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Reflection of E-HRM in the Effectiveness of HR Functions: A Select Study of Information Technology (IT) Industry of India

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to measure the impact of use of e-HRM on effectiveness of HRM functions. The data was collected from 104 employees working in IT industry of India. The research model is based on Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model. Results indicated positive impact of employees' acceptance to e-HRM on the actual usage of e-HRM. Findings revealed that perceived usefulness of e-HRM by employees has a stronger influence on e- HRM use than perceived ease of its use. Moreover, e- HRM enhances the effectiveness of HRM functions. Based on the results it has been suggested to HR practitioners of IT industry to design effective e-HRM training programs to make it acceptable to employees and subsequently will contribute to HRM effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Changes are the prime reality of universe. As things changes with time, so is technology. Past centuries have bought many persistent global changes like, Edison's invention of bulb resulted in use of electricity to enlighten the globe. The late twentieth and early twenty-first century bought plenty of global changes in external environment, cultural values and technology. Development of computer science and internet has changed the scenario of information technology during this period. The availability of such an advanced communication and information technology resulted in swift development of various electronic-organizational systems. Usually, such electronic systems aims at achieving competitive advantage cost efficiency, reduced throughput times, standardized ways of working, and improved communication with external and internal customers and suppliers.

Human resource and their management is the key element to gain competitive advantage as in words of Boxall(2007)the most important assets of any business walk out the door at the end of each day. In today's global competitive scenario and fast-paced technological change, organizations are seeking to understand how to manage their most important resources, that is, human resources for competitive advantage. The practice of human resource management (HRM) is concerned with procuring, training & developing, compensating, maintaining and integrating the human resources. Electronic system for managing the human resources (E-HRM) is one among the high-tech systems that helps organization in gaining the strategic competitive advantage through effective and efficient management of human resources. E-HRM is the application of the advanced IT tools and web based technologies to perform HR functions.Strohmeier (2007) defined'E-HRM as the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities' (p. 20). E-HRM is further defined as the use of electronic systems, interactive electronic media and telecommunications networks to perform HR functions.

The categorization of e-HRM can be made on three bases (Strohmeier&Kabst, 2014), that is, information system (IS) functions, corporate significance, e-HRM objectives.As per the first category that is, IS functions, at its infancy stage e-HRM refers to the automation of voluminous administrative tasks of HRM to reduce admissible work load and cost. At this stage e-HRM istermed as transaction oriented e-HRM (Broderick &Bodreau, 1998) or administrative e-HRM (Ball, 2001). Later, advanced technologies were realized to be underutilized. Considering the fact that merely automating the HR tasks does not take full advantage of technology, IT tools were utilized to perform core HR functions like recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal etc. Thus, a second type of e-HRM that is, informational or decision support oriented (Broderick and Bodreau, 1998) or analytical e-HRM (Ball, 2001)evolved. The second category divides e-HRM as operative and strategic e-HRM. Operative e-HRM aims at improving efficiency and velocity of HRM by performing the administrative tasks electronically(Hussain, Wallace & Cornelius, 2007) while to create a direct impact of HR tasks on corporate strategic objectives, strategic E-HRM aims at performing the basic HR functions electronically with use of latest technologies(Strohmeier and Kabst, 2012). Finally e-HRM is further categorized on the basis of its objectives as operational, relational and transformational e-HRM (Marler, 2009).Operational e-HRM is identical with the first type of previous two categories that is, administrative and operative e-HRM. Transformationale-HRM is similar to second type of previous two categories that is, informational and strategic e-HRM. Relational e-HRM aims at improving the stakeholder's relations and service delivery of HRM electronically. Among the three categories, the third category is experienced as 'commonplace', thus, in majority of literature on e-HRM, reference to the third category is dominating. The classification

of e-HRM under the above mentioned three categories are mutually inclusive and overlapping. Thee three categories may be further understood as hierarchical steps of e-HRM, as to make strategic use of e-HRM automation of HR functions is a premise.

Organizations may be either users or non- users of e-HRM. Further they may be operational, relational or transformational users. Among the three categories transformational e-HRM is carrying a dominant place in e-HRM literature and thus, it is considered to be the conceptual basis for this paper.

The purpose of this study is to find out theimpact of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on level to which e-HRM is used in IT industry of India. Further, it is to evaluate the impact use of e-HRM on effectiveness of core HR functions.

The objectives of the study are based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis in 1985. TAM was adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action (TRA). TRI argues that person's behavior is predicted by his behavioral intentions thus TAM focuses on intension to use and acceptance of latest technology in organizations. The model is based on three variables that is, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioral intention to use new technology. Perceived usefulness is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance his job performance.In contrast, perceived ease of use is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from efforts. The model suggests that employee's shows behavioral intention to adopt a technology if they find it useful and easy to learn.

TAM is the most parsimonious model to predict user acceptance and has been tested empirically and supported through validations, applications, and replications (Venkatesh& David, 2000;Schaup, Carter & McBride, 2010; Lee, 2010; Yusoff, Ramayah, &Haslinder, 2010). Thus, it has been selected as the basis for this study.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide a brief review of literature of e-HRM. We then provide the research model and hypotheses for the study. The fourth section includes the methodology that is followed to conduct this research. Section Five presents analysis of data and results drawn out of such analysis. Findings of the study are discussed in next section. The last section presents conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Several empirical evidences through review of literature have been collected concerning the key areas of HR functions where implementation of e-HRM increases the competitiveness of the firm, configurations of the e-HRM users, factors affecting the use and attitude towards e-HRM and the outcomes of e-HRM implementation.

Integration of Information Technology to HR Functions

Al –Dmour and Al -Zu'bi (2014) identified the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) application those were most frequently used in the business organizations in Jordan. Data were collected by using questionnaire. Findings enlighten that "employee records" is the most frequently used HRIS application which is followed by "pay roll" and "recruitment and selection". Other sophisticated HRIS applications such as "Succession Planning," "Performance Appraisal," "Compensation Management," and "Training Development" were also used in Jordon business organizations. Results reveal that these applications have several benefits, for example, quicker response time, more accurate HR information, reduction of paperwork and manpower, and more efficient tracking and controlling. But the use of such applications also has certain limitations they were: cost of implementation and inadequate knowledge about the system.

Hooi (2006) identified the five main areas of human resource management those significantly influence the competitiveness of the industry. The study was concerned to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector in Malaysia. The five areas are: recruitment, compensation and benefits, training and development, communication and performance appraisal. It had also been found that the readiness for e-HRM is influenced by the availability of resources (e.g. expertise, financial and technical resources) and the attitude of the employees.

Strohmeier and Kabst (2014) investigated the configurations of e-HRM. They found three configurations: "non-users", "operational users", and "power users". Organizations those do not implement e-HRM fall into the category of "non-users". "Operational users" are those who integrate information technology to operational HR functions. Last, "power users" comprise relational, operational and transformational e-HRM, hence, complete automation of HRM. Study on the group of HR managers of public and private organizations in Germany found that operational e-HRM functions are more frequently used and then relational. The transformational e-HRM functions are least performed. Finally, they concluded the e-HRM configurations are specific to organizational context. Some organizations do not have any electronic support in HR functions or merely use it in operational function. On the other hand, the large and strategic-oriented organization has full support of IT in HRM.

Factors Affecting Use of E-HRM

Burbach and Royle (2014) identified the institutional factors that affect the successful diffusion of e-HRM practices in multinational corporations (MNC). Based on the analysis of interviews with key stakeholders of a US-based MNC and with a senior manager working in one of its main competitive organization, authors have suggested four institutional level factors. These are: external, relational, organizational and individual level factors. External factors comprise regulations specific to industry and institutional isomorphic pressures such as coercive pressures, normative pressures, and mimetic pressures. Relational factors include trust, culture, resource dependence and micro-politics. Organizational factors accounts for governance mechanisms, subsidiary HR systems,

and change management. Last, individual factors comprise user reactions, user satisfaction, user acceptance and usability.

Voermans and Veldhoven (2006) examined the attitude of managers and employees working in Philips (Electronics) Netherlands, towards electronic human resource management (e-HRM). Findings reflect that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness have positive impact on attitude towards e-HRM. Furthermore, the study helped in understanding and solving difficulties concerned with the attitude towards the e-HRM.

Patil (2013) examined the attitude of employees towards the use of e-HRM. The study was conducted on group of IT employees working in software organizations. Results found that employees are highly satisfied with the implementation of e-HRM. It is noticed that the primary goal of the use of e-HRM is to increase administrative efficiency and cost reduction.

Manivannan (2013) delineated the nine dimensions of user satisfaction with e-HRM business to employee portal based on extensive review of literature. These are: Information Content, Ease of Use, Convenience of Access, Timeliness, Efficiency, Security, Confidentiality, Communication, and Layout. The validation of the model is suggested for future research.

Erdogmus and Esen (2011) found that technology readiness positively influences e-HRM technology acceptance. More elaborately, the usage intention of e-HRM is influenced by the personality (Optimism and Innovativeness) of the e-HRM user.

Benefits of E-HRM

Bondarouk, Ruel, and Heijden (2009) investigated the contribution of use of e-HRM to the HRM effectiveness. The interview of line managers and employees in a public sector organization were conducted. Results indicate positive linkage between application of e-HRM and HRM effectiveness. Moreover, the study found difference in the usage of e-HRM by line managers and employees. Thus, authors suggested multiple stakeholder perspective to be considered for e-HRM.

Ruel, Bondarouk and Velde (2006) investigate the contribution of e-HRM to human resource management effectiveness. The study was conducted in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in The Netherlands. Results found that the positive assessment of e-HRM applications by employees such as relevance to job, ease of use and perceived quality influence the technical and strategic functioning of HRM. Moreover, positive assessment of e-HRM applications enhances the effectiveness of HRM functions. The study suggests to encouraging employees to participate and involve through training in the area of use of e-HRM applications as it helps to decrease costs and strengthen the strategic partnership of HR department.

Davoudi and Fartash (2012) stressed that the use of e-HRM tools such as HR Intranets, Extranets and Portals lead to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job security etc. this subsequently brings effectiveness to human resource management. Thus, it is suggested to integrate information technology to HR practices which contributes to organizational goals.

Parry (2011) surveyed across 12 countries e-HRM increases the value of HR as it brings the strategic orientation of HR function. Results do not found evidence for the cost saving nature of e-HRM implementation. Hence, the study concluded that the implementation of e-HRM shifts the focus of HR practitioners from operational work to more strategic and value-added activities.

Parry and Tyson (2011) asserted that the use of e-HRM empowers HR practitioners improve efficiency, service delivery, standardization and organizational image and perform HR practices strategically.

The review reflects that the key domains concerned to e-HRM research have been focused by many researchers. The key factors that affect the use of e-HRM are users' attitude, technology readiness, technology acceptance and many more. Similarly, myriad benefits of e-HRM implementation are identified such as HRM effectiveness, increased efficiency, strategic strength etc.

3. Research Model and Hypothesis

Figure 1 depicts the research model for the present study. The model shows linkage between the acceptance of e-HRM technology and HR functions effectiveness. The technology acceptance model developed by Davis (1989) used here. The model propound that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the vital factors that determine the actual usage of the technology (e-HRM). It also indicates that higher the perceived ease of use by the user, greater will be the perceived usefulness.

The presented model also shows that the increased use of e-HRM will contribute to effectiveness of the human resource functions. This linkage is evident by previous studies (Bondarouk, Ruel, & Heijden, 2009; Ruel, Bondarouk& Velde, 2006; Davoudi&Fartash, 2012; Yusoff, Ramayah& Ibrahim, 2010).

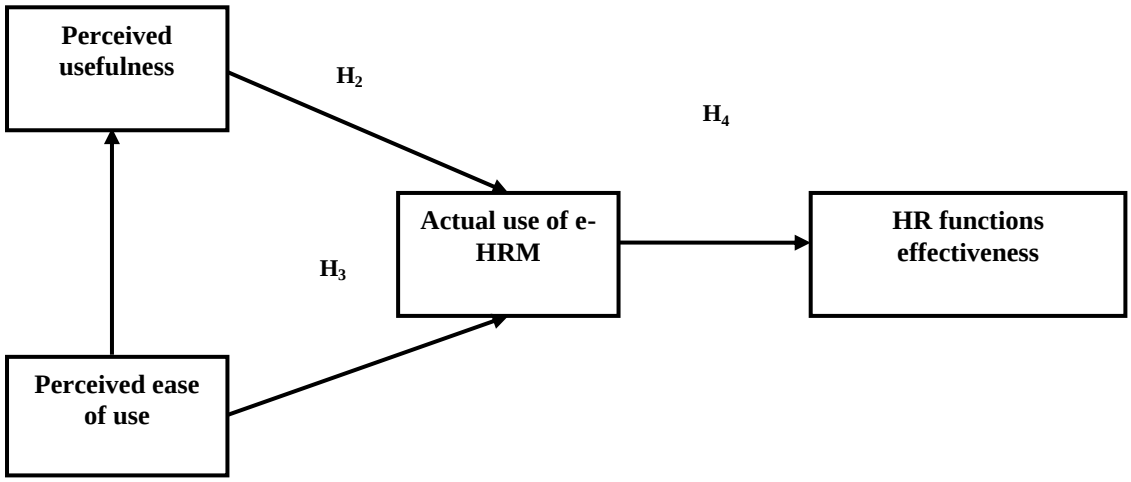

Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

The following proposed hypotheses are drawn from the research model:

H_1: Perceived ease of use has significant impact on perceived usefulness

H_2: Perceived usefulness has significant impact on actual use of e-HRM

H_3: Perceived ease of use has significant impact on actual use of e-HRM

H_4: Actual use of e-HRM has significant impact on HR functions effectiveness

4. Methodology

Descriptive research design with survey technique was followed to achieve the objectives of this research.

4.1 Sampling and Data Collection

For the purpose of collection of data, top five IT companies of Indiaas ranked by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) in 2013-14 were selected. The leading five IT companies are: Tata Consultancy Services Ltd., Infosys Ltd., Cognizant Technology Solutions India Pvt. Ltd., Wipro Ltd, HCL Technologies Ltd.. Data was collected from the employees working in selected IT companies located in Delhi/ NCR region. Sample size was computed to be 90 by using following formula:

$$n = \frac{\sigma^2 \times Z^2}{D^2}$$

Here, n = Sample size

σ = Standard Deviation

Z = Standard normal distribution for 95% confidence level equivalent to 1.96 and,

D = Degree of precision desired.

In order to obtain a representative and realistic sample size, the results of sample size from 3 scenarios are compared:

Scenario 1- Estimating a low standard deviation and low degree of precision.

Scenario 2- Estimating a moderate standard deviation and moderate degree of precision.

Scenario 3- Estimating a high standard deviation and high degree of precision.

The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis Taking Different Values of σ and D.

	SD	Z	D	n0
Scenario 1	0.5	1.96	0.71	1.91
Scenario 2	0.67	1.96	0.41	10.26
Scenario 3	0.9	1.96	0.11	257.164959
Total				269.33
Average				**89.78**

Data were collected from 88 employees. The sample consists of 61 (69%) male and 27 (31%) female respondents. Under the age groups of 20-35 years, 35-50 years, and 50 years and above, the number of respondents lies is 32 (36%), 22 (25%), and 34 (39%) respectively with a mean age of 46.87. The overall work experience distribution was as follows: 0-5 years (n=36); 5-10 years (n=31); 10 years and above (n=21).

4.2 Measurement Instruments

The questionnaire that was administered to the respondents carried 38 questions, out of which 6 belonged to demographic profile of respondents and 27scaled items belonged to the four constructs. Following instruments were

adopted to design the questionnaire to measure variables undertaken in the study:

Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness and perceived

ease of use are measured using the 12-item (6-items each), 5 point scale. The scales are adopted from Measurement Scales for Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Usedeveloped by Davis (1989). The composite reliability estimate of the scales are .946 and .928 respectively.

Actual use of e-HRM. Actual use of e-HRM is measured using an 8-item, five point

Likert scale (refer appendix-A). The composite reliability estimate of the scale for this sample is .974.

Perceived effectiveness of HR functions. Perceived effectiveness of HR functions is

measured using a 7-item, five point Likert scale (refer appendix-A). The composite reliability estimate of the scale for this sample is .929.

5. Analysis and Results

In order to draw meaningful results from the data collected in the online survey, labeling of variables was done by specifying the type of data (nominal, ordinal or scale) to be entered. The descriptive statistics of variables (mean and standard deviation) is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	N	Mean
HR functions effectiveness (EF)	88	4.20
Actual use of e-HRM (AU)	88	3.60
Ease of use (EU)	88	3.93
Perceived usefulness (PU)	88	4.22

The mean value of 4.2, 3.60, 3.93 and 4.22 respectively (on a scale from 1 to five) represents that effectiveness of HR functions, actual use of E-HRM tools, ease of use and perceived usefulness, are high in IT industry of India.

For the purpose of testing the proposed hypothesis Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique is used. The technique has two-step analytical approach. At the first step, the measurement model is evaluated based on the validity and reliability of the measures. If measurement model is found valid and reliable then move to the second step to evaluate the structural model. Under the evaluation of structural model the significance of the hypothesized relationships are assessed.

5.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

At the very first step items those have loading less than .5 was deleted to enhance the reliabilithy and validity of the constructs. To ensure reliability of the constructs composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha measures are used. The composite reliability and cronbach's alpha for all four constructs are above the accepted level of .7 (Fornell and Larcker 1981) as shown in Table 3. Thus the constructs are found reliable.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
HR functions Effectiveness (EF)	0.93	0.90
Actual Usage (AU)	0.97	0.97
Ease of Use (EU)	0.93	0.90
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.95	0.93

To ensure convergent validity the PLS technique requires that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all the constructs should be .5 or above to reflect that all the measured variables of a single construct converge (Chin 1998). Table 4 shows that al construct has AVE above the minimum limit. Thus, construct have convergent validity. The loadings of items (represented by rectangles) to their respective constructs (represented by circles) are also above .7 as reported in Figure 2, indicates good convergent validity of the constructs.

Table 4: Validity Statistics

	AVE	HR functions Effectiveness	Actual Usage	Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness
HR functions Effectiveness (EF)	.83	**0.88**			
Actual Usage (AU)	.77	0.59	**0.91**		
Ease of Use (EU)	.76	0.43	0.78	**0.87**	
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	.81	0.50	0.67	0.68	**0.90**

Fornell and Larcker (1981) test is used to ensure the discriminant validity of the constructs. Table 4 shows correlation between the constructs at off-diagonal and the square root of the AVE at-diagonal. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) test each latent variable correlation should be less than the square root of AVE on the same row and column, to have discriminant validity of the constructs. For example, the correlation between actual usage and HR functions effectiveness (.59) would be compared to the bold diagonal items above it (0.88) and to its right (0.91) to verify that it does not exceed either diagonal element. Similarly, all the correlations are compared to its corresponding (its above and its right) diagonal figure and it is found that all correlations are less than their corresponding diagonal figure. This indicates that the construct have discriminant validity. The above analysis given that the construct have adequate reliability and validity, thus, the measurement model is accepted. Now, we can proceed to evaluate structural model.

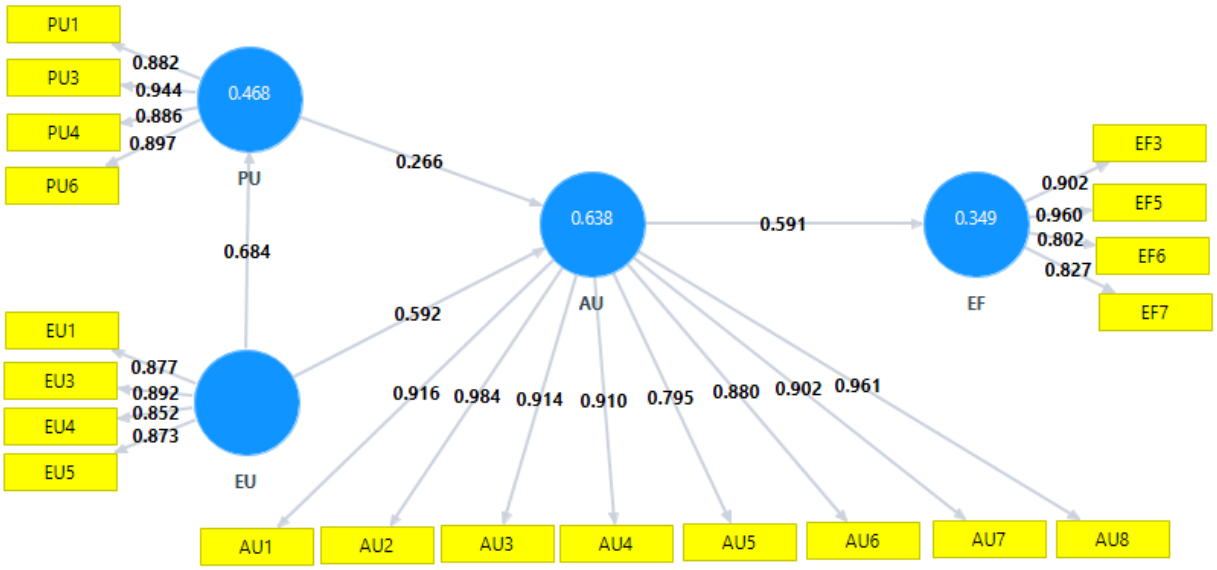

Figure 2: Measurement and Structural Model

5.2 Structural Model Evaluation

The results of structural model are reported by Figure 2. The results of PLS-SEM which also includes bootstrapping technique with 200 sub-samples to assess the significance of the linkages proposed in the model partially support the proposed research model. Based on the results the three of the four hypotheses are accepted. As hypothesized, ease of use (EU) of e-HRM technology significantly impacts perceived usefulness of it (H_1). The impact is positive and strong enough (β= .68, p<.05). The perceived usefulness (H_2) and ease of use (H_3) both have significant and positive impact on actual use of e-HRM. But, the influence of ease of use (β= .59, p<.05) is stronger than the influence of perceived usefulness (β= .27, p<.05). Last, actual usage of e-HRM has shown significant impact on HR functions effectiveness (H_4). The impact is positive and substantial (β= .59, p<.05).

The variance explained by ease of use in perceived usefulness is 47%. Variance explained in actual use of e-HRM by perceived usefulness and ease of use is 64% and actual use of e-HRM has accounted 35% variance in HR functions effectiveness.

6. Discussions

Majority of studies on e-HRM focuses on its acceptance by the targeted users (Ball, 2001), however less attention is paid to measure the impact of its use on effectiveness of HR functions. To overcome the literature gap this survey was conducted to find out the level of diffusion of e-HRM and its impact on effectiveness of HR functions. The effort was successful in several respects. The results obtained, validated the findings of previous empirical studies. Also new insights were generated about the nature of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in IT industry of India. Results indicated that e-HRM tools are used to a great extent in IT industry of India $(\bar{x} = 3.6)$higher level of perceived usefulness $(\bar{x} = 4.23)$ and perceived ease of use $(\bar{x} = 3.93)$ are found to be the reason for adoption of e-HRM tools to such an extent. The self-efficacy theory by Bandrua (1982) suggests that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness function as basic determinants of user behavior. Results of this paper supported self-efficacy theory as both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were found to have a significant positive impact on actual use of the e-HRM tools. Thus, employees in IT industry of India make an extensive use of e-HRM tools because they find it easy to learn and useful in enhancing their job performance as well. Employees working with IT industry are technology friendly and they find it quite easier to learn new technologies thus, actual usage of e-HRM tools is more dominantly effected by perceived ease of use (*β*= .592) in comparison to perceived usefulness (*β*= .266). Results showeda strong impact of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness (R^2 = .468) because employees in IT industry are technology friendly, they enjoy learning latest technologies. Once they learn the technologies they find them useful in their jobs. Results also indicated a significant positive influence of use of e-HRM tools in effectiveness of HR functions (R^2 = .349) as automation of various HR functions reduces the cost and use of internet and computers makes performance of the tasks more fast, accurate and bias free.

7. Conclusion

The research has given prominence to the critical success factors of e-HRM implementation – perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (**Voermans and Veldhoven, 2006)**. It also shows that the leading IT companies of India are practicing e-HRM technology to a great extent, the high technical-risk propensity of employees make e-HRM acceptable to them. Since application of e-HRM tools enhances effectiveness of core HR functions, HR managers shall ensure adoption of e-HRM tools in their organization. Employees adopt e-HRM tools on perceiving them to be easy to learn and at the same time useful for their job performance. Employees working with IT industry of India are eager to learn e-HRM tools as they perceive these tools to be very easy to learn and will help them in improving their job performance. Thus, organizations must design and conduct effective training programmes so that these technology friendly employees may learn and adopt e-HRM tools and which ultimately will result in increasing effectiveness of HR functions.

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