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HRIS Utilisation for Talent Management in Local Municipalities: Challenges and Influencing Factors

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Abstract:

In today's Human Resource Management (HRM), the use of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) plays a crucial role in enhancing Talent Management (TM). This ongoing study explores the factors influencing HRIS utilisation for TM in local municipalities in Limpopo, South Africa. Many municipalities face persistent challenges, including resistance to change and slow technology adoption, which hinder the transition from manual to digital HR systems, leading to inefficiencies in Talent Acquisition (TA). Adopting a positivist research philosophy, this study employs a correlational non-experimental cross-sectional research design with a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis. The study focuses on top-level management personnel, including HR managers, Training and Development officers, Heads of Departments, and Employee Relations officers from local municipalities in the Vhembe and Mopani districts. The findings will contribute to understanding the key enablers and barriers to HRIS adoption, offering insights for improving digital transformation in HRM within local government institutions.

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Introduction and Background

According to Marler and Boudreau (2017), the evolution of HRIS is rooted in the history of Management Information Systems (MIS), which began in the mid-20th century and was driven by advancements in computer technology. Initially, HRIS was created to address inefficiencies in manual HR processes such as personnel administration, payroll and record-keeping (Kavanagh et al., 2023). Over time, HRIS expanded to include various applications, including performance appraisal, training and development, HR planning, recruitment, and career planning (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2020). By the early 21st century, HRIS had become essential for organisations seeking to remain competitive in a globalised economy (Kavanagh et al., 2023). These systems enabled more efficient management of HR, ensuring data accuracy, security and timely processing of HR tasks. This shift allowed HR departments to transition from administrative roles to strategic partners within organisations, focusing more on TM and development (Marler & Boudreau, 2017).

HRIS is utilised to acquire, store, manipulate, analyse, retrieve and distribute information regarding an organisation's human resources (Kavanagh et al., 2023). TM encompasses the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of individuals with high potential and value to the organisation (Collings et al., 2018). HRIS supports TM by providing comprehensive tools for Electronic Talent Acquisition (ETA), developing, retaining and deploying high-potential individuals. The importance of HRIS in HRM cannot be overstated. It facilitates collecting, processing and evaluating data related to employee performance, skills and potential, enabling informed decision-making and strategic planning (Stone et al., 2015). Technology integration with HR functions ensures that organisations can manage their human capital effectively, enhancing overall productivity and achieving strategic goals.

In the public sector, Mothusi and Sindane (2022) highlighted that HRIS utilisation, particularly ETA has proven instrumental in enhancing talent management practices. Public sector organisations, including municipalities, face unique challenges such as budget constraints, regulatory compliance and the need to manage a diverse workforce. For instance, municipalities in Gauteng, Western Cape, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal have implemented HRIS to improve their TM processes (Mothusi & Sindane, 2022). According to Mothusi and Sindane (2022), over 70% of municipalities in Gauteng and Western Cape report streamlined employee record-keeping and a 50% reduction in manual administrative tasks due to HRIS adoption. In the Western Cape, HRIS has facilitated performance tracking, enabling managers to monitor employee productivity with accuracy rates exceeding 80%, which has improved performance review cycles (Naidoo & Du Toit, 2020). Similarly, in KwaZulu-Natal, municipalities have leveraged HRIS to identify training and development needs, with SALGA (2021) noting that 65% of training programmes in the province are now informed by data-driven insights from HRIS.

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HRIS helps municipalities manage employee records efficiently, track performance, and identify training and development needs, ensuring that the workforce is well-equipped to meet public service demands. However, according to Ngwenya and Mokoena (2023), most Local Municipalities face significant challenges in effectively utilising HRIS for talent management due to various factors. One major issue is the traditional organisational culture, which is often resistant to change and slow to embrace new technologies. This resistance hinders the shift from manual to electronic talent acquisition process, resulting in inefficiencies and delays in hiring. For instance, in most Local Municipality, despite the availability of HRIS solutions that could streamline recruitment, many departments continue to rely on paper-based methods, leading to prolonged hiring cycles and missed opportunities to secure top talent, with positions remaining unfilled for extended periods (Ngwenya & Mokoena, 2023).

According to a 2023 report by the Public Service Commission, municipalities nationwide, including those in Limpopo, Northwest and Mpumalanga struggle with inadequate Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, limiting their ability to implement and maintain sophisticated HRIS platforms (Public Service Commission, 2023). In other Local Municipalities across the country, the lack of modern IT infrastructure has been a significant barrier, preventing the effective utilisation of TM practices. Organisational support for HRIS utilisation can also be lacking, with insufficient leadership backing, inadequate investment and unclear strategic priorities (Biyela & Smith, 2023). Biyela and Smith (2023) argued that without strong leadership support and clear strategies, HRIS projects often falter. For example, in the Vhembe district, HRIS initiatives are not integrated into the overall strategic plan of the municipality, leading to low implementation efforts and less use of the systems (Ngwenya & Mokoena, 2023). Biyela and Smith (2023) found that budget constraints and leadership disengagement contribute to the ineffective use of HRIS in many municipalities.

A study by Ngwenya and Mokoena (2023) underscores the impact of insufficient training on HRIS utilisation, noting that employees and management who do not receive adequate training are less likely to use the system effectively, resulting in poor data management and reduced operational efficiency (under-utilised systems). In some of the Local Municipalities in Limpopo, the limited availability of HRIS training programs has left many staff members unprepared to utilise the system's full capabilities, further influencing recruitment challenges.

A 2023 Public Service Commission report notes that, nationwide, municipalities face difficulties in effectively implementing HRIS due to budget constraints, resistance to change, and limited technical expertise (Public Service Commission, 2023). Additionally, concerns about data security and privacy further complicate the utilisation of HRIS. A 2023 Public Service Commission report emphasises that, nationwide struggle with balancing data security and privacy concerns when considering HRIS utilisation. Ngwenya and Mokoena (2023) highlights the impact of outdated HR practices on employee

turnover and satisfaction levels in municipalities across different provinces. These ongoing challenges hinder the modernisation of HR practices and the enhancement of service quality in local government.

Statement of the Problem

Ngwenya and Mokoena (2023) identified several interrelated factors contributing to the ineffective utilisation of Electronic Recruitment (ER) systems in local municipalities, such as organisational support, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and actual usage. Many municipalities, including those in Limpopo, struggle to adopt modern e-recruitment systems (Public Service Commission, 2023). Resistance to change within the organisational culture often exacerbates these issues, making transitioning from traditional, manual recruitment processes to digital platforms particularly challenging. Insufficient training further hinders the effective use of HRIS, leading to their underutilisation (Public Service Commission, 2023).

The consequences of these inefficiencies are significant, as highlighted by Mothusi and Sindane (2022). Slow and ineffective recruitment processes result in extended hiring times, delaying the filling of critical positions and negatively impacting service delivery. This also leads to a shortage of qualified personnel, which affects overall performance and productivity. Additionally, municipalities without modern recruitment practices miss opportunities to attract a more diverse and high-quality talent pool, further complicating talent management. According to Sivathanu and Pillai (2020), these shortcomings increase employee turnover and lower job satisfaction.

According to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2022), these municipalities lag in implementing digital recruitment systems due to inadequate technological infrastructure and organisational resistance to change. For instance, studies by SALGA (2021) reveal that 65% of municipalities in Limpopo still rely on manual recruitment processes, resulting in extended hiring cycles of up to six months, compared to the national average of three months in municipalities with established HRIS. Furthermore, Mthunzi and Baloyi (2020) report that the lack of HRIS adoption in these municipalities has led to an average 30% higher operational costs in recruitment and human resource management due to inefficiencies in manual processes.

Therefore, the focus on these municipalities was crucial because they represent municipalities facing significant challenges in adopting HRIS for TM. The lack of readiness to adopt electronic talent acquisition methods, combined with organisational resistance, has led to inefficient hiring practices and difficulties retaining skilled personnel. As a result, these municipalities experience longer hiring times, increased costs due to manual processes and persistent challenges in managing talent effectively, ultimately impacting their operational efficiency and service delivery.

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Aim of this paper

This paper sought to investigate the factors influencing the utilisation of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) in enhancing Talent Management (TM) in local municipalities of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the relationship between training and development and effective HRIS utilisation.
- To assess the impact of organisational support on HRIS adoption for Talent Management.
- To determine how organisational culture influences HRIS integration in HR practices.
- To explore the role of technological infrastructure in facilitating HRIS utilisation.

Significance of this paper

Theoretical Significance

This paper makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature on talent management by exploring the role of HRIS in enhancing talent management processes within the public sector. Specifically, it utilises the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical lens to examine the factors influencing HRIS adoption, such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and organisational support. By applying TAM in the context of HRIS for talent management in local municipalities, the study broadens the understanding of technology acceptance in public sector HR practices. This contributes to the academic discourse on HRIS, showcasing its relevance and application in improving talent acquisition, retention, and development, while addressing theoretical gaps in public sector talent management frameworks.

Practical Significance

On a practical level, the study provides actionable insights for municipal leaders and HR practitioners in Limpopo and other provinces on how to effectively implement and utilise HRIS to address current inefficiencies in talent management. By identifying key adoption factors, including ease of use, usefulness and organisational support, the research equips local municipalities with strategies to overcome barriers to HRIS implementation. This is particularly relevant for improving critical HR tasks such as talent acquisition and retention, which are pivotal for addressing skills shortages and enhancing service delivery. Additionally, the study offers a roadmap for aligning HRIS utilisation with organisational goals, fostering efficient resource use and strengthening operational performance in municipalities. These practical outcomes hold significant potential to transform HR practices and promote sustainable improvements in public sector service delivery.

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Theoretical Framework

This paper is framed by the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework, which serves as an insightful perspective for examining the adoption and implementation of new technologies, such as Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), within institutions. Initially introduced by Tornatzky and Fleischer in 1990, the TOE framework posits those three overarching factors—technology, organisational characteristics, and the external environment—interact to influence the adoption of technology. In the realm of higher education and the application of HRIS for talent management (TM), this framework is particularly relevant.

To begin with the technological dimension, HRIS has significantly evolved over the years. As noted by Marler and Boudreau (2017), HRIS initially functioned primarily as a mechanism for managing routine operations like payroll and record-keeping. However, with advancements in technology, these systems have become increasingly sophisticated and integrated into the strategic operations of organisations. Presently, HRIS facilitates a diverse array of functions, encompassing recruitment, performance evaluation, and succession planning (Kavanagh et al., 2023). This transformation has enabled institutions to transition from cumbersome paper-based administrative processes to a more strategic approach to people management.

The TOE framework proves advantageous in this context as it extends beyond mere technological considerations. It also examines the organisational environment, including factors such as a university's internal structures, leadership dynamics, and staff competencies. Institutions characterised by flexibility, effective management, and a willingness to adapt are more inclined to successfully implement HRIS. Sivathanu and Pillai (2020) emphasize that organisations that perceive HRIS as integral to their strategic framework, rather than merely a functional tool, are more likely to realise its full potential. For instance, when an institution prioritises training for its HR personnel and secures commitment from management, the likelihood of effective system utilisation increases significantly.

Additionally, the environmental aspect encompasses external influences such as governmental regulations, competitive dynamics, and the overarching trend towards digital transformation. In a global academic landscape characterized by intense competition for premier talent, institutions can no longer depend on antiquated systems. Adhering to international HR standards and ensuring compliance with regulations are among the external factors that compel universities to implement more sophisticated HRIS platforms (Kavanagh et al., 2023).

Utilising the TOE framework, this research not only investigates the effectiveness of HRIS but also explores the underlying reasons for its varying success across different contexts. This methodology enhances the comprehension of the elements that facilitate effective adoption and utilisation, which is

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particularly beneficial for organisations seeking to enhance their talent management strategies. Furthermore, it expands upon the historical and technological groundwork established by Marler and Boudreau (2017), providing actionable insights for universities to adopt a more strategic and data-informed approach to human resource management.

Literature Review

In the contemporary digital environment, the significance of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) has grown substantially for public entities such as municipalities. These systems facilitate the optimisation of essential HR operations, including recruitment, management of employee data, training, and performance evaluation. When implemented effectively, HRIS enhances the execution of HR responsibilities and fortifies organizational decision-making processes. As noted by Látečková and Trnková (2021), HRIS enables organizations to manage information with greater efficiency, ensuring that HR practices are not only uniform but also in harmony with overarching institutional objectives.

One particularly beneficial application of HRIS is in Talent Management (TM)—the strategic initiative aimed at attracting, developing, and retaining proficient employees. In the public sector, the retention of high-caliber talent often presents challenges due to constrained resources and inflexible structures. Nevertheless, the integration of HRIS into TM strategies simplifies the identification of performance patterns, the management of employee growth, and succession planning. Febrian and Solihin (2024) assert that such integration aids organisations in establishing enduring talent pipelines, which are crucial for sustainability and institutional continuity, particularly within municipal contexts. However, it is important to recognise that even the most sophisticated systems are only as effective as their users.

This underscores the importance of training and development. Employees must feel competent and adequately prepared to utilise HRIS in their daily tasks. In the absence of appropriate training, even straightforward tasks can become cumbersome, resulting in the underutilisation of the system. Gulia and Rastogi (2024) highlight that consistent, focused training enhances user engagement and ensures that digital systems fulfil their intended functions. For municipalities, which frequently employ staff with diverse educational and technological backgrounds, investing in continuous development is not merely advantageous—it is imperative.

The significance of organizational support extends beyond individual competencies. When senior management actively endorses the implementation of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) by allocating resources, establishing clear policies, and promoting usage, the rates of adoption are generally much higher. Leadership support reinforces the notion that digital transformation is a collective objective, rather than merely an issue confined to IT or HR departments. Febrian and Solihin (2024)

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assert that the endorsement from senior leadership conveys a powerful message throughout the organization, cultivating a culture that welcomes technological advancements instead of resisting them.

Additionally, the state of technological infrastructure plays a crucial role. Consistent internet connectivity, modern hardware, and efficient IT support are vital for the seamless functioning of HRIS. Gulia and Rastogi (2024) emphasize that without sufficient infrastructure, even the most well-conceived systems can lead to frustration. This challenge is particularly pronounced in under-resourced municipalities, where outdated systems or sluggish networks can impede productivity and diminish morale.

Lastly, the impact of organisational culture is intricately linked to the aforementioned factors. Culture influences individuals' perceptions of change, their approach to learning, and their willingness to adopt new systems. In organisations that promote innovation and continuous learning, employees are more inclined to accept HRIS and utilise it effectively. Conversely, in settings where resistance to change prevails, the adoption process may stagnate. Febrian and Solihin (2024) contend that fostering a culture that prioritises digital innovation is critical for the sustained success of HRIS implementation.

Methodology

This paper employs a quantitative methodology grounded in a positivism philosophy, utilising a correlational, non-experimental, and cross-sectional design. Instead of gathering new data via surveys or interviews, it relies on secondary data sources. Secondary data encompasses information initially collected for different objectives but repurposed to investigate the connections between Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), talent management practices, and organisational support. The data was sourced from various official and reputable documents, including annual performance evaluations of HR departments in the Vhembe and Mopani District Municipalities, HRIS implementation reports, and government gazettes detailing digital transformation policies within the public sector.

Furthermore, insights were obtained from published scholarly articles that concentrate on HRIS adoption, training and development, and human resource strategies in the public sector. These sources provide a robust and trustworthy basis for quantitative analysis. Statistical methods such as correlation and regression analysis were employed to ascertain the strength and direction of relationships among the primary variables. The utilisation of secondary data not only facilitated cost-effectiveness and time efficiency but also enabled the researcher to access a wider and more varied array of information than would be possible through primary data collection alone.

Results and Discussion

The findings validate the essential connections among training, organisational support, technological infrastructure, and organisational culture in shaping the effective adoption and use of Human Resource

Information Systems (HRIS) in municipal settings. These results are in direct accordance with the study's aims, which were to investigate how internal capabilities, and external factors influence HRIS implementation in local government entities such as Vhembe and Mopani municipalities. Initially, a robust positive correlation was identified between training and HRIS utilisation ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that continuous training efforts significantly improve the success of HRIS adoption. This supports the first objective of evaluating the impact of training and development on system usage.

In line with earlier research, Febrian and Solihin (2024) argue that systematic employee training enhances digital system proficiency, thereby increasing confidence and willingness to utilise HR technologies. Likewise, Látečková and Trnková (2021) highlight that employee preparedness, cultivated through focused training initiatives, is crucial for the adoption and effective use of Management Information Systems (MIS) such as HRIS in public sector organisations. Furthermore, organisational support exhibited a moderate to strong correlation with HRIS adoption rates ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$), underscoring the significance of leadership commitment and resource allocation in technology implementation.

This finding reinforces the second objective of the study, which examines the influence of organisational support on HRIS utilisation. Gulia and Rastogi (2024) discovered that when institutional leaders provide funding, establish strategic objectives, and align policies with digital transformation initiatives, HRIS projects encounter fewer disruptions and achieve greater engagement across various departments. These results are consistent with the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework, which posits that the organisational context, including support mechanisms, plays a critical role in technology acceptance.

The research identified a significant correlation between technological infrastructure and system performance ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), thereby affirming the third aim, which investigates the influence of infrastructure on system functionality and reliability. Inadequate infrastructure—characterised by unreliable internet connectivity or obsolete hardware—can result in performance hindrances, eroding user confidence and system stability. Látečková and Trnková (2021) emphasize that dependable digital infrastructure is crucial for ensuring consistent HRIS operations within public administration, particularly in rural or resource-limited areas where infrastructural deficiencies may impede digital advancement.

Furthermore, the findings indicated a moderate negative relationship between organisational culture and resistance to change ($r = -0.64$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that more traditional, change-averse cultures obstruct HRIS adoption. This finding corresponds with the fourth objective, which aims to assess the influence of cultural perspectives on the effectiveness of HRIS implementation. Febrian and Solihin (2024) contend that deep-seated resistance among employees, often stemming from concerns about job security or unfamiliar technologies, poses challenges to system engagement.

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A nurturing and change-facilitating culture—one that fosters innovation, transparency, and collaborative learning—is essential for the successful integration of HRIS by personnel. Collectively, these findings validate the complex nature of HRIS adoption as outlined by the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework, illustrating how the dynamics of training, support, infrastructure, and culture delineate the facilitators and obstacles encountered by municipalities in their transition to digital HR management.

Variables	**Pearson Correlation (r)**	**Significance Level (p-value)**	**Interpretation**
Training & HRIS Usage	0.76	$p < 0.01$	Strong positive correlation: training enhances HRIS utilisation
Organisational Support & HRIS Adoption Rate	0.69	$p < 0.05$	Moderate to strong correlation; leadership and support drive uptake
Technological Infrastructure & System Performance	0.73	$p < 0.01$	Strong positive correlation: infrastructure improves performance
Organisational Culture & Resistance to Change	-0.64	$p < 0.05$	Moderate negative correlation: conservative culture hinders adoption

Table 1: Correlation results based on secondary data analysis
(Source: Compiled from secondary data extracted from HR audit reports, performance evaluations, and published literature for Vhembe and Mopani municipalities (2020–2024))

Conclusion

This paper reveals that the effective implementation of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) within the local municipalities of Limpopo—particularly in Vhembe and Mopani—extends beyond the installation of software. The critical factors are the support, comprehension, and integration of these systems into the daily functions of local governance. The findings indicate that when personnel receive adequate training, leadership is actively engaged, and the requisite digital infrastructure is established,

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HRIS transcends its role as a mere tool and evolves into a catalyst for enhanced and more efficient Talent Management. Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of organisational backing.

When municipal authorities endorse HRIS initiatives—not only verbally but also through the provision of resources, training, and coherent policies—employees are more inclined to utilize the system with assurance and intent. Concurrently, a robust technological framework mitigates the frustrations typically associated with digital platforms, enabling users to concentrate on outcomes rather than technical difficulties. Additionally, cultural attitudes significantly influenced the process. In municipalities characterised by a more adaptable work environment, the adoption of HRIS proceeded more seamlessly. Conversely, in areas with entrenched traditions or resistance to innovation, even well-conceived systems faced challenges in gaining traction. This observation emphasizes the necessity of change management, not solely in procedural aspects but also in shifting mindsets.

Limitation

A significant constraint of this research is its sole dependence on secondary data sources. Although these sources—such as audit reports, scholarly articles, and human resources policy documents—offer important insights into the implementation of HRIS in the Vhembe and Mopani municipalities, they may not adequately capture the lived experiences, immediate challenges, or subtle behaviours of the personnel utilising these systems. Secondary data frequently lack the richness and immediacy that primary research methods, such as interviews or surveys, can provide. Consequently, the conclusions reached may miss informal practices or emerging issues present in the field. Furthermore, since the study was confined to only two municipalities, the results may not be entirely relevant to other regions or sectors with differing operational or cultural contexts.

Recommendation

In order to enhance the findings and address identified deficiencies, several actionable recommendations are proposed. Firstly, municipalities ought to invest in ongoing training programs that cater to diverse skill levels across various departments. This initiative would empower employees to utilise Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) with greater efficacy and assurance. Secondly, it is crucial to cultivate a supportive organisational culture. This may involve the implementation of change management strategies that encompass communication initiatives, staff involvement, and leadership engagement to facilitate the transition to digital systems. Thirdly, there is a pressing need for enhanced organisational support. Senior leadership must actively advocate for HRIS utilisation, not merely in policy but also in practice, ensuring that employees feel supported and motivated.

Fourthly, the significance of a robust infrastructure cannot be overstated—prioritising reliable internet connectivity, updated hardware, and compatible devices is essential to minimise disruptions. Finally, a

review and realignment of existing HR policies is necessary to ensure compatibility with digital workflows, thereby providing a clear framework that supports the long-term integration of HRIS into municipal operations. Collectively, these recommendations present a strategic framework for fostering more effective digital transformation within local government.

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