Examining the Role of Social Influence, Usefulness and Ease of Use for Determining the Mandatory Use of a Human Resource Information System in the Context of Saudi Ministries

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether social influence (SI), perceived usefulness (PU) and ease of use (EU) play an important role towards encouraging the mandatory use of a human resource information system (HRIS) in Saudi ministries. The review of the existing literature indicates that no previous research has examined the mandatory use of HRIS in the Saudi context. Thus, this study has developed a conceptual model by integrating (SI) with factors from the technology acceptance model (TAM) to investigate factors affecting the use and user satisfaction of HRIS. The structure equation modelling technique was employed to test the proposed conceptual model by utilising a questionnaire-based survey data collected from a total of 195 respondents. The findings from this study suggest that (SI) exerts both a direct and indirect effect for encouraging employees to use HRIS. The findings also suggest that TAM factors (i.e. PU and EU) had a significant effect on both the use of the system and user satisfaction.

Keywords: Human Resource Information System (HRIS), Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, Social Influence, Technology Acceptance Model, User Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

The Human Resource Information System (HRIS) is a type of information system (comprising of databases, computer applications, hardware and software) necessary to collect/record, store, manage, deliver, present and manipulate data relevant to human resources (HR) function (Harris and Desimone, 1995). Beckers and Bsat (2002) have outlined the following four reasons to justify why organisations should use HRIS: (1) to help shift the role of human resource management (HRM) from transactions to strategic HRM; (2) to help increase competitiveness by developing and enhancing human resource activities and procedures; (3) to re-engineer the whole HRM department organisations; and (4) to help create a greater range of HRM reports. As the management of information is essential to the modern HR function in any organisation in general and public organisations in particular (Al-Khowaiter et al., 2012), organisations implement HRIS to enable them to benefit from its positive attributes (Mujeeb, 2014).

For Saudi Arabia, information technology (IT) also plays a vital role in limiting the demand for labour in general and semi-skilled labour in particular. As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is the largest economy in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), it has attracted as many as 7,000,000 foreign labourers by the end of April 2013 (Adelman, 2013). In recent years, the GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, have adopted policies to control the flow of foreign labour, as several negative economic and social effects have started arising. HRIS can support long range planning by providing information for labour force planning as well as for supply and demand forecasts (Al-Shibly, 2011). Also, it allows firms to upgrade the capabilities of their human resources in executing their roles rapidly with greater accuracy. Therefore, introducing such a system will not only bring technical benefits, but also could reduce the need for numbers of foreign labourers into the Saudi workforce. This necessitates developments in Saudi’s HR capability in terms of performing their functions rapidly and with the desired level of accuracy. This highlights the importance for adopting such a system in Saudi public organisations.

Considering the vital role of HRIS, organisations such as the Ministry of Education have started implementation of such a system (an aspect of a bigger system called the FARIS system) since March 2011 with a cost of 120 million Saudi Riyals. Such a system has helped them realise a competitive advantage for the national economy through shifting the role of HRM from transactions to strategic, raising Saudi labourers’ productivity by providing them with the needed courses and training, and most importantly helping them to supply data for government or other statutory agencies in order to find qualified local labour. That, in turn, helps Saudi organisations to replace the foreign labour force with qualified Saudis. Despite several benefits offered by the HRIS, implementation and adoption can be challenging due to the costly nature and long time that it takes for the completion of such project. Furthermore, the advantages identified prior to adoption may not be realised until much later, when HRIS has been assimilated (Ashbaugh and Miranda, 2002). The difficulty of recruiting technically skilled labour due to a shortage (Ministry of Labor, 2014) poses a further challenge to Saudi public organisations towards implementing and using such IT-based systems. As the private sector organisations pays better for skilled jobs, public sector workers with skills are in short supply, especially technical ones they tend to move to the private sector (Hertog, 2013).

A lack of appropriate skills and competency among public sector employees may cause their resistance towards adopting and using IT-based systems leading to the failure of the introduction of new technologies (Al-Gahtani, 2004; Dwivedi et al. 2015). Thus, understanding the factors that may influence employee use of an IT-based system is an important step for ensuring wider use and success of new systems (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In this direction, Al-khwoaiter et al. (2014) have attempted to understand the user acceptance (by employing TAM constructs
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