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Gwala, Zakhele H.

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PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTITIONERS ON THE VALUE OF ELECTRONIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF TSHWANE METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

by

Mr Zakhele H. Gwala

Student No: 2467538

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand in 100% fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Commerce (Human Resources Management)

Supervisor: Ms Aretha Mazingi

Co-Supervisor: Dr Emmanuel Nkomo

Johannesburg

January 2023

DECLARATION OF PLAGIARISM

I, the undersigned, Zakhele Handsome Gwala, hereby declare that this research is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Business Science at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

I further declare that:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signed at _____ on this 7th day of February 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this research project symbolises yet another breakthrough in my life. Many people contributed to the successful completion of this milestone and I would like to thank them for their contributions. However, the contribution of the following named individuals was crucial to the research. First, my sincere appreciation and gratitude go to Ms Aretha Mazingi and Dr Emmanuel Nkomo, whose guidance, insight and interest in the research area gave me strength to continue with this research. Their support during the research process is unquantifiable. All the research participants who shared their knowledge and experiences are greatly appreciated; had it not been for them, my quest to complete this project would not have succeeded.

To my family, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to my wife, Mrs Noxolo Rejoice Gwala and my children, Kungawo, Mikhulu and Likuye Gwala, for their emotional support from the inception of this project to its completion. Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues, Mr Siyazi Howard Sithole and Ms Jacqui Madima.

ABSTRACT

The current study was conceptualised to extract the views of the human resource practitioners in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality about the effects of e-HRM on their individual performance. The nature of the research inquiry was to establish whether the introduction of e-HRM in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality resulted in an increased efficiency in business operations and enhanced employee performance. The concept of e-HRM (also known as paperless HRM or green HRM) encompasses the use of paperless systems in all HR occupations such as training, performance management and recruitment. One of the key benefits of e-HRM is to build a viable, globally friendly and competitive advantage through worker commitment (Fındıklı and Bayarçelik, 2015).

The study applied a qualitative exploratory research design. It was not the intention of the study to generalise the findings to the study population. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from ten (10) respondents. Thematic coding analysis technique was used to analyse qualitative data that was extracted from the respondents. An ethical protocol was utilised to ensure that respondents were not subjected to any form of harm. The technology acceptance theory was used to underpin the current study. This theory describes how consumers adopt and use technology. A theoretical framework is the fundamental aspect of the research project since it serves as the base upon which all knowledge is constructed and is consistent with the research problem and purpose statement of the study (Kivunja, 2018).

The study discovered that human resource practitioners had a positive attitude towards the introduction of e-HRM. Respondents to the study claimed that the introduction of e-HRM enhanced the operational capacity of the municipality. Other respondents were sceptical about the introduction of e-HRM. These respondents feared that e-HRM would cause them to lose their jobs in the long run. Load shedding was identified as the key factor in hampering the smooth utilisation of e-HRM.

Keywords: Perceptions, e-HRM, Human Resource Practitioners and Technology Acceptance Theory

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

e-HRM	Electronic Human Resource Management
E-PMS	Electronic Performance Management System
ESS	Employee Self Service
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
NPM	New Public Management
TAT	Technology Acceptance Theory

Chapter One

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The changing work environment triggered by various factors such as globalisation and digitalisation places human resource management (HRM) practices in the central position. Technological and information system development advancements have changed the nature of human resources (Findikli and Rofcanin, 2016). All organisations in the world strive to gain a competitive edge in the market. This implies that organisations need to invest their time in exploring efficient systems to manage their business operations. Demand for human resources related services in many organisations has prompted the challenge of big data. A significant amount of information is created by human resources on a daily basis in their respective organisations. Using a paper-based model to manage a high volume of data can result in undesirable consequences. Information can be lost due to fire. It is time-consuming for human resources to rely on a paper-based model. Therefore, modern competitive and technological developments in the markets enabled the formation of a knowledge-based, real-time, interactive and self-managed business atmosphere (Baykal, 2019).

The advent of electronic -human resource management (e-HRM) in the market was widely viewed by human resource (HR) practitioners as a significant tool to enhance the efficiency of human resources. The current study is conceptualised to extract the views of the human resource practitioners in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality about the effects of e-HRM on their individual performance. The nature of the research inquiry in the current study is to establish whether the introduction of e-HRM in the municipality resulted in increased efficiency in business operations and enhanced employee performance.

This is a qualitative exploratory research study. The study does not seek to generate research findings that can be generalised to the entire population. The findings of the study will instead be used as a base for future studies. This chapter aims to orientate

the mind of the reader to the critical elements upon which the study is founded. Background information is discussed to contextualise the study. Other elements, such as research objectives and research questions, are discussed.

1.2. BACKGROUND

The concept of e-HRM (also known as paperless HRM or green HRM) encompasses the use of paperless systems in all HR occupations such as training, performance management and recruitment. One of the key benefits of e-HRM is to build a viable, globally friendly, and competitive advantage through worker commitment (Fındıklı and Bayarçelik, 2015). Great changes have been brought to our economy, society, and culture with the rapid development of science and technology, especially the usage of Internet and computer technology. Over the last few years, with the appearance of these technologies, a new wave of human resource (HR) technology known as electronic human resource management (e-HRM) has emerged (Al-Harazneh and Sila, 2021). The introduction of e-HRM is expected to facilitate a more efficient and strategic way of working for HR professionals (Sutherland, 2019) because electronic human resource management (e-HRM) provides human resource (HR) functions with the opportunity to create new avenues for contributing to organizational success. The term e-HRM was coined in the 1990s and refers to conducting HRM activities with the use of the Internet or the Intranet (Steyn, 2020).

e-HRM allows HR officials to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their work through reduced paper-based administration (Wege, Ngige and Dieli, 2019). HR executives and generalists can make proper decisions and improve operations can through the application of an e-HRM. e-HRM personnel can keep their personal information on the system and update it at any time when necessary. e-HRM supports the reduced production costs, improved productivity and communication, and promotes a paperless organisation (Al-Harazneh and Sila, 2021). It is important to note that, from these explanations, e-HRM relies heavily on the use of information and communication technology. e-HRM is also viewed as a way of executing HR plans, rules, and practices in the organisation through mindful and focused support of web technology channels (Steyn, 2020).

Mvula (2022) argue that the performance of HRM is inextricably linked to the performance of HR professionals. Public-sector institutions in South Africa have a responsibility to make the transition from traditional HRM tactics and practices to a more strategic HRM by aligning themselves with digitalisation within the context of the fourth industrial revolution to achieve a competitive edge in the provision of public value. Scholars such as Poba-Nzaou, Uwizeyemunugu, Gaha and Laberge (2020) indicate that it is essential for the e-HRM to remain linked to the Human Resource Information System and virtual HRM. Many public-sector institutions in South Africa have already started to rely on self-service as part of e-HRM. These two channels, namely traditional HRM and e-HRM, are the important concepts of HR-related technologies (Purcell, Kinnie, Boxall, Purcell and Wright, 2009). In South Africa, only Gauteng province has implemented the e-HRM over the past five years. Except for Western Cape province, other provinces are lagging behind in terms of implementing e-HRM in their work environment (Ndzwayiba, Ukpere and Steyn, 2018). The implementation of e-HRM in South Africa is viewed as a new phenomenon since it is still in its formative stages (Sutherland, 2019). To measure whether the implementation of e-HRM was a success or not, it is vital to establish whether the introduction of e-HRM contributed to organisational effectiveness. Additionally, it would be interesting to measure the perceptions of HR practitioners about the effectiveness of e-HRM in their work environment.

The present paper elaborates on electronic human resource management (e-HRM) in detail on the following aspects, namely definition of e-HRM, types of e-HRM, effectiveness of e-HRM. Hopefully, this paper could help readers understand e-HRM more comprehensively and systematically.

1.3. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research study was to explore the effects of e-HRM on the performance of HR professionals within the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The focus on local government was motivated by the notion that local government is the crucial entity in the provision of services. Citizens tend to rely on municipal services such as water, sanitation and refuse collection for daily survival. Therefore, organisational efficiency in local government is extremely important. The assumption

here is that e-HRM should assist HR practitioners to better manage their human resource activities, thus leading to organisational effectiveness.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research study intends to generate findings that will shed light on whether e-HRM enhances HR practitioners' performance or not and organisational efficiency. The study will offer more insight on whether the implementation of e-HRM managed to yield the intended results. The result of the study will support the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality to better comprehend the dynamics associated with the implementation of e-HRM practices. Hopefully, this paper could also help readers understand E-HRM more comprehensively and systematically.

1.5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study will significantly contribute to the literature by providing effective ways to enhance the implementation of the e-HRM in the workplace. Many studies are focussing on the application, practice and effectiveness of electronic-human resource management (Obeidat, 2016). Nevertheless, information available in the literature regarding the attitudes of public servants towards the implementation of the e-HRM and the effects they may have on the technical skills of the HR professionals is sparse (Ukpere, 2010). The study will further contribute to the discourse by finding ways that will enhance the use of e-HRM as a decision-making tool in the human resource domain.

1.6. RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

The implementation of electronic-human resource management (e-HRM) in organizations is based on the idea of successfully achieving organizational success. The introduction of e-HRM in organisations should be value based. Wijayadne (2021) argues that the introduction of e-HRM in certain organisations has the potential to empower or disempower employees and might increase or decrease efficiency. These type of contradictions in the implementation of e-HRM can be damaging when

monetary investment associated with operationalising e-HRM is considered. There are several factors that must be considered to ensure successful implementation of e-HRM in organisations (Martini et al., 2020). These contextual facilitating factors are inclusive of organizational size, complexity of e-HRM as an IT system, age and level of education of employees and resistance to change by employees. Employees who are older or closer to retirement are reportedly to take longer in accepting technologically advancement in the workplace as compared to younger employees (Galanakiet al., 2019). These contextual facilitating factors have a potential to cause low adoption rate of the e-HRM in organisations.

Public-sector institutions such as the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality have already adopted e-HRM as a tool to professionalise and modernise public administration. e-HRM is said to save time and cost reduction (Ukandu, 2015). Additionally, e-HRM uses the tools such as the Internet and software, which in theory, should simplify the flow of information and communication among HR professionals. It also offers an online selection of employees for training purposes, simplifying valuable data for all employees. It is suggested that institutions such as the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality are still in the introductory phase of implementing e-HRM (George, 2020). It is argued that the key challenge experienced by HR practitioners in the utilisation of e-HRM systems is consistency. The government sometimes makes use of e-HRM and later reverts to the manual system, which is a sign of inconsistency. This inconsistency seems to be a problem as it creates more data storage facilities and sometimes confuses external stakeholders (Ukandu, 2015). To determine whether e-HRM is of benefit to the public sector, it is essential to explore the views of the end users of the e-HRM. The research findings might be useful to guide planners in government to enhance the operational performance of HR practitioners.

Research of this nature has been conducted before by well-developed countries such as Bangladesh and the United States; however, very few have conducted a study on this environment in South Africa (Sungwa, 2021). The only research associated with e-HRM in South Africa and Nigeria was found to be based on institutions of higher learning (Ukandu, 2015). There is a lack of empirical studies in the literature on how e-HRM influences the performance of HR professionals from a local government perspective (Sungwa, 2021). This study intends to fill this gap.

1.7. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

a) The primary objective of the study was to

- explore the perceptions and experiences of HR practitioners regarding the effects of e-HRM on employee performance.

b) The secondary objectives of the study were to

- identify any factors that have the potential to discourage HR practitioners from using e-HRM.
- identify any factors that have the potential to encourage HR practitioners to use e-HRM.
- determine whether e-HRM results in organisational efficiency.

1.8. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) The *primary research question* that the study intended to answer was:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of HR practitioners regarding the use of e-HRM to enhance employee performance?

b) The study was further guided by the following *secondary research questions*:

- What are the factors that discourage HR practitioners from using e-HRM?
- What are the factors that encourage HR practitioners to use e-HRM?

1.9. STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter	Description
Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study	This chapter introduces the research and sets the contextual background for the e-HRM concept. The chapter further discusses the problem statement, research objectives, research questions guiding the research project, and an overview of the literature survey and research methodology.
Chapter Two: Literature review	This chapter aims to provide a review of scholarly sources related to e-HRM. Sources refer to academic journals, conference papers, published research papers, and books. This chapter identifies areas of prior research and relevant debates on e-HRM. The chapter will further discuss theories relevant to e-HRM.
Chapter Three: Research methodology	This chapter specifies the methodological choices made in this research project. The chapter outlines the research design that pulls the research together. Research methodological aspects such as data collection techniques, sampling methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations are included in this chapter.
Chapter Four: Presentation and discussion of findings	This chapter provides the first observation of the data collected through semi-structured interviews. The data collected is discussed against the literature review presented in Chapter Two. The chapter further deals with data analysis by considering the research questions of the research study.
Chapter Five: Conclusion and recommendations	The chapter concludes the research report by summarizing the key findings of the study and further presents recommendations.

1.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the main problem of the research, namely the issue of inconsistency in the utilisation of e-HRM systems. A background on the concept of e-HRM was provided, followed by the purpose of this study, which sought to highlight the significance of e-HRM to assist HR practitioners to better manage their human resource activities, thus leading to organisational effectiveness. This research will seek to provide answers to the identified primary and secondary research questions.

Chapter Two

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to present existing literature on electronic human resource management. A literature review focusses on exploring the published information on a specific topic. The practice of conducting a literature review is essential in any research due to its capacity to empower a researcher to comprehend the previous research studies and to locate the current study within the existing body of knowledge (Badenhorst, 2007). Information on relevant trends, key issues, debates and theoretical frameworks related to electronic human resource management will be presented in this chapter. The theoretical framework, which is a subsection of the literature review, will discuss one theory underpinning the current research.

2.2. The evolution of e-HRM

The advent of the internet gave birth to a new era of HRM known as electronic human resource management (e-HRM). This period was characterised by the radically re-engineering of human resource practices and strategies in order to compete in an intensely competitive market (De Alwis, Andrli´c, and Šostar, 2022). Before the advent of e-HRM, human resource processes relied heavily on time-consuming manual paper record-keeping. The idea of e-HRM was first introduced in 1990s due to the widespread use of electronic commerce (e-commerce). This was generally understood as performing human resource functions using intranet or internet networks (Maatman, 2006). Prospective job applicants, managers, employees and other relevant stakeholders could access human resource information via the Internet or intranet.

Findikli and Rofcanin (2016) argue that there are five fundamental triggering factors responsible for the development of e-HRM. The first factor relates to the idea of information technology as an important element required for the adaptation of e-HRM

to fast changes in computer hardware, network and software so that work processes become better. The second factor relates to the re-engineering of processes as defined by the ability of the human resource managers to redesign business processes and improve the functioning of the organisation. Swift management is third factor that triggered the need for the adoption of e-HRM. Fourthly, organisations and companies are expected to work swiftly and diligently to maximise their competitive edge in the market (Findikli and Rofcanin, 2016). The final factor relates to the issue of network organisations. Organisations are continuously in pursuit of practical solutions and fewer bureaucratic controls. Information can be easily transferred among co-workers using local area networks, e-mails and a mutual intranet provided for by information technology. Creating information workers is another factor responsible for triggering the demand for e-HRM. The use of information technologies permits workers to manipulate data, thus allowing the organisations to learn and identify new opportunities. The last factor deals with the issue of globalisation. To compete in the 21st century, it is necessary for companies to develop globally relevant strategies capable of meeting the needs or demands of their employees (Findikli and Rofcanin, 2016).

2.3. Understanding the concept of e-HRM

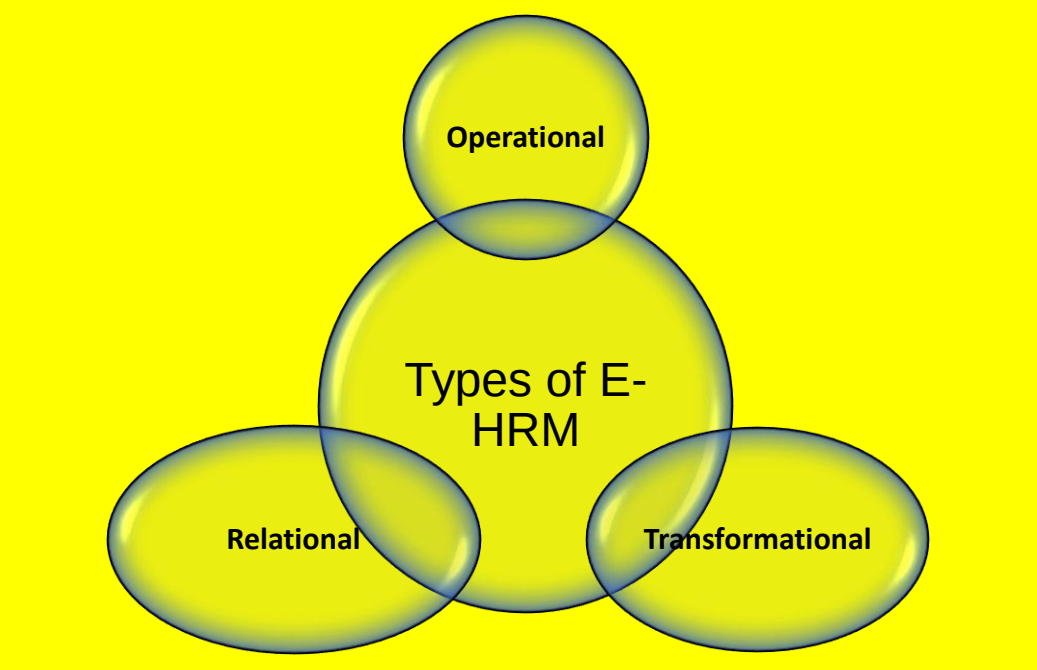
There are various definitions of electronic human resource management (e-HRM) that exist in the literature. Siam and Ahaderi (2019) define the concept of e-HRM as the configuration of human resource management functions with technology. Human resource functions are performed digitally or remotely here. Other scholars, such as Ma and Ye (2015), also define e-HRM as a link between human resource functions and technology. In simple terms, e-HRM may be viewed as a mechanism that permits both managers and employees of an organisation to have easy and direct access to human resource services (Malkawi, 2018). The combination of technology and human resource functions is believed to bring effectiveness and efficiency to organisations. The literature suggests that the introduction of e-HRM in organisations has the potential to improve human resource customer care services. In addition, e-HRM can be used as a strategic partner that results in achieving organisational goals (Al-kasasbeh, Halim and Omar, 2016). Nowadays, human resource functions are not only performed by human resource employees. Human resource functions are also

extended to line managers. For example, non-human resource managers are usually responsible for shortlisting and interviewing potential candidates for employment. Moreover, leave applications or employment terminations are performed through electronic self service, which is another form if e-HRM. Therefore, e-HRM is applicable to all employees in the department (Malkawi, 2018).

2.4. Types of Electronic – Human Resource Management

In terms of the literature, e-HRM can be understood in terms of three elements represented by Figure 1.

Figure 1: Types of e-HRM



Source: Adapted from (Rajalakshmi and Gomathi, 2016).

- **Operational human resource management**

Operational human resource management focusses on operational matters. This can be inclusive of the circulation of policies and the administration of benefits. Other activities that fall under the operational human resource management element include the maintenance of records, personnel data management and payroll. e-HRM assists

in terms of enhancing human resource administrative efficiency and reducing costs. Mahfod, Khalifa and Madi (2017) also suggest that e-HRM can be used as an administrative tool to update employees' personal information through the HR system such as Electronic Self Services (ESS).

- **Relational human resource management**

The notion of relational human resource management entails human resource activities that link the human resources of the organisation with other parts of the organisation and the broader outside world. Recruitment and selection are key human resource activities that connect human resources of the department with the broader society (Rajalakshmi and Gomathi, 2016). Organisations would normally request potential candidates to apply for the available vacancies. By using e-HRM, unemployed individuals may use recruitment portals to declare their interest in the advertised vacancies. Organisations could further issue bursaries or learnerships to unemployed youth.

- **Transformational human resource management**

Transformational human resource management mostly involves strategic human resource management. This can be inclusive of knowledge management, organisational renewal and organisational change (Mahfod et al., 2017). Once the strategic position of the organisation is transformed, e-HRM has the potential to transform human resource functions.

2.5. Determinants of attitude toward e-human resource management

This section discusses the attitudes of employees towards the introduction of e-HRM as determined by several factors.

- **User satisfaction with e-HRM**

Scholars such as Yulsiza, Yong and Ramara (2018) suggest that if employees display higher satisfaction levels with the introduction of e-HRM, then the likelihood that

employees will favour the use of e-HRM is high. Satisfaction with e-HRM can be defined as the extent to which the end user of the system believes the system performs satisfactorily for its intended use. It is further suggested that if a system like e-HRM meets the employee's expectations prior to its implementation, then it is likely for employees to favour such a system.

- **Clarity of e-HRM Goals**

Clarity of e-HRM goals is observable in circumstances where a positive relationship exists between the attitude towards e-HRM and clarification of the objectives of e-HRM (Yulsiza et al., 2018). For employees within the organisations to embrace e-HRM, the goals should be explained for the adoption of that information technology system because, if that is not done, it may lead to the unintended use of the system.

- **User support**

The notion of user support refers to the technical support or assistance that is given to the system's end users when operating the system. User support is one of the key elements required for the successful implementation of the e-HRM (Eneizan, Mostafa and Alabboodi, 2018). User support has the potential to influence the attitudes of the employees towards e-HRM. Providing technical support to the end users of the system can be viewed as a motivational factor necessary to make an end user embrace the system (Eneizan et al., 2018).

2.6. Empirical studies on e-HRM

This section aims to discuss empirical studies relating to the notion of e-HRM. From a global point of view, human resources are considered one of the most appreciated assets in any organisation. The saturation in businesses globally has created complex challenges for human resources (Celaya, 2015). It is difficult to remain with one concrete concept of managing human resources across global businesses due to ever changing technologies and learning environment. A study that was conducted by Iqbal, Ahmad, Allen and Raziq (2018) shed light on employee job performance with regards to e-HRM. The primary aim of the study was to examine the links between e-HRM and

perceived labour productivity both directly and through the mediating role of HR service quality at commercial bank workplaces in Pakistan (Iqbal et al. 2018). The study revealed a positive effect on managers' observations about labour productivity. The study further revealed that e-HRM practices influence the quality of HR services. Despite the fact that the study focussed on the banking sector, it showed that the quality of HR services fully mediates the relationship between e-HRM practices and managers' perceptions of labour productivity. The study advocates that a manager in any organisation should aim to concentrate on how e-HRM impacts HR service quality (Iqbal et al. 2018). The study suggested that this is the only route by which e-HRM can improve labour productivity. This study adds value to the current study since it creates a link between e-HRM and employee performance.

Another study that was conducted by Ma and Ye (2015) in China focussed on the role of e-HRM in contemporary human resource management. This research study concentrated on discussing issues such as the advent of e-HRM, types of e-HRM, the role of e-HRM, factors influencing utility, the effectiveness of e-HRM and the context for e-HRM in China. The study highlighted six determinants of attitudes toward e-HRM. The first determinant was clarity of e-HRM goals. It is claimed here that the successful implementation of e-HRM depends on a positive relationship between the clarity of e-HRM goals and an attitude toward e-HRM. The goals of introducing e-HRM in an organisation can directly influence the use of technology. The second determinant relates to the user's satisfaction with e-HRM. It is assumed here that a positive relationship between user satisfaction and attitude towards e-HRM affects user satisfaction. The third determinant relates to perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to Ma and Ye (2015), the literature demonstrates that ease of use and usefulness are linked with attitudes toward using technology. The fourth determinant relates to user support, which emphasises the positive relationship between user support and attitude towards e-HRM. The fifth determinant is associated with social influence. The claim made here is a positive relationship between social influence and attitude towards e-HRM. The last determinant relates to the facilitating conditions, which are inclusive of and necessary for the support from the IT and human resources departments to supply assistance and education to the employees (Ma and Ye, 2015).

Another study that was conducted by Wege, Ngige and Dieli (2019) in Nigeria adds value to the current study since it establishes the link between e-HRM and organisational performance. Although the current study focusses on e-HRM and organisational performance as opposed to employee performance, it is still relevant to the current study. This empirical study examined e-HRM and organisational performance in Nigeria by concentrating on twenty-one firms from the Nigerian stock exchange. The primary objective of the study was to determine the relationship between e-education, e-recruitment, e-selection and e-evaluation on organisational performance in Nigeria. The findings of the study demonstrated that e-recruitment, e-education and e-evaluation had a positive influence on organisational performance in Nigeria (Wege, et al., 2019). Moreover, the study discovered that there was no significant positive relationship between e-selection and organisational performance. The study revealed that e-education had the most significant positive influence on organisational performance (Wege, et al., 2019).

Another study that was conducted by Umar, Yammama and Shaibu (2020) in Nigeria also adds value to the current study. The study focussed on investigating the association between electronic human resource management practices and job performance. The study concentrated on five higher education institutions in the northern part of Nigeria. The study revealed that certain components of the e-HRM practices were positively associated with job performance. Such components were inclusive of e-compensation and e-communication, which were directly related to the dimensions of job performance. The study also discovered that e-training practice had no significant effect on contextual performance or counter-productive work behaviour (Umar, et al., 2020).

South African public-sector institutions underwent structural and process reforms in the years following 1994. The concept of e-HRM is relatively new in the South African public sector. Post 1994, South African public-sector institutions underwent structural and process reforms. This type of reform was classified as the new public management (NPM). The concept of NPM is associated with the idea of adopting or borrowing private sector business models for public-sector institutions (Cameron, 2022). The adoption of e-HRM in the public sector (Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality) can be classified as part of the reforms associated with NPM.

2.7. The five main factors of the e-Human Resource Management

2.7.1 Electronic Recruitment

Electronic recruitment has been defined as the act of using a website to advertise jobs and information associated with it through the internet as cited by Marr (2012 in Boşcai 2017). As defined by Nasreem, with et al (2016) and Boşcai, (2017), e-recruitment also known as online recruitment is the method whereby cyberspace, particularly websites are used as the means of appealing, evaluating, challenging, questioning and finally hiring applicants for a position. Rogers, Someya and Haung (2010) explain electronic recruitment as any recruitment actions directed by the group through web-based tools. For e-recruitment to be more effective and efficient, it must not be considered work itself; it requires internet support, which is combined with recruitment and selection approaches. The combined level of electronic recruitment can simply be attained if the components of web-based recruitment are automated by the administration's related human resources management (Johnson and Diman, 2017; Malkawi, 2020).

Dessler and Owen (2005) argue that e-recruitment completes the pre-screening that results from the interview steps in the traditional method of recruitment. Lin (2007) discovers that e-recruitment saves cost, increases the wide-open market, is uncontrolled by individual businesses, is unrestricted by geographical boundaries, accelerates the process of tracking and communicating with candidates and creates an image of relationship marketing as product advertising. Nasreem, et al. (2016) advise that e-recruitment offers a quicker turnaround time, a higher number of suitable candidates and makes the recruitment process simpler and cost-saving. E-recruitment allows the organisations to reach a greater number of job searchers in less time and at a lower cost (Poisat and Mey, 2017; Boehle, 2000; Smith and Rupp, 2004).

E-recruitment generates a high volume of applications with mandatory skills for a positive job in the government, leading to the success of government goals at a given time. A large candidate pool can also have undesirable impacts on the growing cost of administering the recruitment and selection processes (Dessler and Owen, 2005).

According to Bartram (2000) and Boehle (2000), the growing volume of general job boards will lead to increasing challenges for candidates to locate relevant jobs. Shrivastava and Shaw (2003) advise that when applying for occupations electronically, the candidates are frequently asked to select from prearranged job classes that are not appropriately aligned to their qualifications, which leads to confusion for the job candidates. In addition to that, individuals who are from marginally identified groups may be unable to use this platform (Chapman and Webster, 2003). The confidentiality and safety issues articulated by applicants regarding the personal details provided in resumés are likely to lead to unethical use of this evidence (Bartram, 2000 and Galanaki, 2002). Poorly directed links within and between sites, network difficulties in worldwide web searches and problems in retrieving pertinent information about occupations on websites (e.g., job descriptions salary level and place of job) (Sood et al., 2011).

2.7.2 Electronic Performance Management System (E-PMS)

E-PMS refers to the progression of performance management through information technology, which provides complete assessments of employee performance and offers for the creation of uniform information for the delivery of employee feedback (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). E-PMS consists partially of e-HRM and HR information systems where the information technology integration of strategies, policies, practices and performance management processes is enabled (Dede, 2020). The main motive for the government's utilisation of the e-PMS is the trust that the technology will modernise the performance appraisal process, reduce costs, and cut the time and effort required to manage employee performance (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). The study to date is inadequate and somewhat questionable as to the overall success of this e-HRM application. Where study has been done, there is some signal for the efficiency of e-performance management systems from the viewpoint of workers whose performance is being evaluated (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). Payne, Storbacka, Frow and Knox (2009) and Kucirkova and Flewitt (2018) found that workers generally have a favourable impression of electronic feedback and are therefore more involved in the performance evaluation process (Schalk, Timmerman, Van den Heuvel, 2012). Additionally, employees are more likely to trust feedback provided through a computer when it strongly aligns with the feedback communicated by the

manager. The overall worker acceptance of an e-performance management system rests on the degree to which they view them as easing the achievement of employee personal goals (Stone, Stone-Romero, and Lukaszewski, 2006).

Worker motivation is also possibly affected by how feedback is presented. Electronic feedback may result in lower levels of worker motivation loss when linked with feedback taken by a manager (Kluger and Adler, 2017). When negative feedback comes from a manager, as opposed to a computer, it may be more likely to be understood as personal or prejudiced. A significant point in evaluating e-performance management systems is the effect they have on employee-supervisory relationships. One of the adopted advantages of e-performance management is that managers will spend less time evaluating performance and more time managing performance while engaging in further performance-related discussions. In this way, e-performance management is likely to increase the interpersonal distance between supervisors and their juniors by reducing the chances for face-to-face communiqué. When feedback is digitally presented and managers do not meet with their workers to debate their performance, it may be less expected to capture their consideration and disturb their performance. Electronic-performance evaluation systems may also lead workers to behave in assertive ways when they are additionally interested in “looking good”. The benefit of an e-performance management system is that it is likely to incorporate the opinions and viewpoints of multiple assessors. It is nowadays widely suggested that numerous evaluator assessments (360° evaluations) be utilised more for developmental drives and not to make reward allocation choices (Antonioni, 2014).

2.7.3 Electronic Training

The term training in this study includes learning grounded on the use of information technology, which is the transfer of educational content via all automated media, including the Internet, intranet, extranet, satellite broadcast, web-based education and the virtual tutorial room. Companies currently use e-training for the introduction and retention of personnel, quickening the training time, and evaluating staff on new products to link with their supply chains and distribution. E-training is a concept that covers a range of applications, education methods and processes (Schank, 2002). Other scholars have defined e-training as a way that encompasses more than just the

offering of wholly online developments. For instance, Bajt (2011) noted that e-training has changed from a fully online course to using technology to deliver part or all of the development independent of enduring time and place. Nugent and Rhinard (2019) also define e-training as the use of innovative multimedia technologies and the Internet to grow education quality by enabling access to facilities and services as well as reserved exchanges and teamwork. Subsequently, there are also different meanings of e-training.

In its widest sense, Abbad and Morris (2009), well-defined e-training to mean any education that is empowered automatically. This description was later narrowed by some scholars to an education that is internet-enabled or web-based (LaRose, Mastro and Eastin, 2001; Keller and Cernerud, 2002). According to Sandybayev (2020), the term training is applied from diverse perspectives, including distributed education, online-distance education, and hybrid education. According to Dag and Gecer (2009), e-training refers to the accomplishment and use of knowledge that is mainly simplified and circulated by electronic means. E-training can be very beneficial for teaching in all types of businesses. It can be started at any time and in any place. Various technologies, which serve as an education basis, permit more room for separate differences and diverse training styles. Content is carried out in smaller units, which prolongs the effect the prolonged effect of learning. It is cheap, saves time and provides quantifiable results. In contrast to traditional learning, it is cost-effective, because of the reduced time and money spent on travel. E-training supports the globalisation of corporations and empowers virtual teams.

It is essential to be knowledgeable when working with computers in such areas as file administration, word processing, internet browsing, sending e-mails and the installation of software programs. These limits may affect the very triumph of scholars in e-training. Technical complications, such as a sluggish internet connection because of its accessibility to many computers. The data is very expensive and the network providers sometimes do not have reception everywhere (Nugent and Rhinard, 2019). The scholar with little motivation and poor education habits may lag in their education. They may feel lonely without the trainer. Trainers are not constantly available to help a scholar.

2.7.4 Technical Skills of HR Professionals

Technical skills refer to the detail-oriented skills that are compulsory for entry-level supervisors (Galanaki, 2002). Technical skills are skills and knowledge related to the field of the employees, whether it is commercial or technical (Medina, 2010). It can be recognised and understood more easily, as it can be seen clearly with the naked eye **(**Medina, 2010**).** Technical skills refer to the skills that need a mixture of precise information and skills of the work done through the body to accomplish the target (Bakuwa, 2013). In another opinion, technical skills are the capability to complete work in a technically knowledgeable way and to monitor it in a self-governing and serious manner **(**Saad, Hisham, Ishak, Fauzi, Baharudin and Idris. 2018). Medina (2010) explained that formally, the mutual way is through academic qualification, namely through the institutes of higher learning.

The responsibilities assumed by HR professionals can differ from the basic clerical procedures right through to participation in board meetings, necessitating HR professionals to have a broad skill set and to function within complex and often challenging frames of reference (Bakuwa et al., 2013). An additional study found indication that there is a more optimistic effect of e-HRM on HRM duties through the explanation of procedures, the delivery of correct information and enhancing the observations of supervisors and human resource management professionals (Bondarouk and Ruël, 2013; Gardner, Lepak, and Bartol, 2003; Olivas-Lujan, Jacobo, Laura and Anabella, 2007). In contrast, e-HRM adoption is linked straight to human resource management productivity and success, except HRM duty value (Bondarouk and Ruël, 2009). If HRM professionals work with e-HRM as proposed, human resource management is likely to be worth more than when operators just use e-HRM more frequently (Bagozzi, Davis and Warshaw, 1992).

2.7.5 Electronic Human Resource Management Implementation criteria

The top three factors, as mentioned, above had imperative roles in the positive application of e-HRM, though exclusively the individual aspect has acknowledged improved devotion in literature through the past era. Individual aspects comprise both supervisors and workers, commonly recognised as internal clients (Bondarouk et al.,

2015), the user of e-HRM systems. Though the reputation of the interplay between IT and organisational aspects should be taken seriously (Bondarouk et al., 2015). Additionally, e-HRM knowledge is carefully thought to be robust when it is acknowledged by the operators as easy to utilise and the tools that cover the human resource management information are appropriate to the exact HRM activities (Bondarouk et al., 2015). Furthermore, growth in the common usage of e-HRM systems will be stimulated if the systems are easy-to-use and if the information administered and kept with the applications is of worth (Bondarouk et al., 2015). The purpose of the technology implemented should be known to the operators. In short, if employees are suitable for the grounds and drives of e-HRM, users may utilise it inefficiently, which may result in unexpected consequences (Bondarouk et al., 2015).

2.8. Theory underpinning the study

This section focusses on discussing one theory applicable to the study. The technology acceptance theory (TAT) will form the underpinning theory of the current research, which describes how consumers adopt and use technology. The adoption of technology theory describes how employees or people in general embrace and implement new technologies (Usman et al., 2020). TAT was developed by Fred Davis in 1986 as part of his doctorate proposal to measure the acceptance of new technologies in organisations. The TAT will be used as base in this thesis to determine the reasons for the acceptable or unsuitability of the e-HRM in the Tshwane Municipality. TAT will further look at how perceptions of the technology's convenience and usefulness influence adoption intentions of e-HRM (Lai, 2017).

A theoretical framework is the fundamental aspect of the research project since it serves as the base upon which all knowledge is constructed and is consistent with the research problem and purpose statement of the study (Kivunja, 2018). Scholars such as Samaradiwakara and Gunawardena (2014) argue that a user's confirmed willingness to use information technology for the tasks it was intended to support can simply be understood as a user's adoption of technology. Technological advancements are worthless until they are acknowledged and put to use. It is essential for employees to view technology as a medium that can be used to disseminate information. The workplace environment has changed dramatically as a result of

technological advancements. Nowadays, people can enjoy online learning, while saving money and time by not travelling to training venues. It is a widely held view that technologies have brought positive alterations to the workplace, resulting in enhanced work efficiency.

The technology acceptance theory can be useful in certain instances to assist researchers comprehend the extent to which new technologies are accepted by end users. Observing or measuring the acceptance of new technologies can be useful to determine the effectiveness of a new technology. The technology acceptance theory focusses the mind of the reader on comprehending how users of a system decide whether to accept or to reject an information technology (IT) system. The technology acceptance theory was constructed to envisage the adoption and the utilisation of the new IT system. The theory can be used to determine perceptions or when looking at evolving technology adoption from an individual's perspective (Lai, 2017). The theory will be used as a base to determine the employee's acceptance levels of the e-HRM system in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

2.9. Conclusion

This chapter presented information on relevant trends and debates related to the concept of e-HRM. The chapter started by orienting the mind of the reader to the evolution of e-HRM. The chapter further explored in detail the concept of e-HRM by presenting different definitions. Empirical studies from different scholars were presented from a global, regional and local perspective. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology to be applied in the current research project.

Chapter Three

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used to answer the research questions reflected in Section 1.8 of this report. This chapter further aims to provide information relating to the method used in undertaking the current research and the justification for the use of this method. The research methodology aims to assist the researcher to develop a specific procedures or techniques to identify, process and analyse information about the topic of interest. Furthermore, to understand the perceptions of HR professionals, the current study employed various stages of research to collect and analyse data. Data collection is the key issue in the research methodology. Unique techniques in the field of research are used to ensure the collection of quality data. These techniques are inclusive of data collection tools, sampling methods, data quality issues, data analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter positions the study within the qualitative research paradigm. This research employed qualitative inquiry since the aim was to elicit the views about the effects of e-HRM in their workplace and gather experiences of HR professionals employed by the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The exploratory research design will be used as a blueprint or systematic approach to describe life experiences that offer meaning. This chapter will further discuss the issue of data quality. Trustworthiness and reliability factors are classified as crucial elements in determining data quality in qualitative research.

3.2. Rationale for selecting the qualitative approach

The study seeks to gather the perceptions and experiences of human resource practitioners about the effects of e-HRM on their individual performance. Since the study aims to acquire subjective data, it can be classified as qualitative in nature. It was essential for the researcher to initiate contact with human resource practitioners since their views could not be predicted. Subjective data is not neutral and can be

influenced by various factors such as an individual's attitudes, circumstances or feelings. Researchers tend to rely on the qualitative approach when seeking to measure and collect the subjective meanings of social actors. The literature provides various definitions of qualitative research, which, in essence, is a way of acquiring an in-depth understanding of the social world from the perspective of the research participants. The purpose of the qualitative researcher is to comprehend the social world by interpreting the experiences and attitudes of the individuals under scrutiny (Taherdoos, 2016). Qualitative research attempts to make sense of individual accounts of a phenomenon, particularly when they are interacting with their cultural, economic, social and physical environments (Jameel et al., 2018). Qualitative research is iterative and participant-driven. When engaging in qualitative research, the priority is to attain non-numerical data, which may include features such as categories, themes, phrases, concepts and words. Qualitative research is situated within the context of a naturalistic enquiry approach.

3.3. Research Design

According to Saunders and Bezzina (2015), a research design is a strategy used by the researcher to specify the procedure that will be undertaken to generate and analyse data. Other scholars such as Schindler (2006) and Mouton (2008) also define research design as a blueprint or overall plan that is utilised to respond to the research objectives of the study. The research design holds all phases of the research together in a coherent and logical manner. Erasmus (2016) suggests that poorly constructed research designs do not have the capacity to provide the researcher with accurate answers in responding to the research questions of the study and may ultimately result in poor decision-making processes. A qualitative exploratory research design was used to guide the current study. Exploratory research design is applicable when less is known about a phenomenon of interest. Research findings produced using an exploratory research design cannot be generalised. The use of an exploratory research design is mainly used to provide insights for future studies (Creswell, 2018). Currently, there are insufficient empirical studies available that shed light on the effects of e-HRM on individual performance within the context of the public sector in South Africa.

3.4. Research Philosophy

The current research opted to use the philosophical perspective known as interpretivism to guide the study. Interpretivism may be described as the intention to comprehend the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism as a philosophical worldview is normally applied to understand reality from the viewpoint of the individuals who are studied in their natural setting. Interpretivist scholars focus on the individual's viewpoint and their interpretation of the world, rather than on objective facts. Interpretivism is grounded on the belief that reality is socially created (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define interpretivism as a procedure that entails collecting data from diverse individuals and integrating the similarities and differences in their responses. Interpretivism is used in the current study to comprehend the meanings that Human Resource Practitioners attach about the value of e-HRM. The responses of Human Resource Practitioners were used to construct an understanding of viewpoint in relation to the adoption and utilisation of e-HRM.

The process of fitting a research project into a precise form of enquiry tends to raise several philosophical questions. These questions may be related to ontological (to do with the nature of reality) and epistemological (to do with the theory of knowledge) considerations. Ontology refers to a broad understanding about the nature of reality and what there is to know about it (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). In the world of research, ontology mainly refers to how our ontological assumptions influence our perceptions about the social world. Business research includes several ontological stances. The initial ontological stance is the assumption that there is no connection between the world and social actors. The second ontological stance is that the views and experiences of social actors can be used to construct a social phenomenon. This is rooted in a subjectivist understanding of the world and is directly connected to interpretivism, since interpretivism provides the framework for examining the opinions, attitudes and feelings of social actors. In this study, the ontological stance adopted is that research participants are social actors who create meaning in their social environment.

Another aspect of enquiry in research is epistemology. Epistemology is concerned with how one acquires knowledge, especially with regard to the methods one uses, the validity and scope of knowledge, and the distinction between opinion and justified belief. The concept of epistemology assist researchers in their scientific enquiry to raise questions such as 'how can we learn about the social world and what is the basis of our knowledge?' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013:4). By being aware of epistemology, researchers raise issues about what may be regarded as an acceptable basis for knowledge. The current research project accepts the view that interpretivism must be used when studying the social world.

Epistemological debates are influenced by several factors in the business world. The first debate is about the process that ought to be applied when acquiring knowledge. The literature suggests that the process of knowledge acquisition can either be inductive or deductive. Deductive reasoning is mainly applicable in quantitative research or natural sciences, and can best be understood as a process of moving from a theory to observations. This type of reasoning is mainly used by knowledge seekers who subscribe to the positivist paradigm (Taherdoos, 2016). Deductive reasoning is a top-down approach that allows researchers to generalise their findings to the entire population. Observations are highly structured and quantified. This implies that the process of acquiring knowledge is logically derived through hypotheses which are tested against observations.

Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, is classified as a bottom-up approach. Through inductive reasoning, a researcher makes observations to contribute to a new theory (Taherdoos, 2016). Inductive reasoning emphasises the process of collecting observations (evidence) to be used in creating knowledge that may lead to the development of theories. Inductive reasoning is mainly linked to qualitative research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). The current research opted to apply inductive reasoning. Human Resource Practitioners were required to describe their experiences and opinions regarding the value of e-HRM in their working environment. Such information was subjective in nature and has the potential to be used in creating new theories.

3.5. Research instrument (data collection tool)

Primary data will be collected using semi-structured interviews. The notion of primary data refers to the technique of gathering data directly from the research participants (Creswell, 2013). Question phrasing and interview design normally affect the depth to which a respondent can respond. Certain interview types, such as unstructured and semi-structured interviews, encourage lengthy and detailed responses. Other types of interviews, such as structured interviews, elicit specific responses (Tjora, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are often applied in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). A semi-structured interview is a data collection technique that involves dialogue between the researcher and research participant. This data collection technique allows the researcher to explore participants' beliefs, thoughts or feelings about a specific phenomenon through the use of open-ended questions based on a semi-structured interview schedule (Jamshed, 2014). The semi-structured interview schedule is attached as Appendix C of the current report.

3.6. Sampling design and population

This section aims to outline the procedure that was used to select the research participants for inclusion in the study. A study population can be defined as the full set of cases or elements from which a sample is drawn (Saunders, Ober, Barnes-Proby and Brunson, 2016). The population for the current research consisted of all human resource practitioners who have been using the e-HRM system for the past five years in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Due to budget constraints, it was difficult for the researcher to measure every element in the study population. Therefore, a study sample was utilised. The concept of study sample refers to a subset of the study population (Boddy, 2016). The method of selecting a suitable sample size in qualitative research is an area of conceptual debate. Study samples in qualitative research tend to be small and purposive in nature. Omona (2013) suggests that a study sample size should be of a satisfactory nature in describing the phenomenon of interest. Omona (2013) further argues that a large sample size in qualitative research is not necessary since it may result in repetitive data. Only 10 research participants were selected to form part of the study sample. As stated earlier, the purpose of qualitative research is not to generate a large sample size but rather to have a sample size that is large

enough to assist the researcher to uncover a variety of opinions. In qualitative research, the focus should be on quality as opposed to quantity. The sample size in qualitative research should assist the researcher to collect rich and detailed information from the respondents (Creswell, 2013).

The sampling procedure that was used in the current study was purposive sampling, which is classified as non-probability sampling. This implies that elements in the study population do not have an equal chance of being selected (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling is used in circumstances where a researcher intends to select elements for inclusion in the study sample with specific characteristics (Tjora, 2019). The researcher relied on the following criteria to select the research participants for inclusion in the study sample,

- Human resource practitioners with five years' experience in using the e-HRM system, and
- Human resource practitioners who previously used a manual HR system.

3.7. Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using a thematic coding process. Thematic analysis is a method that systematically categorises, organises, and offers insights into patterns of meaning across a data set (Liamputtong, 2019). The researcher applied a six-phase approach to thematic analysis developed by Trochim in 2006, which consisted of the following stages:

Stage	Description
1	The first stage involves the process of assigning labels to the research questions. The assigned labels will later be divided into several anchor codes. The development of anchor codes is meant to link relevant statements (in the text data) with the research question. The coding process will be performed manually using coloured pens and highlighters. The coded data will later be examined to point out commonalities, differences and patterns. ▪ **Research question** - What are the perceptions and experiences of senior managers regarding the balance between their personal lives and work activities within the context of telework? ▪ **Label** - Experiences and perceptions of senior managers of the value of telework to maintain Work Life Balance. ▪ **Anchor codes** - Experiences of senior managers of the value of telework on Work Life Balance. - Perceptions of senior managers of the value of telework on Work Life Balance.
2	The second step involves the method of reading the transcribed manuscripts and applying the applicable code statements appropriately. New coded statements must be linked to the relevant anchor code.
3	Step 3 involves the coding process, which concentrates on assembling the list of initial codes that will be later aligned with the anchor code.
4	Stage 4 involves the task of grouping codes into their respective anchor codes.

Stage	Description
5	Stage 5 involves the task of tallying the frequency for each code.
6	In stage 6, categories are generated from the codes.
7	Stage 7 focuses on examining the categories to generate themes.
8	Stage 8 concentrates on using newly generated themes to address the research question.

3.8. Trustworthiness and reliability

Trustworthiness is the fundamental component in qualitative research. Trustworthiness grants a researcher a certain amount of confidence about the quality of the data. Trustworthiness further guarantees that during the interpretation of data, no meaning is lost. The researcher ensured that certain protocols were established to safeguard the trustworthiness of the data. These protocols ensured data neutrality and minimised the researcher's bias. The researcher employed two trustworthiness protocols to ensure quality data.

- *Research participant's checks*

The researcher sent back the transcribed interviews to the participants to ask the research participants to authenticate their responses. This process afforded the participants the opportunity to expand, clarify or provide additional input.

3.9. Ethical considerations

The researcher made it clear to the participants that they were not obligated to take part in the study and if at any point during the interview they did not feel happy responding to some of the questions, they were free to withdraw from the study. The researcher did not ask the interviewees any questions about their organisation, age,

religion, or any other private details. Research participants were subjected to the following ethical requirements:

- The researcher ensured that each research participant received detailed information about the purpose of the research study.
- Research participants were required to give informed consent to participate in the research project.
- The researcher informed all research participants that they had the right to terminate their participation if they felt uncomfortable continuing with the interview.
- The researcher informed all research participants that their participation would not lead to any physical, emotional, or mental harm.
- Permission was sought from the research participants to record their responses.
- Participants' personal information was not used in the final report.

3.10. Conclusion

Human resources are considered as the most expensive resource in any organization; therefore, they need careful management. The goal of human resources management is to make sure that a company has the right number of people with the required knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies, in the right place, at the right time, at an affordable cost and who are motivated and determined to achieving the current and strategic need of a firm. E-HRM practice provides a more efficient and strategic way of working to reach the goals. E-HRM facilitates human resource functions with the chance to create new avenues for committing to organizational success. Nowadays, a great many technological applications have emerged, claiming to cover nearly every “traditional” human resource management (HRM) activity; not only complementing it, but often even substituting it (Ravindran, 2019). In order to meet the demands of today’s knowledge-based economy, it is almost a must for companies to maximize the potential and productivity of their employees, a goal towards which HRM information systems and E-HRM could be of help.

This chapter described the research methodology that was employed in measuring the perceptions of human resource practitioners on the value of electronic human resource management in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. This chapter discussed the basis for using a qualitative exploratory design and emphasised that the findings of the study would not be generalised to the study population. The chapter further outlined the methods of research by defining the study population, study sample and sampling procedure. Data collection tools, data analysis methods and data integrity were also discussed. The chapter concluded by discussing ethical considerations applicable to the current research project. The next chapter will present and discuss the findings of the study.

Chapter Four

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the results of the study based on the analysed data and synthesise the findings of the study against the literature review that was presented in Chapter Two of the current report. The findings of the current study are grounded in the data that was collected during the qualitative exploratory study. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, which were directed towards uncovering the subjective data about the perceptions of human resource practitioners in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality concerning the effects of e-HRM on their individual performances. The researcher (as a human instrument) used Microsoft teams to collect data for the current research project, which was later transcribed into transcripts for analysis. The meanings that were provided by human resource practitioners through interviews were context-based. The chapter intends to provide a discussion of the findings and to respond to the research questions that were stated in Section 1.8. of the current report. This chapter uses graphs and tables to explain the meaning of the data presented. The chapter will commence by describing the composition of the study sample.

4.2. Analysis and presentation data

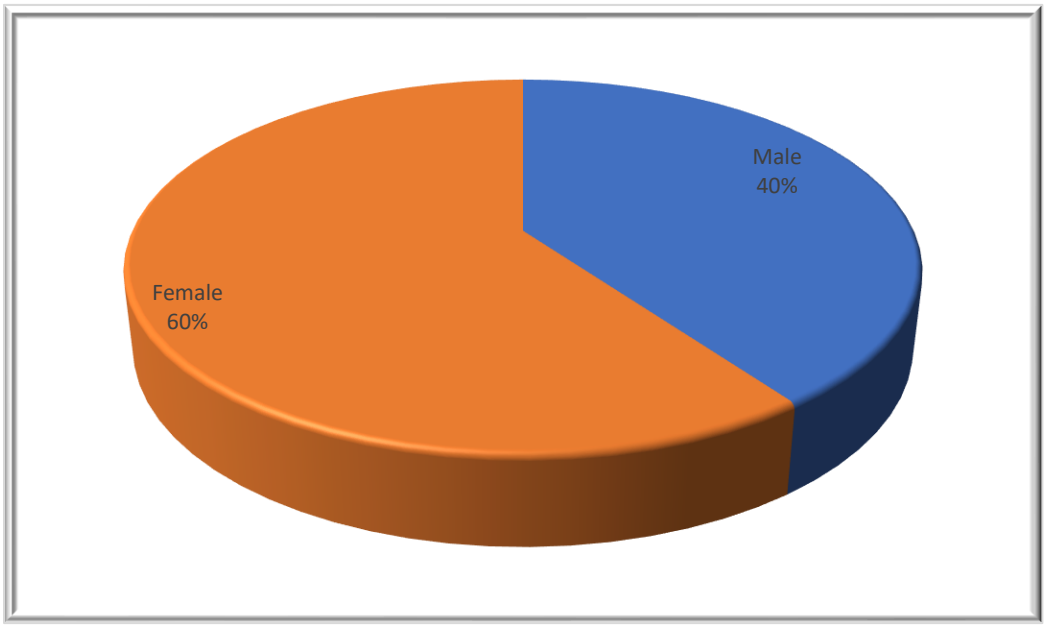
Analysing data for qualitative research projects is an iterative and time-consuming process. In certain instances, the process of analysing the qualitative data may appear simple to individuals with limited knowledge. Experienced qualitative researchers are mindful of the complexities associated with qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis can simply be defined as an attempt by the researcher to understand the meaning behind the actions or behaviour of the participants (Ravindran, 2019). During the process of collecting subjective data from the human resource practitioners, the researcher was more concerned with the quality and depth of the narration about the perceptions of human resource practitioners than the number of study participants.

Acquiring descriptions and rich data was more important than interviewing more individuals. A total of ten (10) individuals were interviewed who provided detailed context-based perceptions of human resource practitioners in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality concerning the effects of e-HRM on their individual performance.

4.3. Presentation and discussion of qualitative data

4.3.1 Background information on Human Resource Practitioners

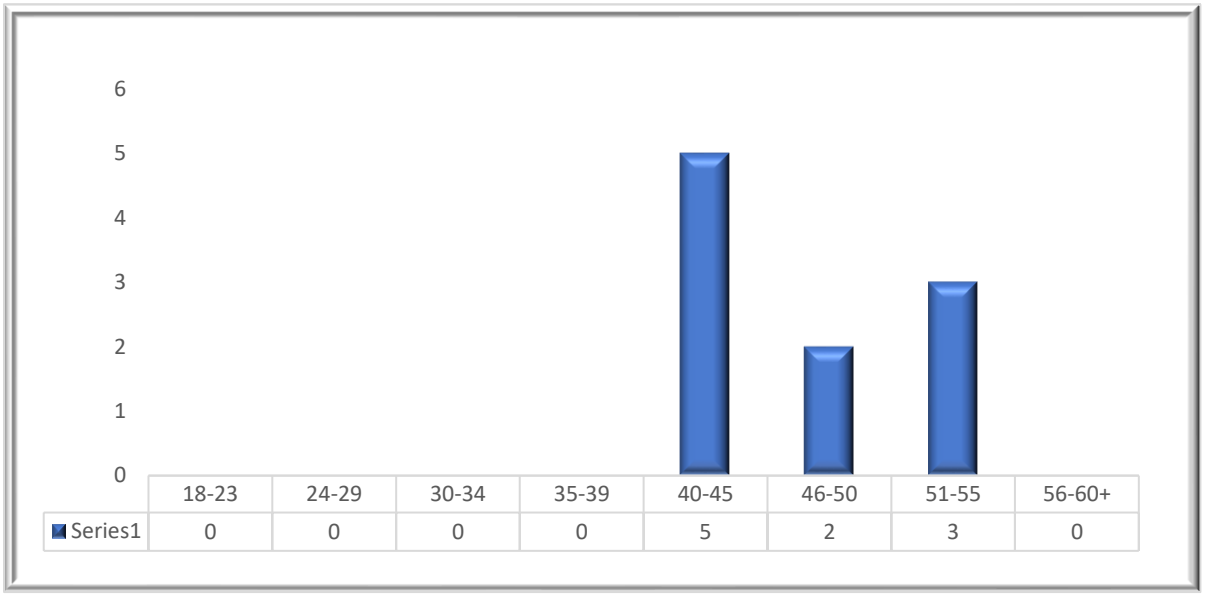
Figure 2: Gender profile



Source: Student's own, 2023

Figure 2 shows that the study sample consisted of four (4) males and six (6) females. This type of gender profile is directly linked to the notion that females are more prevalent in the field of human resource management (Ainsworth and Pekarek, 2022). The Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality Annual Report (2020) also confirms that more women are employed in human resources as compared to men.

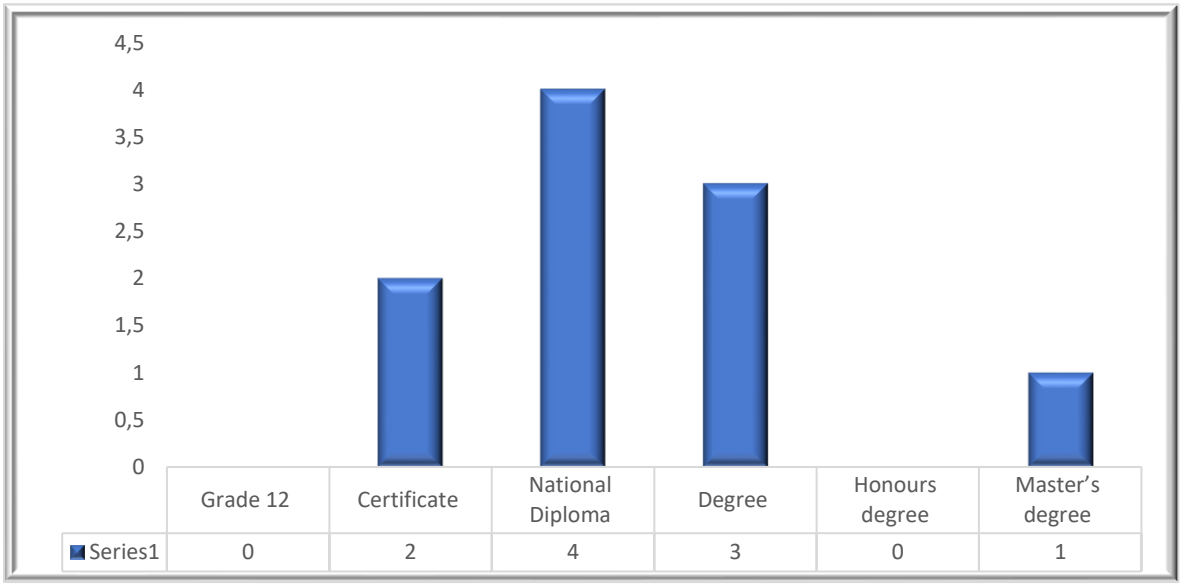
Figure 3: Age categories of the respondents



Source: Student's own: 2023

Figure 3 shows that all respondents were above the age of 40. Five respondents were in the age category of 40 to 45 years and two respondents were between the ages of 46 and 50. Three respondents were between the ages of 51 and 55. The age categories of respondents depicted in Figure 3 were influenced by the purposive sampling that was applied. The criteria for purposive sampling stated years of experience. The researcher was only interested in human resource practitioners who previously used manual HR systems and are currently utilising e-HRM. It is apparent that these types of employees have long service experience with the municipality, hence their age.

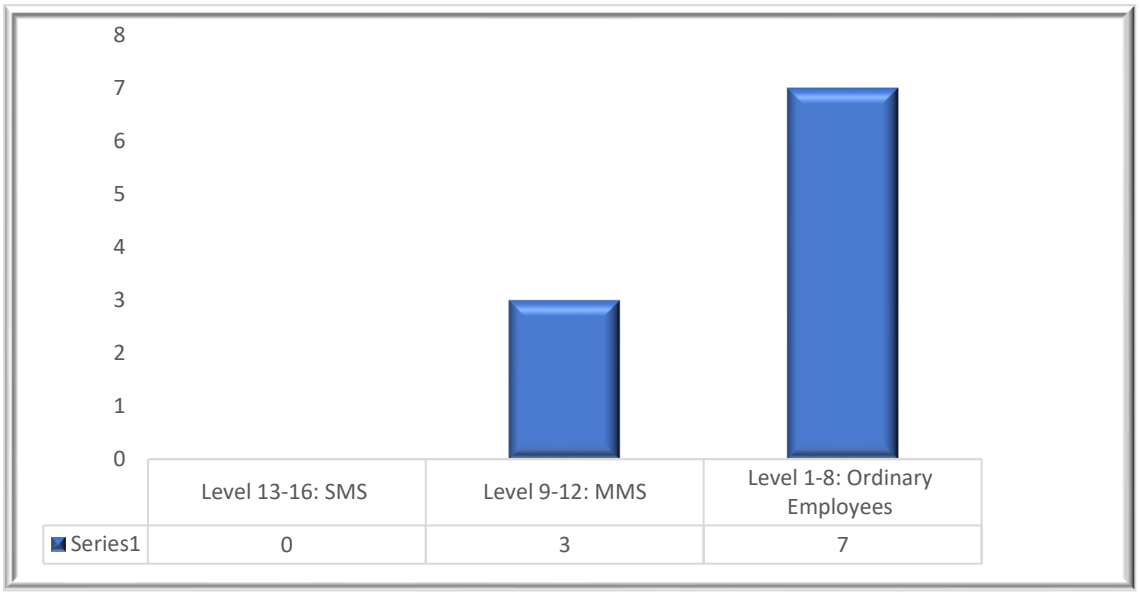
Figure 4: Qualification of the respondents



Source: Student's own, 2023

Figure 4 shows that the majority (4) of the respondents had national diploma qualifications. Two participants had diplomas and one participant had a post-graduate (Masters) qualification.

Figure 5: Position in the organisation



Source: Student's own, 2023

Figure 5 demonstrates that seven respondents are employed as ordinary employees in the field of human resources. Three respondents were appointed in middle management services.

4.4. Presentation and discussion of human resource practitioner's perceptions

4.4.1. Coding process

The Microsoft team's audio recordings that were converted into transcripts were used to conduct the coding process. The coding process refers to the technique of reducing raw data without compromising its meaning (Trochim, 2016). The researcher opted to use the manual coding process due to the limited number of ten (10) transcripts that were available for analysis. On average, the length of each transcript was not more than seven pages. Manual coding involves the process of physically going through the data to establish patterns and trends while assigning codes and themes (Trochim, 2016). The manual coding process is normally recommended when the transcripts from the interviews are reasonably short (e.g., less than 30 pages). Although manual coding process is highly recommended for smaller samples, it must be noted that it is labour-intensive and time-consuming. In this document, a coding process was used to identify, explain and analyse possible links between the data collected and the stated research objectives of the study. Manual coding was made possible by using coloured pens, pop-up flags and highlighters. A linear approach involving eight steps borrowed from Trochim (2006) was applied as part of the coding process. The initial step in the coding process involved the process of assigning a label to the primary research question. This label was later translated into an anchor code (see table 5).

Table 1: Assigning labels to the research question

Primary Research question	Label	Anchor codes
To explore the perceptions and experiences of HR practitioners regarding the effects of e-HRM on employee performance.	Perceptions and experiences	Perceptions
		Experiences
To identify any factors that have the potential to discourage HR practitioners from using e-HRM.	Hindrance	Factors that discourage employees from using e-HRM
To identify any factors that have the potential to encourage HR practitioners to use e-HRM.	Enhancers	Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM

The second step involved the process of reading the transcribed manuscripts and assigning relevant codes to the related statements. The newly created codes were connected to the relevant anchor codes (see Table 2). Stage 2 was crucial in terms of associating each created code with the applicable research question. Stage 3 of the coding process concentrated on gathering the list of all initial codes. Stage 4 concentrated on grouping codes into their corresponding anchor codes. Stage 5 involved the process of tallying the frequency for each code. Stage 6 involved the establishment of categories from the list of identified codes. The researcher scrutinised categories to create themes as part of Stage 7. Stage 8 was characterised by the researcher's desire to use the created themes to address the research questions.

Table 2: Coding process

Anchor code	Code	Theme
Human resource practitioners' perceptions	▪ Social influence ▪ Add value to operational efficiency ▪ Empowers unemployed youth ▪ The role of leadership	**Perceptions of Human Resource practitioners**
Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM	▪ Perceived usefulness ▪ Cost reduction ▪ Improved turnaround time ▪ User support	**Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM**
Factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM	▪ Electricity load shedding ▪ Unreliable e-HRM system ▪ Change management issues ▪ Threat to current jobs	**Factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM**

Student own source, 2023

The concept of e-HRM was well received by the respondents to the study. Generally, the respondents to the study understood the goals of e-HRM and acknowledged its importance. Several themes emerged from the data through the analyses of the transcripts in relation to the research questions. Raw data was grouped into themes in order to create patterns that could be interpreted. Three themes were created from the data and consisted of perceptions of human resource practitioners, factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM and factors that discourage employees from using e-HRM. The succeeding section will deliberate on each theme in detail by considering the literature review provided in Chapter Two.

4.4.2. Generated themes

- **Theme one: Perceptions of human resource practitioners**

Table 3 shows the different codes extracted from the raw data that were used to construct perceptions of a human resource practitioner's theme. All ten (10) respondents claimed that the introduction of e-HRM in the municipality added value to its operational efficiency. These respondents concurred with the view that the advent of e-HRM in the municipality enhanced human resource functions and processes. This type of perception corresponds with the idea that was articulated by Rajalakshmi and Gomathi (2016) in Chapter 2 of the current document. Rajalakshmi and Gomathi (2016) suggested that there are three types of e-HRM, namely relational, operational and transformational.

Table 3: Perceptions of human resource practitioners

Codes		Frequency	Theme
1	Add value to operational efficiency	10	**Perceptions of human resource practitioners**
2	Empowers unemployed youth	7	
3	Social influence	6	
4	Quality of HR services	5	

The operational human resource management component focusses on operational matters. All respondents concurred that the introduction of e-HRM yielded value in administrative efficiency. Respondent 3 stated that:

> *"The arrival of e-HRM system in the municipality helped us not to worry about record keeping or archiving hard copies. I can easily account to internal auditors without wasting time because all human resource information is now stored electronically".*

Seven (7) respondents suggested that the introduction of e-HRM empowered unemployed youth. These respondents suggested that e-HRM made it easier for

municipalities to connect with the wider population of Tshwane. Respondent 5 stated that:

> *"The unemployed youth is now privileged to apply online instead of travelling long distances to submit employment applications. Municipal libraries have free Wi-Fi for those individuals who are unable to afford the purchase of data".*

The above narrative from Respondent 7 can be directly linked to relational human resource management. According to Rajalakshmi and Gomathi (2016), relational human resource management is fundamental because it connects the human resources of the municipality with the broader outside world. The seven respondents stated that the municipality utilises the recruitment portal to afford potential candidates an opportunity to apply for available vacancies. In addition, the municipality also relies on the recruitment portal to encourage unemployed youth to apply for bursaries or learnerships. Another six (6) respondents mentioned social influence as the key factor for the adoption of e-HRM. Respondent 1 stated that:

> *"Technology has penetrated many layers of society and cannot be avoided. The municipality has no choice but to align itself with the fourth industrial revolution. Younger generation loves technology".*

The six (6) respondents indicated that their attitude towards e-HRM is positive due to social influence exerted by the wider population of Tshwane. People nowadays perceive technological advancement as a key requirement for an organisation to gain a competitive edge in the market (Ma and Ye, 2015).

- **Theme two: Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM**

Table 4 displays four codes that were used to formulate factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM theme.

Table 4: Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM

Codes		Frequency	Theme
1	COVID-19	8	**Factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM**
2	Perceived usefulness	10	
3	Cost reduction	10	
4	Improved turnaround time	10	

The first positive case of the Corona virus in March 2020 in South Africa was reported in the province of KwaZulu Natal (KZN). The South African government immediately declared the most restrictive lockdown for the whole country. All business entities were compelled to close their operations (Greyling, Rossouw and Adhikari, 2021). Only essential services such as police, grocery shops, hospitals and the media were permitted to operate. Eight (8) respondents mentioned COVID-19 as the key factor that popularised the use of e-HRM. Many organisations learned a valuable lesson during COVID-19 lockdown period. Respondent 5 stated that:

> *"e-HRM was introduced before the arrival of COVID-19 in our municipality. Before the arrival of COVID-19, there was no sense of urgency from the side of the municipality to encourage public members to use recruitment portal or to encourage internal staff to use Employee Self Service (ESS) to administer their leave requests".*

All eight (8) respondents concurred that the advent of COVID-19 created a sense of urgency and accelerated the need to utilise e-HRM. These respondents also mentioned that during the COVID-19 period, the municipality permitted all employees with comorbidities within the administration sector to telework. The concept of telework refers to the type of work where employees work from home as opposed to the employer's premises (De-Klerk, Joubert and Mosca, 2021). The respondents mentioned that the municipal employee self-service system made it easier for teleworkers to operate from home. The eight (8) respondents further mentioned that a new feature was added to the municipal employee self-service system (ESS). The eight (8) respondents also mentioned that employees were no longer required to

submit hard copies of letters or memoranda. All human resource practitioners within the municipality were required to utilise the ESS system to submit letters or memorandum. This move has contributed to administrative efficiency.

Another code that was used to construct theme two related to the notion of perceived usefulness. Ten (10) respondents mentioned the perceived usefulness of the e-HRM. These respondents mentioned that, during the change management workshops, they were trained on the benefits of using e-HRM. Ma and Ye (2015) referred to perceived usefulness as the key determinant of employees' attitude towards technology. All respondents in the study sample had a positive attitude towards e-HRM. These respondents mentioned that e-HRM transformed their working environment for the better. Respondent 2 stated that:

> *"In the past we use to take longer to hire individuals. Recruitment process was time consuming. As a recruitment consultant, I was required to manually capture applicants' details on an excel sheet and lots of typing errors occurred. Just imagine capturing 200 applicants".*

The respondents mentioned that their turnaround time on recruitment processes and bursary or learnership management has become shorter when using e-HRM, unlike in the past, when manual traditional human resources were still prevalent. Lastly, the respondents mentioned that the introduction of e-HRM has contributed to the reduction of costs within the human resource departments. Fewer people are required to administer e-HRM systems since the system was automated. Scholars such as Islami, Asdar and Baumassepe (2021), suggest that perceived usefulness and perceived use of ease have the potential to influence the attitudes of the employees towards a specific technology. All respondents in the study sample indicated that it was easy for them to use or navigate e-HRM systems such as the recruitment portal and ESS.

As indicated earlier, all respondents in the study sample had a positive attitude towards the introduction of e-HRM. This type of finding can be directly linked to the acceptance technology theory, which underpins the current research project. The acceptance technology theory is normally applied when the intention is to describe how end users adopt and use technology in a specific environment (Kivunja, 2018).

Respondents in the study sample indicated that, due to change management workshops, it was easy for them to accept e-HRM. The respondents further explained that e-HRM was easily adopted because it was easier to use, human resource tasks were completed faster and the goals of e-HRM were clearly defined.

- **Theme three: Factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM**

Table 5 illustrate two codes that were used to formulate factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM.

Table 5: Factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM

Codes		Frequency	Theme
1	Electricity load shedding	10	Factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM
2	Threat to current jobs	4	

Ten (10) respondents cited electricity load shedding as the key factor that prevented them from using e-HRM to its maximum capacity. South Africans are currently experiencing an unreliable supply of electricity. According to ESKOM, the concept of load shedding refers to "a controlled process that responds to unplanned events to protect the electricity power system from a total blackout" (Olajuyin and Mago, 2022). Electricity is a significant source of energy for any IT related system. Deficient provision of electricity in the country inhibits the smooth operation of e-HRM systems. All respondents in the study sample concurred that a poor supply of electricity to the work environment impedes the human resource practitioners' concentration and their ability to proactively discharge the human resource functions. Respondent 10 stated that:

> *"I spend less time doing my work these days. In an eight-hour shift, we only receive four hours of electricity. When electricity comes back, the e-HRM systems take longer to reboot".*

Four (4) respondents articulated the fear that they might lose their jobs in a long run due to the introduction of e-HRM in the municipality. This fear originates from their observation that the bulk of the work that was usually performed by human resource practitioners is now performed using e-HRM. Leave requests, termination of service, change of banking details and payroll verification are some of the human resource functions that can be performed using e-HRM. The concept of e-HRM is associated with technological advancement within the context of the fourth industrial revolution. Scholars such as Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) argue that the fourth industrial revolution exists to replace human workers and cognitive work altogether using artificial intelligence. The literature acknowledges that the fourth industrial revolution offers opportunity prospects for economic growth while also posing a threat to many employment types in the labour market (Xu, David and Kim, 2018).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter relied on a coding process to analyse raw data and achieve meaningful information. The data analysis was based on data obtained from ten (10) respondents using semi-structured interviews. Only three themes were created during data analysis and consisted of perceptions of human resource practitioners, factors that encourage employees to use e-HRM and factors that discourage employee's from using e-HRM. Some human resource practitioners included in the study displayed positive attitudes towards the implementation of e-HRM, while other respondents displayed the fear of losing their jobs due to e-HRM. The next chapter will provide a conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Five

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the overall conclusion and recommendations of the study and directions for future research. The chapter will further respond to the research questions that were outlined in Section 1.8 of the current document. Nothing new was discovered by the research study except to confirm the existing literature The study was conceptualized to explore the effects of e-HRM on the performance of HR professionals within the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The focus on local government was driven by the idea that the local sphere of government is the most crucial entity in the provision of services. Public members tend to rely on municipal services such as water, sanitation and refuse collection for daily survival. Therefore, organisational efficiency in local government is extremely important. This was a qualitative study and only ten (10) respondents were included as part of the study sample. The findings of the study that were generated in Chapter Four cannot be generalised to the study population. The findings of the study were generated only from the perspective of the human resource practitioners in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

5.2. Summary of the research findings

This section offers a brief discussion of the research findings in relation to the primary and secondary research questions that guided the study.

a) The primary research question that guided the study was:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of HR practitioners regarding the use of e-HRM to enhance employee performance?

b) The study was further guided by the following *secondary research questions*:

- What are the factors that encourage HR practitioners to use e-HRM?
- What are the factors that discourage HR practitioners from using e-HRM?

5.2.1. Responding to the primary research question

The main finding under this research question by human resource practitioners of the Tshwane Municipality was a positive attitude towards the introduction of e-HRM. A coding process analysis was used to create three themes that discuss and explain the perceptions of human resource practitioners regarding the impacts of e-HRM.

- **Theme 1**

All respondents perceived e-HRM as the best tool in terms of enhancing human resource functions and processes**.** It was claimed that the introduction of e-HRM contributed to the operational efficiency of human resources. A significant number of respondents also perceived the e-HRM as a tool that can be used to connect the municipality and the wider population of Tshwane. Respondents also attributed their positive attitude towards e-HRM to social influence. Society expects public-sector institutions to restructure themselves in line with existing technological advancements.

5.2.2. Responding to the secondary research questions

- **Themes 2 and 3**

Factors that had the potential to encourage HR practitioners to use e-HRM were identified by the respondents. The arrival of COVID-19 accelerated the need for e-HRM. Due to the infectious nature of the Corona virus, employees were permitted to work from home. The concept of e-HRM made it possible for human resource practitioners to continue with their human resource functions while at home. Respondents viewed the introduction of e-HRM as key to reducing administration costs and turnaround times. Other factors, such as load shedding and the fear of losing jobs in the long run, were viewed as a risk associated with e-HRM.

5.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made regarding the adoption of e-HRM to enhance individual employee performance.

- Recommendation One

It is recommended that the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality perform external environmental analysis and identify factors that have the potential to hamper the smooth running of the e-HRM systems. The municipality might consider investing in an alternative source of energy (e.g., a generator) during load shedding. Furthermore, the municipality might explore the option of creating a back-up system to protect the human resource information from damage.

- Recommendation Two

The municipality should perform an assessment to identify employees who are at risk of losing their jobs in the near future due to technological advancements. Career changes must be instituted by the municipality. Bursaries may be provided to such employees in order for them to pursue in-demand careers.

5.2. Limitation and Directions for future research

- There are possible limitations regarding face-to-face interviews in as far as fears of Corona virus are still in place. To counterweight this possible limitation, the researcher opted to use interviews as data collection method through MS Teams. The use of MS Teams made it easy for the researcher record and transcribe all the manuscripts. Consents were provided by all respondents to record the interviews.

- Future researchers can explore the possibility of repeating the same study with a larger sample. The study can be quantitative so that the findings can be generalised to the study population.

- Future research may also explore the possibility of investigating the opinions of industry experts, management and the individuals responsible for designing the e-HRM system. This will help uncover diverse perspectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introduction Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

Request to interview Human Resource Practitioners

My name is ***Mr Zakhele Handsome Gwala*** and I am a master's student in Human Resource Management at University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project that seeks to explore the impact of e-HRM on the performance of HR professionals within local government. The focus on local government emanates from the notion that local government is the centre of communication between the government and the people. This activity will take approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital voice recorder device.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through University of Witwatersrand library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the School of Human Resource Management at University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg.

Thanking you in advance for your participation

May I turn on the digital recorder?

Appendix B: Consent Form

I _____, hereby give consent to take part in the research study on exploring the exploring the impact of e-HRM on the performance of HR professionals within local government. I understand the purpose of the research study and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary, which implies that I can stop at any point should I not want to continue.

I have also been informed that the interview is confidential and that I do not stand to benefit personally from the study, but the findings will benefit the municipality by ensuring proper implementation of the e-HRM system for the improvement of the performance of HR professionals in the best interest of local government.

Signature of the participant: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview schedule for human resource practitioner's

Research title: Perceptions of human resource practitioner's on the value of electronic human resource management to enhance employee performance.

Important remark: All questions to be read out are in normal print. Instructions to the interviewer are in italics.

Section A: Biographical Information

Please insert a cross (x) in the appropriate block that you choose as a suitable answer to the question posed.

- **Previously, have you used manual human resources practices before the introduction of e-HRM?**

Male	
Female	

- **What is your gender?**

Male	
Female	
Other	

- **What is your age group?**

18-23	
24-29	
30-34	
35-39	
40-45	
46-50	
51-55	
56-60+	

- **What is your highest level of education?**

Grade 12	
Certificate	
National Diploma	
Degree	
Honours degree	
Master's degree	

- **What is your position in the organisation?**

Level 13-16: SMS	
Level 9-12: MMS	
Level 1-8: Ordinary Employees	

Section C: Interview questions for HR Professionals

Important remark: All questions to be read out are in normal print. Instructions to the interviewer are in italics.

1 I would like to start this interview by asking you to discuss your understanding about the Electronic Human Resource Management [*Probe: The interviewer must probe the interviewee to explain how he/she was introduced to e-HRM and to explain his/her understanding of the e-HRM concept*.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 In your opinion, do you think the introduction of e-HRM has managed to enhance the operational capacity of HRM environment? *[Probe: The interviewer must probe the interviewee to justify in detail how the introduction e-HRM has improved the overall performance of the HRM. Should the interviewee indicate that the introduction of e-HRM has not enhanced the operational capacity of HRM, the interviewer must probe further for justification]*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3 Please explain how the introduction of e-HRM in your workplace affected your individual performance? *[The interviewer must probe the interviewee in the following manner: before and after the introduction of the e-HRM, how were you rated or scored in your performance appraisal; does e-HRM allows you to be more efficient in completing daily activities of HR?].*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4 Does e-HRM allows you to be more efficient in completing your HRM daily activities? *[Probe: The interviewer must ask the interviewee to explain whether the turn-around time has improved when dealing with clients]*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5 Please discuss factors that encouraged you to use e-HRM to support your daily activities. *[Probe: The interviewer should request the interviewee to explain in detail whether the change manage program used to introduce the e-HRM influenced him/her to use e-HRM]*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6 Please discuss factors that have the capacity to prevent you from successfully using the e-HRM.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7 What resources or programs were introduced or deployed by the municipality in support of the implementation of e-HRM?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and patience in answering the questions. Your contribution is highly appreciated.