

E-HRM and employee flexibility in Islamic banks in Jordan**Mohammad Al-Alwan^a, Dojanah Bader^b, Manar Al-Qatawneh^b, Suleiman Alneimat^c and Sulie-man Al-Hawary^{d*}**^aHussein Bin Talal University, Jordan^bAl-Balqa Applied University, Jordan^cPrincess Sumaya University for Technology, Jordan^dAl al-Bayt University, Jordan**CHRONICLE****ABSTRACT***Article history:*

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The study aimed at investigating the effect of e-HRM use on employee flexibility based on Davis' technology acceptance model. Seven hypotheses were proposed. Two external factors (HR department role and organizational readiness) were linked to e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use. These two factors linked to the behavioral intention to use e-HRM, which in turn connected to employee flexibility. All these propositions were accepted through analyzing data collected via a questionnaire from a sample consisting of managers and employees of human resource departments in Islamic banks in Jordan. The study contributes to the literature through clarifying and extending the technology acceptance model of e-HRM, as identifying two of the external factors that significantly affect e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use, as well as, and spreading the model to include employee flexibility.

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1. Introduction

The advancements of information and communication technologies (ICTs) result in numerous changes in life aspects. One of the most influenced economic entities by ICTs are organizations (Allahow et al., 2018). An example of using ICTs in organizations is implementing human resource management via electronic means, which is known as electronic management human resource management (e-HRM) (Al-Hawary et al., 2020; Al-Abbadi et al., 2021; AlHamad et al., 2022). Definitions of this concept describe it as a method used to implement human resource strategies and practices using technology-based channels (Erdoğan & Esen, 2011). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been used to describe the attitudes toward using information technology, particularly-HRM, by many authors (e.g., Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007; Yusoff et al., 2010; Erdoğan & Esen, 2011; Yusoff & Ramayah, 2011).

TAM assumes that the behavioral intention to use e-HRM is influenced by e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM perceived ease of use. These two factors are affected by external factors. Scholars were interested in applying TAM to explore users' attitude towards using e-HRM (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007), proposing models for e-HRM acceptance (Yusoff et al., 2010), and exploring factors influencing both users' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Erdoğan & Esen, 2011; Esen & Erdogmus, 2014; Anjum and Islam, 2020). In the same line, the current study seeks to explore some external factors

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that affect both e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM perceived ease of use, as well as to identify the effects of these two factors on users' behavioral intention to use e-HRM.

On the other hand, few studies took place to investigate the outcomes of TAM applications like employee outcomes, particularly, employee flexibility. This concept emerged due to a key shift in the resource-based view in which organizations were called to develop new competencies, in other words, human resource flexibility (Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013). The significant effects of employee flexibility is well established in the literature. Selecting a sample of senior executives of firms from industrial industry as well as food and grocery stores industry in the USA, Bhattacharya et al. (2005) found that skill flexibility and behavior flexibility are positively related to firm performance, i.e., financial performance. Moreover, the study found that skill flexibility was critical in reducing firm costs. In the healthcare industry, the results of Vredenburg and Bell (2014) showed a positive association between employee flexibility and patient satisfaction. Au et al. (2021) confirmed that employee flexibility is very important for organizations to manage external risks. Other benefits of employee flexibility include increased employee performance (Sabuhari et al., 2020) and employee engagement (Bal & De Lange, 2015). For Camps et al. (2016), employee flexibility significantly mediated the effect of organizational learning capability on employee performance. Liu and Lin (2021) indicated that employee flexibility plays a significant role in elevating the positive effects of high performance work systems and management of team flexibility on service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. Do et al. (2016) added another benefit of employee flexibility, which is improving organizational innovation.

Despite the importance of employee flexibility benefits, few studies investigated the antecedents of employee flexibility. Some previous studies indicated that employee flexibility could be promoted by human resource practices (Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013) and e-HRM (Al-Saidi and Ala'a, 2020). Hence, this study seeks to investigate the effect of e-HRM from TAM's perspective on employee flexibility. Specifically, the aim of this study is threefold. First, to determine some of the factors that affect e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM perceived ease of use. Second, to explore the effect of e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM perceived ease of use on users' behavioral intention to use e-HRM. Finally, to explore the effect of the behavioral intention on employee flexibility. Ultimately, the study looks for extending the TAM model to include outcomes of using e-HRM.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1 Employee flexibility

Organizations are required to make their resources more flexible to be utilized in different situations. In terms of human resources, flexibility refers to employee skill flexibility and employee behavior flexibility. Flexibility of employee skills means that he/she is able to learn new skills quickly for the purpose of his/her job tasks, while flexibility of employee behavior refers to his/her ability to adapt to new work conditions (Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013). Wright and Snell (1998, cited in Bhattacharya et al., 2005) indicated that skill flexibility refers to the number of situations in which employee skills are consumed, while behavior flexibility represents employee ability to deal with different work explicit demands. Flexibility of human resource practices was identified as a key dimension of employee flexibility (Do et al., 2016).

Regarding its measurement, employee flexibility was measured based on two dimensions: skill flexibility and behavior flexibility. Sabuhari (2021) used employee skills and employee behavior as two dimensions of human resource flexibility. In their study on employee flexibility role in healthcare services, Vredenburg and Bell (2014) measured employee flexibility using four items related to employee ability to change his/her approach when necessary as well as his/her ability to shift from one situation to another using another work approach. Al-Saidi and Ala'a (2020) conceptualized firm flexibility in terms of resource flexibility and coordination flexibility. They regarded resource flexibility as a construct that refers to resource utilization through different approaches, and viewed coordination flexibility as using assets in a quick manner. Do et al. (2016) identified three dimensions of human resource flexibility, which are employee skill flexibility, employee behavior flexibility, and HR practice flexibility.

Concerning the essential antecedents of employee flexibility, it was found through reviewing the literature that this construct is a function of numerous variables. HRM systems were identified as a major antecedent of employee flexibility in addition to leaders' role in promoting employee flexible behaviors (Solberg et al., 2021). Collecting data from employees and human resource directors, Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) examined the effect of firm/environment-associated factors such as management support as well as training culture and job-associated factors like job involvement and job autonomy on employee performance through employee-associated factors such as skill flexibility and adaptability. Their results accepted the hypotheses that firm/environment-associated factors had significant effects on job-associated factors, employee-associated factors and employee performance. Furthermore, both job-associated factors and employee-associated factors had significant effects on employee performance. Precisely, the results showed that skill flexibility is positively affected by training culture and adaptability is one of the most influential factors on employee performance.

Based on the above-cited literature, employee flexibility was defined as employee ability to acquire new skills quickly to cope with job demands, and to show different job approaches, when necessary, in different work situations. Therefore, this variable was operationalized as a construct of two dimensions, i.e., employee skill flexibility and employee behavior flexibility. These two dimensions were used in the literature as dimensions of employee flexibility (Wright & Snell 1998; Kumari & Pradhan, 2014; Do et al., 2016; Sabuhari, 2021; Sarala et al., 2016).

2.2 TAM E-HRM adoption

As documented in the literature, e-HRM adoption is affected by numerous factors (Al-Hawary & Al-Rasheedy, 2021). Bondarouk et al. (2017) divided these factors into three kinds: technological factors, organizational factors, and people factors. Such factors include employee attributes, top management support, information technology infrastructure, compatibility of e-HRM with the organizational objectives, as well as industry pressure (Masum et al., 2015). Exploring e-HRM use in information technology organizations, Rathee and Bhuntel (2021) identified eight critical factors including technology ease of use, system security, technology usefulness, organizational support, experience in information technology, risk perceptions, communication tools, and usage intention. Yusliza and Ramayah (2012) reported that the attitude towards e-HRM acceptance from the perspective of the technology acceptance model comprised user support and satisfaction with e-HRM, clarity of e-HRM objectives, e-HRM perceived usefulness and ease to use.

Davis' TAM as shown in Fig. 1 indicates that the attitude towards using information technology is a function of two key factors, which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which in turn shape users' attitude to use and therefore their behavioral intention towards the actual use of information technology systems in the future (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007). The aim of the model is to explain the user's behaviour toward information technology systems (Yusoff et al., 2010). In the e-HRM field, perceived usefulness has been defined as a user's confidence that using the systems will improve job performance, and perceived ease of use has been described as a user's perception that the system requires no effort to be implemented (Yusoff & Ramayah, 2011). The model shows that these two factors are mainly affected by external variables.

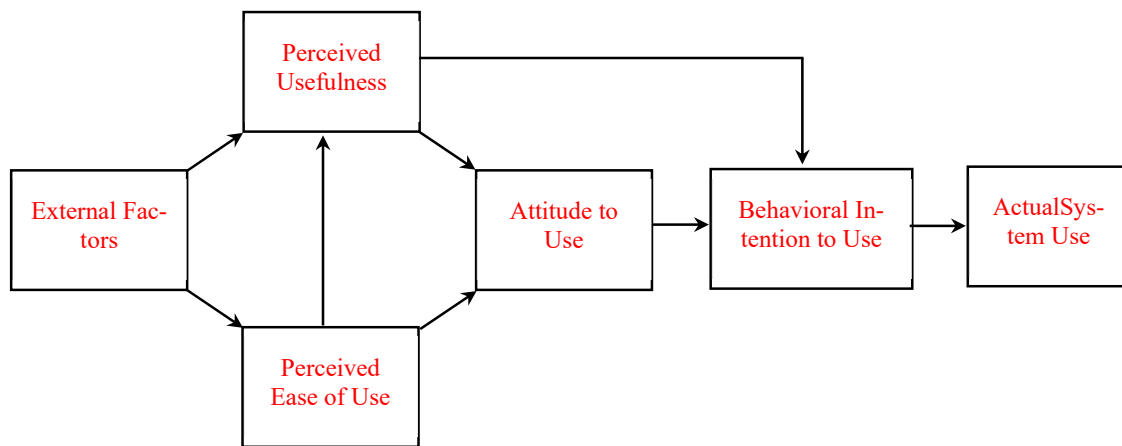


Fig. 1. Technology Acceptance Model(TAM)

Source: Davis(1989); Yusoff et al. (2010).

Reviewing the literature to explore these external variables reveals some factors as reported in Table 1. Yusoff et al. (2010) proposed a model comprising the role of human resource department as antecedents of users' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in e-HRM acceptance. The model was based on Ulrich's (1997) HRM four-role model in which human resource roles include administrative expert, change agent, strategic partner, and employee champion. Dosajh and Sujlana (2012) proposed a similar model. In their study on technology acceptance in e-HRM, Erdoğan and Esen (2011) investigated the effect of technology readiness (i.e., optimism, innovativeness, discomfort, and insecurity) on technology acceptance in e-HRM. They found that optimism and innovativeness had significant effects on users' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, while discomfort and insecurity had no significant effects on users' perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Optimism was defined as a user's perception of technology as a factor that leads to higher levels of flexibility and efficiency while innovativeness refers to a user's tendency to be a first mover to use technology (Esen & Erdogmus, 2014).

Moreover, Anjum and Islam (2020) found that employee technology competency and organizational resources competency had significant effects on the system perceived usefulness and both employee technology competency as well as organizational innovation had significant effects on the perceived ease of use. Investigating the effect of organizational readiness on e-HRM (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) acceptance, Esen and Özbağ (2014) found that the dimensions of organizational readiness had significant effects on behavioral intention to use e-HRM. Employee technical competency describes the real knowledge and skills required to perform job tasks, while organizational innovativeness refers to acceptance of new ideas or applications, and organizational resources signify all resources essential to execute e-HRM activities like technology infrastructure and financial resources (Anjum and Islam, 2020). Exploring the determinants of e-HRM, Masum et al. (2015) found that e-HRM adoption is significantly influenced by information technology infrastructure, industry pressure, employee individual attributes, top management support, and system complexity.

Table 1

External factors affecting perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in TAM

No.	Factors	Reference
1.	Roles of HR department (administrative expert, change agent, strategic partner, and employee champion)	Yusoff et al. (2010); Dosajh and Sujlana (2012); Yusliza and Ramayah (2012)
2.	Technology readiness (optimism and innovativeness).	Erdoğan and Esen (2011); Esen & Erdoğan (2014).
3.	Organizational readiness (perceived resources, perceived support, information policy, perceived innovation, perceived employee technical competency).	Esen and Özbağ (2014); Rathee and Bhuntel (2021).
4.	Employee technical competency, organizational innovation, and organizational resources competency.	Anjum and Islam (2020).

Based on the above-mentioned literature on the external factors affecting the perceived usefulness and ease of use of e-HRM, it was expected that two pivotal factors, i.e., HR department roles and organizational readiness, have significant effects on e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use. Therefore, the following hypotheses were introduced:

H₁: *Roles of the HR department significantly predict e-HRM perceived usefulness.*

H₂: *Roles of the HR department significantly predict e-HRM ease of use.*

H₃: *Organizational readiness significantly predicts e-HRM perceived usefulness.*

H₄: *Organizational readiness significantly predicts e-HRM ease of use.*

In terms of the effects of the perceived usefulness and ease of use of e-HRM, numerous studies revealed significant effects of these two factors on the attitude towards e-HRM use. Yusoff et al. (2015) found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were significant predictors of the attitude towards e-HRM use. According to Saleh and Saleh (2016), both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are positively correlated to the attitude towards using e-HRM. Another evidence reported by Rathee and Bhuntel (2021) indicated that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use had significant effects on the attitude towards e-HRM. Thiruselvi et al. (2013) indicated that the behavioral intention to use e-HRM is determined by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. It was acknowledged that both perceived usefulness and ease of use of e-HRM have significant effects on the attitude towards e-HRM use. Therefore, the following hypotheses were postulated:

H₅: *Perceived usefulness significantly predicts the behavioral intention to use e-HRM.*

H₆: *Perceived ease of use significantly predicts the behavioral intention to use e-HRM.*

Using e-HRM results in several outcomes. Al-Saidi and Ala'a (2020) found a significant positive linkage between e-HRM use and human resource flexibility. The authors categorized human resource flexibility into two dimensions, which are resource flexibility and coordination flexibility. They defined the first dimension as a resource possibility to be utilized in different ways, while described the second one as an organization's capability to attain and use assets in a timely routine to achieve its strategic goals. According to Beltrán-Martín et al. (2008), human resource flexibility represents employee functional flexibility (i.e., employee ability to perform altered responsibilities under several situations), employee malleability flexibility (i.e., employee ability to acquire new skills to complete new tasks), and employee behavioral flexibility (i.e., employee ability to adopt diverse behaviors in doing job tasks). Pyszka (2018) added that using information technology applications in human resource management results in important outcomes such as employee higher level of self-efficacy and flexible work collaborations. It was expected that there is a significant effect of behavioral intention to use e-HRM on employee flexibility and, therefore, the following hypothesis was assumed:

H₇: *The behavioral intention to use e-HRM significantly predicts employee flexibility.*

2. Research methodology

2.1 Research sample

The population of the study consisted of HR department employees in four Islamic banks in Jordan, from which a sample comprising 150 employees were randomly selected. Data were collected using an online questionnaire. One-hundred and twenty-nine questionnaires were received, from which 10 responses were excluded due to incomplete answers. Hence, 119 questionnaires were used for statistical analysis purposes. Initial data screening showed that eight responses should be excluded as outlier responses. Therefore, 111 questionnaires were used to conduct data analysis.

2.2 Research instrument

Role of the HR department (HRDR) was measured using three items (Yusoff et al., 2010). Organizational readiness (ORGR) was measured via three items (Esen & Özbağ, 2014; Anjum & Islam, 2020; Erdoğan & Esen, 2011). Six items were used to measure perceived usefulness (PUSF) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) (Esen & Özbağ, 2014), four items used to assess the attitude towards e-HRM (ATU) (Rathee & Bhuntel, 2021). Behavioral intention (BI) was also assessed using three items (Thiruselvi et al., 2013). Finally, three items were used to evaluate employee flexibility (EMF) (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008).

2.3 Research conceptual model

The model shown in Fig. 2 portrays the potential associations between research variables through eight hypotheses. Based on Davis' TAM, two external factors (HR department role, organizational readiness) were linked to e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use (H1-H4), which in turn assumed to exert significant effects on the behavioral intention to use e-HRM (H5 & H6). The latter outcome, i.e., the behavioral intention to use e-HRM, was expected to show a significant effect on the employee flexibility (H7). The analysis was conducted assuming that both the role of the HR department and organizational readiness are correlated independent variables.

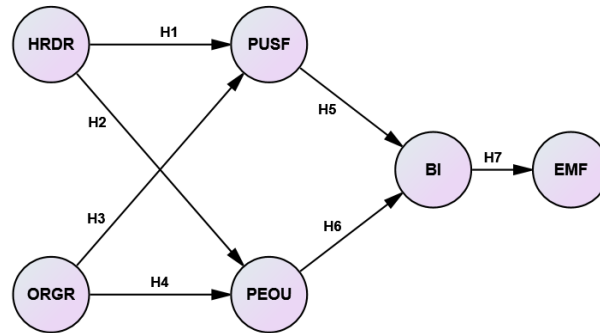


Fig. 2. Research conceptual model

2. Data analysis and results

2.1 Validity and reliability

The results of exploratory factor analysis in Table 2 indicate that all factor loadings were greater than 0.50, the values of the average variance extracted (AVE) were higher than 0.50, and the square roots of AVE values were greater than the correlation coefficients between each pair of the independent variables, which ensures convergent and discriminant validity (Al-Hawary & Al-Syasneh, 2020; AlTaweel & Al-Hawary, 2021; Eldahamsheh et al., 2021).

Table 2

Results of exploratory factor analysis

Factors	Items	Loadings	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	CR	α	ω
HR department role	Q1	0.609	0.520	0.721	0.762	0.916	0.920
	Q2	0.788					
	Q3	0.753					
Organizational readiness	Q4	0.721	0.548	0.740	0.784	0.800	0.805
	Q5	0.725					
	Q6	0.773					
e-HRM perceived usefulness	Q7	0.666	0.579	0.761	0.804	0.805	0.827
	Q8	0.816					
	Q9	0.793					
e-HRM ease of use	Q10	0.664	0.631	0.794	0.835	0.894	0.910
	Q11	0.848					
	Q12	0.856					
Behavioral intention	Q13	0.640	0.601	0.775	0.816	0.918	0.922
	Q14	0.809					
	Q15	0.859					
Employee flexibility	Q16	0.768	0.675	0.822	0.862	0.868	0.869
	Q17	0.844					
	Q18	0.851					

On the other hand, values of composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α) and McDonald's omega (ω) were higher than 0.70, which means acceptable values of reliability. Hence, validity and reliability essentials were met. The results in Table 2 show that there are significant correlations between independent variables with no coefficients greater than 0.80, and significant correlations between each independent variable and the dependent one.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations

Constructs	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) HR department role	-					
(2) Organizational readiness	0.670*	-				
(3) e-HRM perceived usefulness	0.528*	0.513*	-			
(4) e-HRM ease of use	0.575*	0.494*	0.557*	-		
(5) Behavioral intention	0.661*	0.514*	0.510*	0.640*	-	
(6) Employee flexibility	0.542*	0.384I	0.390*	0.505*	0.568*	-

*. Correlation is significant less than 0.001

2.2 Model fit and hypotheses testing

The results of model fit showed satisfactory results of the structural goodness-of-fit as relative chi-square is less than 3 (CMIN = 252.079, DF = 128, P = 0.000), goodness of fit index is close to 1 (GFI = 0.812), the comparative fit index is close to 1 (CFI = 0.920). The root mean square error of approximation is less than 0.1 (RMSEA = 0.094). The structural model in Figure 2 shows the diagram of hypothesis testing. HR department role and organizational readiness are related to e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use, which in turn are linked to user's behavioral intention to use e-HRM. The latter is associated with employee flexibility. Basically, the results in Table 2 indicated that all research hypotheses were accepted. HR department role had significant effects on e-HRM perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.249$, C.R. = 3.578, P = 0.000) and e-HRM ease of use ($\beta = 0.482$, C.R. = 4.644, P = 0.000). Organizational readiness had significant effects on e-HRM perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.388$, C.R. = 3.588, P = 0.000) and e-HRM ease of use ($\beta = 0.513$, C.R. = 3.264, P = 0.001). Moreover, e-HRM perceived usefulness showed a significant effect on the behavioral intention to use e-HRM ($\beta = 0.417$, C.R. = 3.101, P = 0.002), as well as, e-HRM ease of use had a significant effect on the behavioral intention to use e-HRM ($\beta = 0.379$, C.R. = 5.290, P = 0.000). Finally, the behavioral intention to use e-HRM had a significant effect on employee flexibility ($\beta = 0.518$, C.R. = 5.568, P = 0.000).

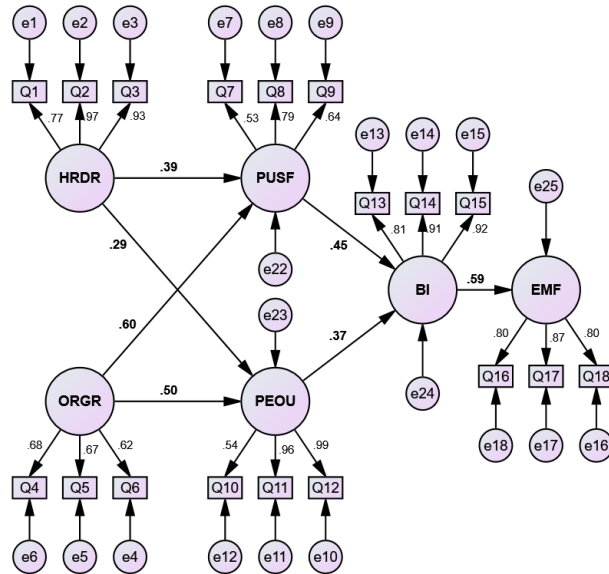


Fig. 3. Research structural model

Table 3
Results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Paths	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1	HRDR → PUSF	0.249	0.069	3.578	0.000
H2	HRDR → PEOU	0.482	0.104	4.644	0.000
H3	ORGR → PUSF	0.388	0.108	3.588	0.000
H4	ORGR → PEOU	0.513	0.157	3.264	0.001
H5	PUSF → BI	0.417	0.134	3.101	0.002
H6	PEOU → BI	0.379	0.072	5.290	0.000
H7	BI → EMF	0.518	0.093	5.568	0.000

3. Discussion and conclusion

The results confirmed that the research hypotheses were accepted. That is, roles of HR department and organizational readiness are significant predictors of e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use, which supported H1, H2, H3, and H4. These results are echoed in prior works based on Ulrich's (1997) HRM four-role model (e.g., Yusoff et al., 2010, Dosajh & Sujlana, 2012; Erdoğmuş & Esen, 2011; Anjum & Islam, 2020; Esen & Erdogmus, 2014; Masum et al., 2015). Moreover, the results showed that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have significant effects on the attitude towards e-HRMuse, which means that H5, H6, and H7 were supported. Similar results were found in previous studies (e.g., Yusoff et al. 2015; Saleh & Saleh, 2016; Rathee & Bhuntel, 2021). Finally, the effect of the behavioral intention to use e-HRM on employee flexibility was also supported in line with previous works (e.g., Pyszka, 2018; Al-Saidi & Ala'a, 2020).

These results suggest that users' behavioral intention to use e-HRM is significantly influenced by their attitudes to use e-HRM. As documented in the literature, the attitude towards using e-HRM is a function of two constructs, which are e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use. According to Davis' technology acceptance model, both e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use are subject to external factors. The results of the current study confirmed that HR department roles (administrative expert, change agent, and strategic partner) and organizational readiness (perceived organizational resources, perceived organizational support, organizational information policy, perceived organizational innovation,

perceived employee technical competency) are examples of these external factors. Overall, using e-HRM is one of the critical factors for employee flexibility in terms of employee ability to perform different job tasks in different conditions, employee ability to acquire new skills to execute new job tasks, and to adopt different behaviors in accordance with the required job tasks.

4. Research implications and limitations

The study embraces three key implications. First, employee flexibility as a central aspect of organizational success can be enhanced through e-HRM based on its role in improving employee ability to carry out different tasks in different conditions as established on the basis of employee ability to acquire new skills and to adopt new behaviors. Therefore, organizations are requested to promote e-HRM. Second, publicity of e-HRM depends on the perceptions of e-HRM usefulness and ease of use. Such factors can be enhanced through users' awareness and training. Third, e-HRM perceived usefulness and e-HRM ease of use are affected by numerous factors such as HR department roles as well as organizational readiness. Efficiency of the HR department, organizational resources, support, information policy, innovation, and employee technical competency are pivotal factors in the context of e-HRM adoption and actual use. However, the study is limited to its cross-sectional design and sample size. Hence, longitudinal research design with a larger sample size should be considered in future research. Likewise, future studies are required to explore additional external factors influencing the adoption and use of e-HRM systems.

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