and problems, allowing them, for example, to practically evaluate how to automate and implement incentive schemes in HRIS. Additionally, direct contact between HR practitioners and line managers through regular management meetings enables HR practitioners to assess where skill deficiencies lie and assign the required training courses via HRIS learning modules to overcome the challenges. This approach also allows HR practitioners to identify any potential issues that may cause talent leakage within the organisation and respond accordingly by setting up loyalty programmes, such as employee of the month, via HRIS to support the retention strategies of the organisation. Implementing such approaches would eventually impact on business profitability and increase customer satisfaction.

In summary, it is evident that a link between HR empowerment limitations and HRIS deficiencies could be formed. The research findings indicate a relationship between the

limitations in HRIS business impact and HR practitioners' empowerment. By involving HR practitioners in the lines' business strategies, operations, and objectives, more HRIS utilisation and business impact could be achieved. The next section discusses line managers' expectations of HR role.

8.3.1.3 Adopting Business Expectation About HR Role

According to the interview's findings, most of the participants perceived the HR role as an administrative field and did not view HR practitioners as their business partners. This perception is evident in the feedback provided by the participants. The term "business partner" which is commonly used by companies, was not well-received by the participants whose feedback conveyed a sense of uncertainty about the HR role. The participants showed reluctance to embrace the concept of HR-line partnering, a topic that has been discussed extensively in the HRM literature (Caldwell, 2003; Ulrich et al., 2009; Lo et al., 2013).

To address this issue, there is a need to redefine the HR role and change the traditional perception of the HR practitioners' identity. HR should not be viewed as a cost centre that only supports employee needs and can be outsourced easily (Tracey & Nathan, 2002). This mindset will hinder the development of a business partnership agreement between HR practitioners and business managers. According to Ulrich and Brockbank (2005, p.27), business partnering is a collaborative effort between HR practitioners and business managers who work together to develop and implement a business strategy that aligns the HR practices with the organisation's goals. HR practitioners should not be viewed as "police officers" or "door holders", as some participants reported. This misconception about the role of HR has the potential to hinder organisational success significantly. Therefore, it is essential to change this perception and recognise HR practitioners as critical business partners who can help achieve organisational success.

From professional implementation, when the line managers adopt a new vision about the HR role, the HR practitioners are motivated to activate/enable different features in the HRIS. For example, Project Management helps both lines and HR practitioners to track the time spent on each activity of past and ongoing projects. This feature helps project managers make critical project decisions, identify which activity they have spent the most or least amount of time on, and make informed decisions to improve performance. When the line managers adopt a business-oriented perspective towards the HR role and believe in their partnership with HR practitioners, HR practitioners are more willing to utilize unused features in the HRIS, such as the login system to monitor employee productivity and provide appropriate advice. The HRIS database is available for use in addressing any potential problems that may arise. However, this data will remain unused unless a proper relationship is established between the line managers and HR practitioners.

It is imperative to mention that a relationship could be built between the participants' feedback on the HR role and the limited business impact of HRIS. The participants identify the HR role under either the "clerical model" or the "control model." Some of the participants suggested that the primary function of HR personnel was to cater to employee benefits, describe statistics, maintain records, and file paperwork (Fallon Jr & McConnell, 2013, p.19), while some of the participants have the opposite opinion. This conflicting feedback might be one of the factors that caused the limitations in HRIS usage. This issue has been discussed by Tansley & Watson (2000, p.109) who suggested that "some HR managers argue that because of the high levels of uncertainty of HR tasks/role, utilisation of IT in human resourcing work is insupportable". Similarly, Voermans et al.'s (2007) study findings indicated that the HR practitioners with strategic roles have a more welcoming attitude to the use of E-HRM.

In summary, in order to leverage the potential of HRIS, it is necessary to challenge the traditional expectations about the HR role adopted till now by some line managers. Line managers must eliminate outdated stereotypes about the HR role and collaborate with HR practitioners to develop effective strategies and employee development plans. This approach will help unlock HRIS potential to use the resources/data such as money, information, and people in a more effective manner. In addition, it should be noted that the success of HRIS implementation is not solely dependent on the line managers' initiatives. HR practitioners must also possess certain characteristics to align with the expectations of the lines. The following section discusses these characteristics.

8.3.2 HR Practitioners' Characteristics (SAB)

The primary objective of this question was to evaluate the qualifications and characteristics of HR practitioners from the perspective of the line managers who have direct contact with them. In addition, this assessment aims to identify any potential relationship between the absence of these attributes and the deficiency of HRIS.

It is crucial to emphasise two points in this section. Firstly, some participants reported a lack of information to evaluate the skills of their practitioners, which may be attributed to various reasons such as weak interaction between the line managers and HR practitioners or sensitivity surrounding the topic. Some participants were hesitant to assess their colleagues' attributes, while others were willing to share their opinions regardless of how it may be perceived by others.

Secondly, it was observed that the participants were unable to provide concrete examples of how adopting strategic and analytical skills or possessing business knowledge could aid HR practitioners in effectively utilising HRIS to contribute to business performance. Nonetheless, the primary purpose of this inquiry was to evaluate the skills of HR practitioners and determine

if there is any link between the absence of these skills and HRIS deficiency. It was not anticipated that participants would be able to place themselves in the HR practitioners' shoes and demonstrate how these characteristics would enhance the utilisation of HRIS in a business context. As previously mentioned, most participants indicated that they have seldom received HR reports that demonstrate the implementation of such skills by HR practitioners. Therefore, it would be challenging for them to demonstrate how these required skills would make a difference in leveraging the potential of HRIS. The next section discusses the first characteristic which is strategic competency.

8.3.2.1 Strategic Competency

It was found that many of the interviewees were unable to perceive the connection between implemented HR practices and their organisational objectives. This perspective does not align with what HRM studies say about the HR practitioner who acts as a "strategic architect", instead of simply executing strategies, and also makes links between HR functions and overall organisational strategy (Ulrich et al., 2009).

According to Ulrich et al. (2009), "HR's ultimate jobs are to link the human side of business with business strategies and to frame and implement individual abilities and organisation capabilities as a critical source of competitive advantage". However, there was no agreement among the participants that this philosophy had been implemented in their organisations. Many participants believed that their HR practitioners lacked strategic skills and believed that HR activities were not geared towards achieving long-term business objectives. This association between the strategic thinking and business outcomes is consistent with the observations made by Caldwell (2003) and Guest and King (2004) who highlight that HR practitioners must possess strategic competencies to impact the business and add business value. I did not receive feedback from the line managers that demonstrated how their strategic HR managers performed

the groundwork, conducted research on future trends, and provided proactive solutions and advice. Only a few participants reported that their HR practitioners utilise strategic thinking to customise and tailor HR practices to meet business requirements.

From professional implementation, when the practitioners adopt strategic thinking, HRIS could assist in staff planning and remodelling manpower structure. For example, HRIS can be utilised to propose recruitment options or scenarios, such as seasonal or part-time hiring, during high seasons based on the stored data. This can help companies determine the most efficient method to adopt to overcome staff shortages during these specific periods of the year. Similarly, HRIS can be effectively utilised to launch additional training courses in response to changes in required roles or responsibilities within the organisation, provided that the practitioners have strategic vision. When practitioners possess strategic competencies, they are more likely to use HRIS in a strategic manner, which in turn increases the likelihood of impacting the business.

During the discussion with the interviewees, the relationship between the deficiency of HRIS in contributing to business success attainment and the practitioners' strategic competency shortfalls was established. For example, P17 linked the HRIS admin use and the shortfalls in the HR practitioners' strategic competency by saying: "I think that's where mostly people are still using it more from an admin, and that's why I do agree when you say the HR business partners they're not strategic". Many of the participants did not realise the customisation of HR practices to meet business requirements and objectives. That would explain the HRIS deficiency where most of the features are not effectively utilised to provide analysis that assist line managers to take informed HR decisions. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that HR software is a semi-functional application when controlled by semi-skilled HR practitioners who do not effectively adopt a strategic school of thought.

In conclusion, HRM studies agree that HR professionals with strategic competence are able to improve the overall business vision for growth and customer satisfaction (Burbach & Dundon,

2005; Martín-Alcázar et al., 2005; Van et al., 2011; Ulrich et al., 2013; and Venegas et al., 2017). With HRIS implementation, this would be more feasible when the HR data, news, procedures, disciplines, processes and practices are aligned/integrated with business requirements, strategy, and objectives. The next section discusses the practitioners' analytic ability.

8.3.2.2 Analytic Ability

During the discussion with the participants, it could be said that there was a debate about HR practitioners' analysis skills, as different positive and negative views were reported. It was noted that some of the interviewees believe that their HR practitioners lacked analytical skills or require improvement in this area. This lack of analytical skills can be linked to the findings in the usefulness section of the study, where many interviewees reported that they were not in receipt of HR reports or statistics to aid in their decision-making. In addition, during the discussion there was no evidence provided by participants explaining how the HR practitioners' analytic ability had been demonstrated. Despite the emphasis of the HRIS providers and sales team on the software potential to reinforce the data analytics by providing reliable details on areas such as personnel, training, and productivity, this study found that such HRIS analytic potential has not been realised yet by the line managers.

Certainly, HRIS can provide quality information for better decision-making (Ankrah & Sokro, 2012). Most of the sophisticated HR software available today promotes analytics and reporting features that allow users to aggregate, filter, and generate/display reports as required. However, it is evident that the use of such HRIS reports depends on the analytical skills of the practitioners to provide information about for example, recruiting times, onboarding speed, and employee satisfaction. Therefore, the problem lies not in the HRIS systems themselves, but in the users' ability to analyse the data and transform it into knowledge.

This analytical approach can be interpreted through the professional implementation of HRIS. Based on HRIS data, HR practitioners can propose, for example, the factors that lead to turnover through creating a predictive model to better track and flag employees who may fall into the identified pattern associated with employees that have quit, develop strategies, and make decisions that will improve the work environment and engagement levels. This exercise can enhance employee satisfaction and performance, eventually leading to business success and profitability. HR statisticians, with the help of HRIS, can provide answers to important questions, such as how long it takes to hire employees, which employees are most likely to leave within the year, and whether learning and development initiatives impact employee performance. Practitioners without analysis skills will find their HR systems limited to administrative purposes, making them incapable of informing HR decisions (Togt & Rasmussen, 2017). This was confirmed by Kryscynski et al. (2018), who emphasised the need for HR practitioners to leverage data points to make the best-educated reliable HR decisions. Data generated from HRIS can help organisations decide, for example, when to initiate promotions and employee pay rises. If the HR practitioners are to seek a realistic level of confidence in judgement and decisions that impact the business, then an analyst team at the HR department with excellent understanding and knowledge about data has to be ready to forecast, assess and stimulate the business risks, opportunities, assumptions, or any arising issues when running the reports (Parry & Tyson, 2011).

A relationship could be noted between the ineffective contribution of HRIS to business performance and the practitioners' inability to handle data and make informed decisions that impact the business. Both HRIS limitation to impact the business and the analytical weakness of HR practitioners were observed in this study. Kovach et al. (2002, p.43) stated that “it is easier to see how a successfully implemented HRIS is moving away from a data input and

storage device toward a fully operative decision-analysis tool”. However, this insight is meaningful provided that the practitioners’ sense of figures, planning and analysis is present.

To sum up, HRIS today, with accurate advanced customised reporting and graphics/charts features, enables HR practitioners to group/filter data, select various criteria, display various measures, and export that to be analysed and transformed into information for different purposes. However, if HR practitioners are unable to unlock their analytical potential, short of the data analytics and reporting skillset, then such data will remain stored and out of use. The next section discusses the last characteristic of the practitioners, which business knowledge.

8.3.2.3 Business Knowledge

According to the findings, some of the participants reported that their HR practitioners do not have enough business knowledge. During the discussion, no reference was made to HR practitioners’ ability to identify business opportunities or taking initiatives to increase net sales. During the conversation, the participants did not provide evidential statements that support the claim that HR practitioners have sufficient understanding of business language, or the ability to pay attention to business details and think from customers' and competitors' perspectives. This limitation in business knowledge would ultimately impact the ability of HR practitioners to translate business strategy into HR practices and add the necessary value (Cascio, 2005; Ulrich et al., 2009; Groysberg et al., 2011; Forsten-Astikainen, 2017).

From professional implication, having sufficient business knowledge is critical for HR practitioners to enhance their professional contributions, particularly in areas such as designing organisational structures, job evaluations, competency profiles, and goal libraries, which are all essential components of HRIS implementation. HR practitioners who possess enough business knowledge can become advisors to the organisation via implementing HRIS to serve

in, for example, proposing innovative appraisal methods and purposive relative training and development programs.

HR practitioners who effectively utilise HRIS are those who can anticipate business opportunities and risks, grasp the external customer's problems, and develop HR solutions that can overcome everyday business challenges.

By gaining a solid understanding of business principles, HR practitioners can proactively safeguard their company against expensive legal disputes that could lead to financial loss. This can be achieved by incorporating acknowledgment and announcement functionalities into their HRIS.

It is imperative to mention that a relationship could be formed between the HR practitioners' shortfall in business knowledge and HRIS deficiency in contribution to business performance. Scant positive feedback towards HRIS potential to contribute to business was deduced during the conversation with the participants. Similarly, many of the participants were not satisfied with the business knowledge that their HR practitioners possess. Many participants reported that their HR practitioners do not have a sufficient connection to the business. Without this connection, the HRIS data will remain meaningless or untransformed to information.

In conclusion, the participants agree that business knowledge is crucial in utilising HRIS to drive business impact. It is agreed that HR practitioners who can identify business problems are better equipped to suggest solutions using HRIS services and features to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. Without business knowledge, HRIS will only be partially functional. Therefore, HR practitioners should maintain a business focus to effectively manage, maintain, and process employee data to achieve a positive impact on the business.

8.4 Summary

Several authors have described HRIS as a super multifunctional instrument that would automate HR transactions and cause business impact in organisations. However, various factors and aspects have impacted the usefulness of HRIS and their business impact. Besides the existing success IS factors, this study has proposed and focused on the HR dimension and its related HRM characteristics that specifically could enhance HRIS effectivity to contribute to business success attainment. In order to obtain a full picture and respond to the HRIS deficiency problem, both key existing IS factors and selected HRM characteristics have been considered in this study.

9. Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how this study contributes to knowledge through enhancing the understanding of HRIS effectiveness and addressing the problem of HRIS deficiency in impacting business. Furthermore, the chapter covers research limitations and potential areas for future studies, followed by brief concluding remarks about the study. The following section will elaborate on the contribution to knowledge.

9.1 Contribution to Knowledge

The contribution to knowledge of this research lies in providing a new approach that adds a comprehensive understanding of the needs that could help organisations to use HRIS effectively to contribute to business success attainment. One of the problems that organisations are experiencing today is the HRIS limitation in contributing to business performance, impacting the business, or adding business value. This research has responded to this problem by developing a new framework based on the TAM model and TOE theory. From the eighties till today, IS researchers are still adopting TAM model either by developing the model itself or testing it quantitatively to measure users' acceptance of different innovations (Bagozzi, 2007 cited in Vogelsang et al., 2013, p.2). This research framework has adopted TAM's "perceived usefulness" and "ease of use" as two main factors for HRIS successful implementation. Besides, the technology, organisation, and environmental factors of TOE theory are adopted in the research framework as impacting factors on HRIS usefulness. Moreover, the adoption of certain HRM characteristics from HRM studies addresses a gap in the HRIS literature and fulfils essential requirements to enhance the HRIS contribution to business performance.

The knowledge contribution in this research is realised through the research framework that firstly positions the HRIS usefulness and ease of use as the first step towards contributing to business performance realisation. Secondly, the research framework considers three

components as external dimensions that impact HRIS usefulness. Thirdly, the research proposes the HRM dimension of HR practitioners' characteristics and line managers' initiatives as required aspects in HRIS studies to enhance HRIS contribution to the business performance aspects of profitability and customer satisfaction. This combination of the IS factors and HRM characteristics provides a new insight/understanding of what is required in HRIS implementation to contribute to business success attainment.

To sum up, IS theories have been established and developed in the last century. Those theories have identified various factors and dimensions at certain times and contexts to address different problems. Those factors have been tested and documented as key success factors in the innovation theories, IS, and HRIS research. However, the 21st century has been marked as an era of rapid adoption of new technologies and that necessitates the need for continuous improvement/enhancement to those existing theories to address new emerging problems. Hence, a new approach has been presented through conducting this study that firstly responded to a specific problem related to HRIS limitation, secondly bridged a gap by adopting HRM characteristics in the HRIS studies. The next section presents the limitations of this study.

9.2 Recalling Research Question, Objectives, & Aim

Concluding this thesis in this final chapter involves revisiting the foundational elements of the study, namely the research question, objectives, and aim. This review aims to offer a comprehensive and reflective summary of the insights gained throughout the study. In addition, the purpose of recalling the essential aspects of the study is to state the impact that has been achieved. In the following sections, each element will be addressed with clarity and depth.

9.2.1 Research Question

The research question is: what are the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that contributes to business performance success?

To respond to this question, the investigation focused on three main areas, namely, IS success factors, HRM characteristics, and business performance success aspects. Based on the findings of the field study, data-backed relationships between these factors and aspects are established and represented in the research framework to answer to the research question. Accordingly, the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that contributes to business performance are outlined as the following:

- 1- HRIS needs to be perceived as useful for effective management of routine HR administrative transactions and enhancing overall efficiency.
- 2- HRIS needs to be perceived as user-friendly for managing administrative HR activities and other related HR-business functions that contributes to business performance success.
- 3- HRIS needs to be secure to ensure effective usage, efficiency, and be perceived as useful.
- 4- HRIS needs to be compatible with the organisation's infrastructure, software, hardware, and network facilities to ensure effective usage, efficiency, and be perceived as useful.
- 5- HRIS needs to be integrated with other existing applications to extend its benefits beyond HR administrative functions and positively impact overall business performance.
- 6- Top management support is crucial to ensure the effective utilisation of HRIS, enhance efficiency through HRIS, and perceive HRIS as useful.
- 7- Well-structured organisation is important to ensure the effective utilisation of HRIS, enhance efficiency through HRIS, and perceive HRIS as useful.

- 8- Competitive advantage attainment is significant to ensure the effective utilisation of HRIS, enhance efficiency through HRIS, and perceive HRIS as useful.
- 9- Analytic ability, strategic competency, and business knowledge are essential skills that HR practitioners should adopt to enhance HRIS usefulness and contribute to the success of business performance.
- 10- Maintaining productive HR-line managers relationship, empowering HR practitioners, and adopting business expectations towards HR role, are crucial initiatives that line managers should take to enhance HRIS usefulness and contribute to the success of business performance.

To conclude, the previous outlined ten necessities provide a comprehensive summary of the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that focuses on contributing to business performance. The answer to the research question covers various factors and aspects discussed throughout the study. The next section will review the objectives of the thesis.

9.2.2 Research Objectives

This section reviews the research objectives to assess their fulfilment. Four objectives were established early in this study. The importance of revisiting these objectives lies in clarifying not only whether each objective was met, but also in explaining how it was achieved and what new insights were gained. Most importantly, the overall goal is to highlight how those four objectives are interconnected to answer the research question and form a comprehensive understanding of HRIS successful implementation. The following sections will dig into each objective, providing a detailed examination of its realisation and contributions to the overall research narrative.

Objective One

The first objective aimed to identify the success factors of business performance. In addition, this objective sought to determine whether HRIS contributes to fulfilling these factors and, if so, how. It is essential to note that business success factors were identified based on the perspectives of line managers. The participating line managers in the field study have business background and are more capable of providing business insights based on their business experience. Although line managers defined the business success differently and provided various business success factors that their organisations aspire to achieve, the data suggested that most of the line managers concentrated on two factors, namely profitability and customer satisfaction. The focus of most of the line managers was mainly on how their companies could succeed financially and maintain excellent customer satisfaction standards.

In addition, the findings of this objective drove the investigation forward to investigate whether HRIS has an impact on the identified measures of business success and helped in forming initial views on why HRIS did not, or only to a limited extent, contribute to achieving the organisation's profitability and customer satisfaction. In essence, the objective was fulfilled and revealed that the identified business success factors of profitability and customer satisfaction align with what has been reported in the literature review.

Objective Two

The second objective of this study was to investigate the key existing IS factors that are well-documented in the previous IS research. This IS factors' investigation is about the impact of three dimensions: technological, organisational and environmental on HRIS usefulness. Line managers were the targeted participants to fulfil this objective. Specifically, the participants provided their views on key IS factors in relation to HRIS's usefulness, ease-of-use, security, integration, compatibility, top management support, organisational structure, competitors'

pressure, and technological reputation. The findings indicated that the discussed IS factors are present in the majority of participants' organisations with a prevailing perception that HRIS is useful and easy to use in an administrative context. However, there was less consensus on the importance of the tech reputation factor. In essence, participants provided a comprehensive understanding of the discussed IS factors and illustrated, through examples, how they perceive these factors in their organisations. The findings affirmed the essential role of IS success factors, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, security, integration, compatibility, top management support, organisational structure, and competitors' pressure, in the successful implementation of HRIS. Therefore, the objective to investigate the key IS success factors in relation to HRIS successful implementation is fulfilled.

Objective Three

The third objective aimed to explore the HRM characteristics that bring the business impact. These HRM characteristics were identified under two categories. Firstly, HR practitioners' characteristics (SAB) include skills related to strategic competency, analytic ability, business knowledge, and ethical compliance. Secondly, line managers' initiatives (MEA) involve maintaining a productive HR-line managers relationship, empowering HR practitioners, and adopting business expectations about the HR role.

Some of the participating line managers shared valuable insights into the skills of their HR practitioners. Similarly, they provided perspectives on their relationships with the practitioners, and to what extent the practitioners are involved in lines' management meetings and business decisions. Furthermore, the participants gave their expectation about the HR role.

The findings of the third objective indicated shortfalls in the HRM characteristics (SAB) and identified areas that require improvement. Besides, the initiatives taken by the line managers were found to be insufficient, highlighting the need for increased support towards the

practitioners. Based on these findings, the objective of exploring HRM characteristics was fulfilled

Objective Four

The fourth objective of this study was to establish relationships between the key existing IS factors, HRM characteristics & business performance success aspects. The relationships between the factors were built based on the findings of the previous three objectives. Three relationships were established: first, a relationship between the external dimensions and perceived HRIS usefulness; second, a relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived HRIS usefulness; and third, a relationship between HRIS deficiency in the pursuit of business success and the shortfalls in the HRM characteristics.

Based on these findings, the conceptual framework was improved, and a revised framework was presented as a research framework. This framework provides a new insight into HRIS studies and has achieved the aim of the thesis which will be discussed in the next section.

9.2.3 Research Aim

The aim of this research was to develop a framework that clarify how the key IS success factors and HRM characteristics, when combined, can help organisations effectively use HRIS to contribute to business performance. In the light of the findings from the previous four objectives, the research framework was improved, and its relationships established. As the framework illustrates, considering the technological, organisational, and environmental factors as external dimensions is crucial, as they have an impact on the usefulness of HRIS. To maximise and shift this HRIS usefulness, which is primarily perceived in the administrative context, towards contributing to business performance, the presence of the HRM characteristics is required. Without these characteristics, HRIS will be perceived as useful in an administrative

context, lacking the potential to contribute to business performance. To sum up, the framework provided a comprehensive presentation about how to leverage HRIS for Business performance.

9.3 Research impact

This section presents the impact of the study through emphasising its contribution to knowledge and addressing the HRIS deficiency in impacting business. The primary phenomenon addressed in this study was the limitation of HRIS in contributing to business performance. This study responded to this challenge by developing a new framework grounded on TAM Model and TOE theory. The TAM model forms the basis for the research framework with “perceived usefulness” and “ease of use” identified as essential factors for HRIS successful implementation. Besides, the TOE theory’s technological, organisational, and environmental factors are integrated in the framework, serving as influencing factors on HRIS usefulness. Taking these existing IS factors into consideration, the study bridged a gap in the HRIS literature by introducing HRM characteristics from HRM studies as essential requirements to enhance HRIS contribution to business performance. This approach provided a fresh insight into HRIS studies. In addition, a practical evaluation tool (RAC) was developed in this study to assess the proposed framework’s factors. Through RAC, the study not only validated the theoretical foundations, but also offered a tangible and actionable guide for organisations aiming to implement HRIS and enhance its use in the pursuit of business success. Besides, RAC could save companies unnecessary cost by suggesting training courses and consulting packages to address potential issues and essential requirements. It is important to note that RAC can be utilised by various parties including company owners, business leaders, HR practitioners, and HRIS providers.

In summary, the study offered a new approach to tackle one of the evolving challenges in the HRIS industry: HRIS limitation in impacting the business performance. It is highlighted in this

study that the inclusion of HRM characteristics is the key to overcoming the HRIS deficiency in impacting the business success.

9.4 Research Limitations

Research limitations are the boundaries or restrictions that researchers face when conducting their studies. These limitations can be due to a variety of factors, such as time, resources, data availability, or even ethical considerations. It is important for researchers to acknowledge and address these limitations in their research, as it can affect the credibility and generalizability of their findings. By understanding the limitations of their study, researchers can identify potential areas for improvement in future research and help readers better interpret their results. It is therefore essential for researchers to clearly state the limitations of their research to ensure that their findings are appropriately contextualised and interpreted. The limitations of this research are outlined in three areas.

9.4.1 Sampling Recruitment

The sample of this study has involved line managers. The importance of targeting line managers in this study stems from four key reasons. Firstly, most of the HR activities have been devolved to the line managers who play a crucial role in implementing such HR practices, policies and frameworks. Secondly, line managers are in contact with the HR practitioners and can provide valuable feedback on their effectiveness and how well they are implementing their strategic, analytic, and business knowledge skills. Thirdly, it is important to investigate how line managers take the initiatives to back up HR practitioners, hence, interviewing them is justified. Finally, understanding the business aspects or the HRIS business impact, requires a business background and mentality, making line managers an ideal sample for this study. However, it is important to note that this sample has limitations in providing different

perspectives, such as those of senior HR practitioners or executive business leaders. These samples could offer different insights about HR practices and HRIS service delivery. For instance, top executives might have more strategic information due to the level of seniority of the practitioners dealing with them. Nonetheless, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of HRIS from line managers' perspectives.

9.4.2 Research Contextualisation

This research is UK based study where the participants were recruited from British companies. Generalising the results to other countries could be limited or invalid especially to developing countries where HRIS is still in its infancy and limitedly diffused, and perceiving its business impact is one step ahead in such contexts. In developed countries, HRIS utilisation is widespread, and organisations use sophisticated HRIS tools to manage their HR functions. In addition, the technology infrastructure in these countries is well-developed, making it easier to implement and operate HRIS systems, especially cloud-based ones. In contrast, developing countries often have a limited technology infrastructure. In addition, cultural differences, such as a preference for manual processes and a lack of trust in technology, can also hinder the adoption of HRIS. Moreover, the cost of implementing and maintaining HRIS systems can be a significant barrier for organisations in developing countries. Despite these challenges, HRIS utilisation in developing countries is gradually increasing, as organisations recognise the benefits of automation and the need to remain competitive. As a result of the above differences, the generalisability of findings globally is limited.

9.4.3 Research Longitudinal Study

The study has a limitation that requires a reassessment of the framework implementation at BCC. The research framework has been validated through a readiness assessment tool (RAC)

implementation at BCC. Recommendations were provided to overcome certain identified issues. However, to determine the extent of improvement and the impact of the changes on HRIS utilisation, the company needs to be revisited to reassess the changes in the light of RAC items. To address this limitation, a longitudinal approach can be conducted in the future, based on data from a case study where new insights/themes could be captured through this longitudinal research methodology. However, it should be noted that the longitudinal approach requires a significant investment of time and resources (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000), making it difficult to adopt in this research. In summary, the study requires a reassessment of the framework implementation at BCC, and a longitudinal approach can be used to address this limitation in the future. The next section will discuss the potential for future research.

9.5 Future Research

Future research is vital for gaining advanced knowledge about the topic under consideration. In the light of this research, the focus of future research can vary to include aspects in the research methodology or developing new insights by exploring new areas that requires further exploration. Based on this research, the research that can be conducted in the future could be identified in three areas: HRM characteristics, quantitative approaches, and company size. The next section discusses in the potential of exploring other HRM characteristics.

9.5.1 Additional HRM Characteristics

The study has identified the HRM characteristics related to practitioners' characteristics and line initiatives. To enhance the utilisation of HRIS towards achieving business success, other practitioners' characteristics could be identified through further research. For example, other HR practitioners' characteristics could be investigated in the light of adopting a consultancy role, establishing trust, or obtaining a leadership position in the company. Ulrich et al., (2013,

p.465) referred to the new HR practitioner who becomes a “credible activist” and can build their credibility “by establishing relationships of trust” with the employees, as this will “move the business forward”. Future research can explore the relationship between practitioners' adoption of a leadership role and the business impact of HRIS. The next section will highlight the future research in reference to a quantitative approach.

9.5.2 Quantitative Research Approach

The research has adopted a qualitative approach to understand and explore areas in HRM, business success, and IS factors. Searching quantitatively using questionnaires, for example, to measure the impact of the HRM characteristics and IS factors on HRIS contribution to business success would be a potential for future research. In addition, this would be relevant in making the findings of the study more generalizable. The next section will present the company size as a potential for future research.

9.5.3 Company Size

This research focuses on large size companies, where implementing HRIS in such organisations requires a structural process, time, technical offer, and a testing phase. It has been found that smaller organisations are more agile in adopting new technologies than larger organisations due to their flexibility, fewer layers of bureaucracy, and a more informal decision-making process. In contrast, larger organisations may have more complex decision-making processes and more resistance to change. Therefore, while this research specifically focuses on large organisations, exploring midsize organisations may provide valuable insights into HRIS implementation or additional dimensions or aspects to consider in addressing the HRIS deficiency problem. Such insights could include unique challenges and opportunities that midsize organisations face when implementing HRIS, as well as any best practices that could

be adapted to other organisational contexts. The next section will summarise the main findings of this research.

9.6 Conclusion

The research journey began with a critical examination of existing challenges that HR practitioners are still experiencing today, particularly in adding business value to their organisations. HRIS was introduced as a solution to overcome this challenge. However, it became evident that HRIS encounters a deficiency in impacting business outcomes. Through an in-depth examination to this problem, the study presented a broad understanding of Human Resources Information System (HRIS) and its effectiveness in contributing to business performance success. Four objectives were determined to respond to this problem. The findings of the objectives accumulated layers of insights that established multi-dimensional relationships among HRIS, IS, HRM and business performance success, ultimately presented in a framework.

Based on the findings and the established relationships among the factors, the study answered a fundamental question: what are the requirements for successful HRIS implementation that contributes to business performance success? This question resulted in proposing ten key necessities, each serving as a critical factor in contributing to leveraging HRIS effectivity for business performance. In addition, a readiness assessment tool (RAC) was designed to validate these key necessities/factors. The implication of RAC affirmed the practical relevance and applicability of the proposed framework's factors in a real-word application.

As we conclude this exploration, the overall impact statement is that this study has made a substantial contribution to the understanding and enhancement of HRIS use in the pursuit of business performance. It is evident that the findings of the study pave the way for future

research and enhancements in the evolving triangulation of technology, human resources, and organisational business performance.

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Appendices

1. Appendix: Interview Questions

1.1 Demographic questions:

- 1- How old are you?
- 2- What is your job title for your current position?
- 3- What is the size of your company?
- 4- What is the name of your company?
- 5- How many years do you have experience dealing with HR software?
- 6- What sector is your company in?
- 7- What is your educational background?
- 8- What is the name of your HR software?

Main questions:

1.2 Section One: (HRIS Business Impact)

- 1- What is the business success that your top management is looking to achieve at your company?
- 2- Does HRIS help or not help in the contribution to achieve the business success? How?
- 3- Why HRIS has partially or not at all contributed in the business success attainment?

1.3 Section Two: (HRIS Usefulness)

- 4- How often do you use the HRIS? (when/why)
- 5- What kind of reports does the HR department provide you on daily, monthly, and yearly basis?
- 6- Do you have access to any of the HRIS reporting services? What kind of access to the reports do you have and what kind of analysis you are performing?

7- How useful the HRIS is at your organisation? (In terms of Admin and business usage)
(Firstly, contribution to your business individual work and activities. Secondly, the business impact in general).

1.4 Section Three: (HRM Characteristics)

8- How is the HR-line managers relationship (structured delegation process, visible, reachable practitioners)? Do you think a productive HR-line relationship is important to help practitioners use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

9- Have you involved your HR practitioners in your key management meetings and your business decisions? How? Do you think if the practitioners are empowered that will help them to use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

10- How do you perceive the HR role? (Admin, business) (HR practitioners are business partners or facilitators? Do you think that if the lines adopted a business expectation about the HR role that will help use the HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

11- What do you think about your practitioners' strategic skills? (HR alignment) Do you think if the HR practitioners have strategic skill, that will help them use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

12- What do you think about your practitioners' analytic skills? (Statistics and data driven decision making, aware from the data input to influence the business decisions). Do you think if the HR practitioners have this skill, that will help them to use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

13- What do you think about your practitioners' business knowledge? (Understand customers' needs, sales initiatives, competitors' position, how to make money, stakeholder expectation). Do you think if the HR practitioners have this skill, that will help them use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

- 14- How do you feel about your practitioner's ethical compliances? (Recruitment process, salary scale, health & safety? Do you think if the HR practitioners have this skill, that will help them use HRIS to contribute to business success? How?

1.5 Section Four: (Ease Of Use)

- 15- How easy to use your HRIS system is? (Confusion, friendly interfaces).

1.6 Section Five: (Technological Dimension)

- 16- How secure your HRIS system is? (Such as: role authorisation, login credentials, etc).
- 17- How integrated your HRIS is with other applications at your organisation such as finance, CRM?
- 18- How compatible your HRIS system is with the organisations' infrastructure (software, hardware, network facilities)? (Performance, responsiveness).
- 19- What technological issues are you experiencing with your HRIS?

1.7 Section Six: (Organisational Dimension)

- 20- Tell me about your top management support to use HRIS features? (Encourage the employees to use the HRIS at your company, awareness of HRIS benefits).
- 21- Tell me about your organisation structure and strategies related to flat structure, teamwork, collaboration, self-management, self-esteem, sharing knowledge, and open communication? How do you practice that?
- 22- Do you have any organisational issues you would like to report?

1.8 Section Seven: (Environmental Dimension)

- 23- Achieving competitiveness in the market over the competitors is important. To compete in this dynamic market, (by reducing the cost and better allocation to the human resources for example) is one of the reasons to implement HRIS and use it effectively at your organisations. What do you think about that?

- 24- Having tech-reputation is one of the reasons that pushed our company to implement HRIS and use it effectively. What do you think about that? (Adopting the latest and sophisticated technology).
- 25- What other environmental issues are impacting your HRIS usefulness?
- 26- Any comment or recommendation you want to add?

2. Appendix Consent Letter

Dear Participant

The purpose of this interview is to support academic research related to a PhD study on the adoption of Human Resources Information System (HRIS). The study seeks to explore various factors that may influence the usage and usefulness of HRIS within an organisation. Specifically, the interview aims to investigate the impact of different factors on the effectiveness of HRIS implementation, as well as assess the capabilities and skills of the HR practitioners.

The interview will also examine the relationship between line managers and HR practitioners. Your participation is an added value for me, and I kindly request 30 to 35 minutes of your time to answer the interview questions in an objective manner. Please note that all information received will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without providing any justification.

Thank you in advance for your valuable participation.

3. Appendix RAC Tool

NO	Sec	Item
1	CS	The new HR software helps to achieve customer satisfaction by aligning HR practices to meet customers 'needs.
2	CS	The new HR software will help the company become customer centric.
3	PF	The new HR software assists in increasing net sales at your organisation.
4	PF	The new HR software reduces the cost by implementing HR practices and transactions more efficiently and effectively.
5	US	The new HRIS software meets your company's needs and requirements.
6	EU	It is easy to use the new HR software demo.
7	SEC	The new HR software has security features that maintain authentication, audit tracking, user management (Admin &ESS), and CRUD.
8	INT	The new HR software APIs can be integrated with existing software applications.
9	CPT	The new HR software is compatible with our hardware, software, and network facilities (For example, internet connection, computers/laptops)
10	TMS	Top management is aware that automating HR practices at our company is important.
11	TMS	Top management is willing to allocate adequate resources for the use of HRIS (for example, fingerprint/facial recognition or QR for tracking attendance, server provider's cost, and workforce with the required skills).
12	ORG	The environment at the company is healthy and positive and I am satisfied with our organisational structure, collaboration, and communication.
13	ORG	Employees at our organisation share knowledge through training courses and employee rotation schedules.
14	COP	Competitors use sophisticated applications to manage their workforce transactions (for example, online training courses and onboarding, fleet administration).
15	COP	Competitors have smart recruitment solutions that help fill vacancies efficiently and quickly, attract job seekers.
16	COP	Competitors have automated most of their HR practices, transactions, and services.
17	STG	HR practitioners successfully align and integrate HR practices with the organisational objectives.
18	AAB	HR practitioners provide data to influence business decisions making at our organisation.
19	AAB	HR practitioners use HR analytics to predictively identify business problems and propose solutions based on relevant data.
20	AAB	HR practitioners are able to interpret statistics and numbers professionally.
21	BKN	HR practitioners have a good understanding of company products and services, competitors, customers' needs, and shareholders expectations.
22	BKN	HR practitioners can talk business, demonstrate the return on investment, and prepare budgeting.
23	BKN	HR Practitioners can identify risks and problems that are central to the business processes, and how such problems could impact business performance.
24	BKN	HR practitioners can anticipate sales opportunities and generate HR solutions.
25	HLR	The boundaries between line manager's responsibilities and HR practitioner's tasks are not well defined.
26	HLR	Line managers do not treat delegated HR responsibilities seriously enough.
27	HLR	line managers believe that HR practitioners are reluctant to delegate HR tasks.
28	HLR	HR practitioners are perceived as possessive data owner and withhold employee data from line managers.
29	HLR	HR practitioners are isolated, and we do not feel their presence among us.
30	EMP	The HR presence is welcomed at line managers' management meetings.
31	EMP	There is a strong top-down culture that is shaped by large egos; this negatively impact practitioners' ability to perform.
32	EMP	HR representation at board meetings is limited or non-existent.
33	EMP	HR practitioners are not sufficiently involved in the business decision makings.
34	EXP	HR Practitioners are primarily viewed as back-office employees by direct managers (paperwork etc).
35	EXP	HR practitioners are business partners at our company.