

Putting e-HR into practice: the case of the University of Alicante

Susana de Juana Espinosa, University of Alicante, Spain
Susana.Espinosa@ua.es

Sergio Luján-Mora, University of Alicante, Spain
sergio.lujan@ua.es

***Abstract.** Nowadays it is not likely to find any large organization, either public or private, that does not have some sort of computerized information system for their Human Resource Management (HRM) processes. However, not all of them use it successfully and effectively. Lessons need to be extracted, both from theoretical research and case studies in order to show HR managers how to boost the added value of people by integrating an e-HRM perspective in their businesses.*

Strohmeier's e-HRM [36] framework posits that researchers need to understand the context in which the practitioner works, along with the relationships between the actors affected, the firm's strategies and activities, and the technologies implemented before attempting to determine its consequences and ways to improve HRM performance. Taking this into account, this paper offers an analytical, qualitative view of the e-HRM context, actors, activities and technologies developed by the University of Alicante, comparing the perspectives of the employees and their supervisors, in order to identify which key issues need to be considered prior to undertaking a quantitative research on e-HRM performance. Our main contribution is to find evidence supporting that the most relevant issues to be considered are those of communication, conflict management and trust between employees and supervisors.

Keywords: case study, e-HRM, Intranet, University, Spain.

1 Introduction

Lately, there has been a strong interest in the relationship between Human Resource (HR) managers and the way they add value to organizational performance, surpassing the exploration of the effectiveness of single HR policies and practices [5, 32]. Even though Teo [37] presented evidence on the fact that technology-related competences were considered less competitive than soft relationship management issues (trust, commitment, etc.), it cannot be denied that a dramatic change is taking place in the HR area, which affects everyone within and on the fringes of the organization (applicants, retirees, outsourcing contractors...). This change is both supported and led at the same time by information technology (IT), specifically Internet, which is permeating, slowly but surely, the HR manager's function.

Strohmeier, S.; Diederichsen, A. (Eds.), Evidence-Based e-HRM? On the way to rigorous and relevant research, Proceedings of the Third European Academic Workshop on electronic Human Resource Management, Bamberg, Germany, May 20-21, 2010, CEUR-WS.org, ISSN 1613-0073, Vol. 570, online: CEUR-WS.org/Vol-570/, pp. 342-359.

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The root of this change is the knowledge that a successful firm will be the one compelled both to adapt and anticipate to the current environmental changes, evolving from a solid, hierarchical and mechanical entity to a fluid, organic organization built on information flows [44].

Some consequences of the introduction of Internet in the world of HR are the following [11]:

- IT destroys traditional, intensive manual labor, but gives birth to new jobs (Webmasters, media brokers, html programmers, etc).
- Teleworking and flexible consideration of time and space are part of the job's description. Privacy has also become a relevant issue, since the distinction of personal and professional related information is blurred, as well as blending personal time and working hours.
- Geographical barriers disappear, up to the point in which some businesses are working 24 hours a day by using time zones appropriately.
- Multifunctional skills and team working are required abilities for new economy's employees.
- Modern organizational structures, flat and team-based, are taking over traditional forms (virtual organizations being the epitome of this phenomenon).

The integration of IT in the organization of work has brought certain benefits which lead to new conceptions about work relations, but not about work itself [12]. Business have to learn to "e-manage" their human resources, as opposed to simply "manage" them, in order to survive in today's digital environment. However, many organizations do not react to these environmental challenges suitably. This problem often results in policies, practices, and strategies that may be outdated.

Thus, the quest of present time HR managers is making the most of this pervasive technology while addressing the abovementioned challenges in an effective manner. And this can be achieved by implementing e-HRM functions. Strohmeier [36] defines e-HRM as the application of IT for both networking and supporting at least two individual and collectives actors in their shared performance of HR activities. Therefore, e-HRM extends outside of the HR department to the whole organization.

The paper's purpose is to address a case study in which it is shown how to boost the added value of people as a company asset by means of an IS, specifically intranets, to integrate an e-HRM perspective in their businesses. It focuses on the issues raised by the employees of the University of Alicante (UA) who are currently implementing intranet-supported applications for their HRM practices. This case study is the first part of a larger research project, which comprises another stage in which a quantitative survey will be carried out. This survey will study whether the Technology Acceptance Model [9, 10], or TAM, is applicable to the context of the UA's e-HRM policies as a tool for predicting HR attitudes, and its consequences for HR performance.

The layout of the paper is as follows: the following section will approach the concepts of e-HRM, Strohmeier's framework and the role of the intranet and its HR applications for e-HRM performance. A third section presents the methodological aspects of this stage of the research. Afterwards, the results and discussion section shows an analytical, qualitative view of the e-HRM functions carried out by the UA through its corporate intranet. The paper finalizes with some conclusions and the consequences that the

findings presented here will have for the second stage of our research, as well as future lines of work for new economy's HR managers, as extracted from the case studied.

2 State of the art: e-HRM

2.1 E-HRM concept, advantages and models

E-HRM refers to conducting HRM transactions using the Internet and other IT. Although the 'e' part is a reflection of the 'electronic' meaning that it has in 'e-business' or 'e-commerce', it really means online HR. An e-HR system aims to provide useful information to managers and employees anytime, anywhere. For instance, it allows employees to take over some of the administrative roles of the HR department, by controlling their personal information, updating records and keeping control of timing and agenda. As for managers, it helps them to access information and data, conduct analyses, and make HR related decisions without consulting the HR department [29].

E-HRM is a more specific vision of how HRM and its associated processes can benefit from a rational use of IT. According to Voermans and van Veldhoven [40], there exists *"a positive relation was expected between reported ease of use, usability, user support and output quality of an IT system and the attitude towards E-HRM"*. The cost of doing HR transactions is lowered and response times are improved, as well as quality and consistency of the HR information [27]. Likewise, HR managers are able to focus on strategic functions instead of carrying out administrative tasks. But there are also some disadvantages: as said by Noe et al. [26], e-HRM *"pose a challenge that is especially significant for human resource management: they lack the personal touch of face-to-face communication"*. Also, less administrative and paperwork tasks usually lead to less HR personnel needed, thus considering e-HRM as a blessing and a course [20].

This is the principle underlying the notion of e-HRM: It can only support true competitive advantages in combination with soft HRM practices, knowledge management and trust relationships [13, 17]. This means that firms must enhance their employees' skills, behavior and attitude towards creating and sharing knowledge in technology-based work environments, like an intranet. For a more elaborated view on IT-based HR innovations, see [13].

This case study will benefit from being approached from a comprehensive organizational perspective, like that presented by Strohmeier [36]. For this author, e-HRM is a multilevel phenomenon; this is, its effects are both macro level (organizational) and micro level (individual). Both levels need to be considered for the dimensions of their framework (see figure 1):

- The **context** considers the different environments that influence the e-HRM system, namely cultural, legal, industrial and organizational.
- The **configuration** seeks to integrate the operative part of e-HRM. The actors involved can be external assessors, employees, HR professionals, managers, applicants, virtual teams, etc. The activities are those HR processes and functions that could be improved with IT. As for technology, it is clearly identifiable with the equipment and applications that support e-HRM. Finally, the strategy refers to the connection between e-HRM implementation and HR objectives.

- The **consequences** will attend to the different levels. Operational consequences are actors' attitudes, whereas transformational (organizational) consequences will happen when HR play a key role in sustaining competitive advantages.

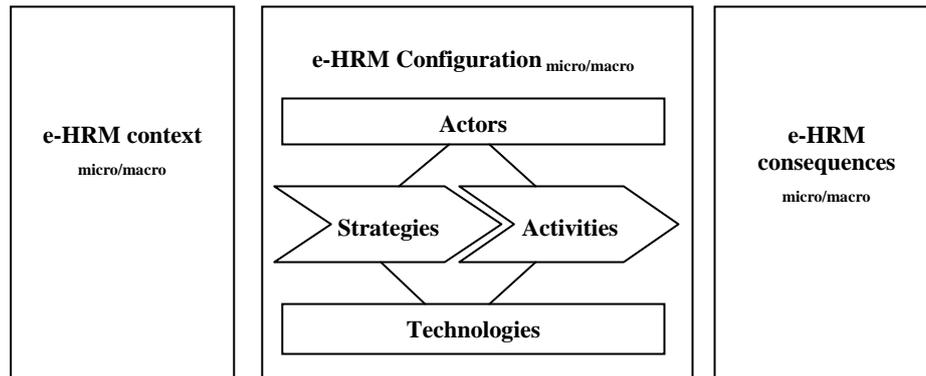


Figure 1. Framework for e-HRM [36]

2.2 E-HRM activities and processes

Almost every e-HRM activity can be carried out by means of an intranet. An intranet is defined as a network based on TCP/IP protocols (an internet) belonging to an organization, usually a corporation, accessible only by the organization's members, employees, or others with authorization. The intranet's purpose is to safely share part of an organization's information or operations with its employees and to facilitate the sharing of this information. They support many real job functions and can become the primary avenue that employees use to communicate with people in other groups within the organization and the way you find the information you need to do your job effectively and easily [25]. Sometimes the term refers only to the most visible service, the internal website, generally restricted to employees of the organization.

Intranets have inherited from Web parenting the low cost, inexpensive fees, scalability and excellent support advantages, but these will only come out if it is properly designed and managed [17]. This means that the Internet's interactivity and real-time interaction collude with the advantages of having the information on HR systematized, allowing for most efficient decision making.

Figure 2 illustrates the key e-HRM processes most commonly found on corporate intranets [5, 15, 39].

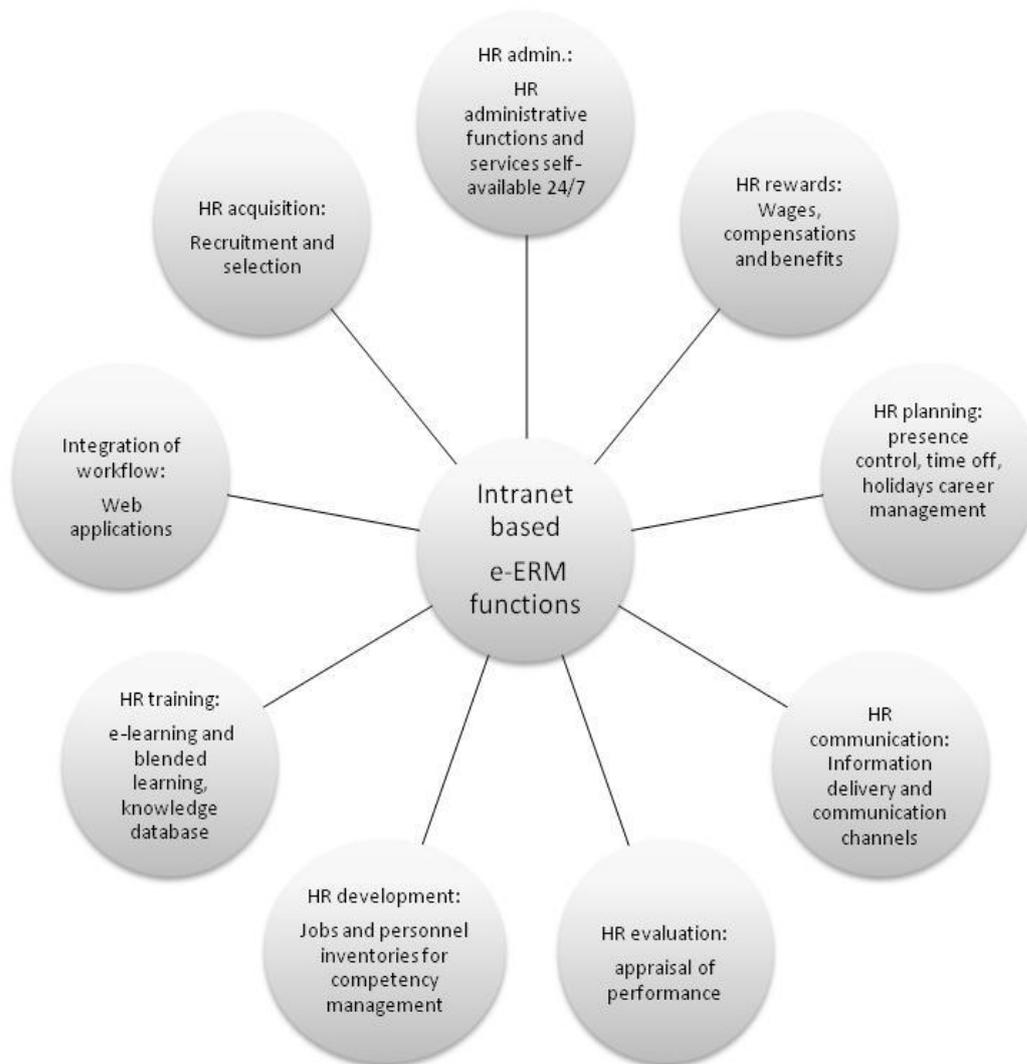


Figure 2. Key e-HRM functions

It can be seen in Figure 2 that there is a variety of functions available for e-HR managers, from the simple publishing of information, to more sophisticated HR practices that contribute in the long term to skill and knowledge base within the organization [42]. Let us elaborate on these functions.

HR selection and recruitment may be carried out by means of an applicants' tracking system, a software application that enables the electronic handling of corporate recruitment needs. Most include a corporate career site, allowing companies to post jobs on to their own websites, and applicants to log on their curriculum vitae. Candidates can apply for either specific or non-specific job vacancies. Effective solutions store the candidate data into a database to allow efficient searching, filtering, and routing of applications. It can be complemented with the information provided by an online, integrated solution using Web-based management tools, which allow applicants (job seekers) to submit (upload) and manage their electronic Curriculum on the Internet [39].

HR administration allows for e- self-service applications that diminish the charge of routine work for the HR department while increasing transparency and visibility for employees in regards to their personal information. This indicates an increase in information access and sharing, shifting away from the traditionally centralized and hierarchical approach. Furthermore, the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the HR area improves, leaving their managers to focus on the more strategic functions of their profession [8].

Payroll administration is known to be one of the earliest HR processes to become automatic [20]. **Wages and benefits** are easier to calculate and personalize since the information needed is mostly uploaded in the system, like time attendance and productivity figures.

This is related to **HR planning** in terms of presence control, and requests for holidays and time off. The traditional time clock often no longer makes sense and simply does not meet the needs of the current work environment. The intranet may be used to track and monitor employee attendance accurately in real-time, even if they are not working physically at the organizational premises. However, it may lead to a “Big Brother” experience for the more technophobic employees [1].

Information dissemination and intra-organizational communication are two of the most common purposes of the intranet [5, 24]. However, e-HRM takes this information level up a few notches, by offering employees online access to information about HR in a self-service way. E-mail, forums, videoconferences and other applications are set up on the virtual desktop of the employee to provide them with several communication channels that break the trade-off between reach and richness of information [8].

Payne et al. [29] provide evidence that **online performance appraisal** systems are viewed as superior to paper and pencil systems in many respects, but not in terms of the perceived quality of the performance appraisal ratings. Actually, the gain comes from having the information gathered in one system that allows for comparison and feedback of the HR manager, although not so much from the employee’s point of view.

Jobs inventories and staff profiles can be loaded into the system and used as the starting point of the **HR development** function. A series of assessments are carried out to match peoples’ competencies and job requirements, as well as planning promotions and careers, and detecting training needs. These databases should be kept always updated, so that HR managers are able to identify and lack or excess in any competency of any employee at any given time [39].

HR training has a wide scope, from an application to request courses to e-learning and e-mentoring processes. It also contributes to organizational effectiveness by managing knowledge repositories and creating social and intellectual capital [20]. According to Murray et al. [23], most distance education technologies can be used for training, are cheaper for the firm to use (as compared to the use of a live instructor) and trainees thus trained perform better, especially in virtual environments. However, the average trainee prefers a live trainer that any e-learning resource, unless there is a strong intercommunication among trainees.

The use of web technologies has changed the way in which data and computational resources are brought to the desktop of the employees. Since **web based solutions** are easy to establish [32], a plenty and quickly increasing number of resources can be made available on Intranet application [15]. This function refers to an e-HR form which focuses on the automation of transactions, under the principles of business process

reengineering, where paperwork is replaced by electronic work flows, even integrating and combining several application programs, under ERP software.

Now that the e-HRM functions have been shown, the next stage would be to measure their performance and the employees' attitude towards them, for which the TAM has been considered for the next stage of the project that is being discussed in this paper.

The Technology Acceptance Model

As we have seen in Strohmeier's framework, the performance levels of the e-HRM depend on several factors, like the level of commitment and qualifications of the HR manager, the IT used, the organizational culture and the expectations and demands of the employees and managers [5, 11, 27]. In order to be able to measure this performance, several models and theories have been developed. Particularly, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use a technology. This model may be valuable as a tool for helping with analyzing and understanding intranet usage [16] and attitudes toward e-HRM [40].

Davies et al. [10] presented a model which suggested that when users are presented with a new technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it (see figure 3):

- **Perceived usefulness:** refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance. That is, the application results in a positive use-performance relationship. In the context of e-HRM, this definition can be interpreted as whether or not actively participating in the online management of one's time would help the employee to become more productive.
- **Perceived ease-of-use:** refers to the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort; i.e., if the application can be easily used for the intended purpose. For instance, in e-HRM, whether the platform is easy to access and to work with.

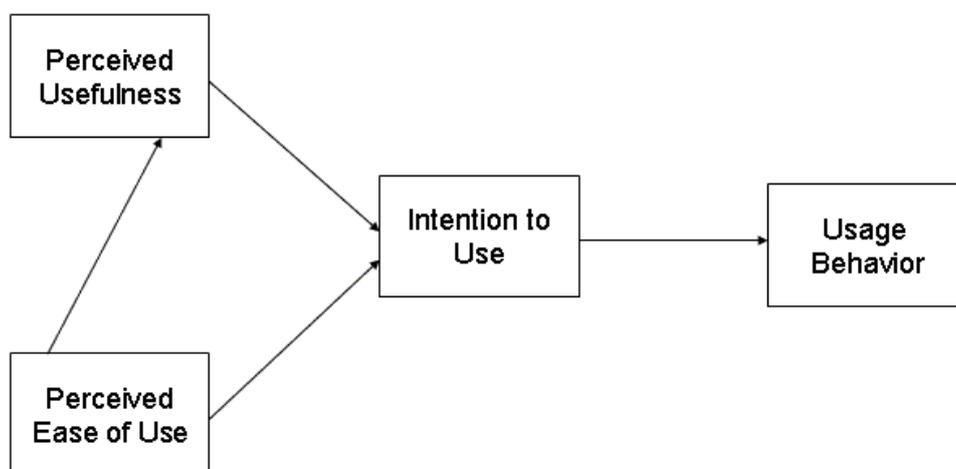


Figure 3. Technology Acceptance Model [9]

This model is quite popular among researchers. It has been tested within a wide variety of computer settings and has been shown to be a robust predictor of computer use [40]. The TAM should also be a successful predictor of online course use [22] thus being applicable to study online training practices.

However, a common denominator is that the model is seldom useful as designed by Davis [9], and therefore changes have to be made so that it may adapt to the circumstances of the analyzed industry and business. In practice constraints such as limited ability, time, environmental or organizational limits, and unconscious habits will limit the freedom to act. For instance, Horton et al. [16] found out that its applicability may be variable between intranets and demonstrates that self-report and actual measures of usage are not interchangeable when applying such a model. Further criticisms of TAM as a "theory" include its lack of falsifiability, questionable heuristic value, limited explanatory and predictive power, triviality, and lack of any practical value [3]. Attempts to overcome these hindrances have generally taken one of three approaches: by introducing factors from related models, by introducing additional or alternative belief factors, and by examining antecedents and moderators of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use [34]. For instance, Venkatesh and Davis extended the original TAM model to explain perceived usefulness and usage intentions in terms of social influence and cognitive instrumental processes. The extended model, referred to as TAM2, was tested in both voluntary and mandatory settings. The results strongly supported TAM2 [40]. The variables added by [40] are: image (the degree to which use of an innovation is perceived to enhance one's status in one's social system), job relevance (individual's perception regarding the degree to which the target system is relevant to his or her job), output quality (the degree to which an individual believes that the system performs his or her job tasks well), result demonstrability (tangibility of the results of using the innovation), subjective norm (a person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question), and voluntariness (the extent to which potential adopters perceive the adoption decision to be non-mandatory). The latter dimension appeals to our research since we are dealing with public servants.

Other attempts to establish a perfected model are those of [31], who proposed a framework integrating three categories of factors for the analysis of teleworking adoption: technological, human resources, and organizational factors. [2], using data gathered from the implementation of an ERP system, affirmed that managerial interventions in training and project communication influence the acceptance of technology, since perceived usefulness and ease of use contribute to behavioral intention to use the technology.

All in all, these discrepancies on the applicability of TAM for e-HRM reinforce our belief in carrying out a previous analysis of the context, actors, activities, strategies and technologies, so that we can tailor the model to our organization's features.

3 Methodology

This paper presents a qualitative research [43], based on an open group-based interview regarding the intranet's working and their perceptions and attitudes. This interview was responded by the employees of the CV division of the Information Systems Department of the UA, one of them a middle manager, thus applying the "person of interest" approach. Following [14, 33], the majority of the studies in HRM performance neglect

the perspective of the employee, which is necessary evidence to have a comprehensive view of HR politics, and has the added value of improving labor climate.

These specific employees were selected because, firstly, they possess technical knowledge about CV and coached us in how the system works and which applications are still being implemented. Secondly, the interviewees' job is to answer the questions, issues and suggestions of the university's employees regarding CV usage, thereby providing the researchers with first hand information about behavior usage. Therefore, the interview was conducted in an interactive manner, in which the interviewees described how the system works and stressed the most important issues they have come across during the implementation period in regards to its users.

Following their recommendations, we selected for analysis the following subsystems of the e-HRM of the UA because of their higher level of development, describing them from both perspectives, those of the administrative employee and the supervisor:

- Employee: time attendance tracking, time off request, holiday period request.
- Supervisor: employee absence monitor, time off request and holiday period request approval.

This will allow for a 360° vision of every function, illustrating the interactions among both agents involved [4]. Also, the information was limited to the experience of the administrative staff since they form a numerous group with similar tasks, at least in regards to the manner in which to conduct these HR functions, whereas the faculty do not have these online time management functions because of the special nature of their jobs.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 The context

The UA had a teaching staff of 2212 people and 1240 administrative staff in December 2007 [21]. Besides, the 2007 budget was roughly 265 million €. Therefore, although the UA is a public organization, it can be considered a “big-size enterprise” in terms of personnel and operative budget, albeit a very complex one. Also, being a public organization, strict bureaucratic rules need to be followed, especially for administrative tasks. This means that the assessment of e-HRM is seen as the extent to which e-HRM applications are perceived as appropriate in use [30].

4.2 The strategies

The e-HRM system of the UA was developed as a result of its strategic plan for achieving higher levels of service quality and cost efficiency, as well as complying with its environmental policy [6]. Its use is compulsory for everybody and training courses are offered to the employees once the applications are implemented and in use.

4.3 The technology

Since 1995, the UA makes use of a self-made platform called Campus Virtual [6]. Campus Virtual is a web application that supports both teaching and learning processes and administrative tasks, and it is used by more than 95.000 users in a mandatory manner [38]. As a proprietary IT system, it is customized to UA staff's needs and demands, and any difficulties are being dealt with as soon as they are detected. It is on this platform, which was already known to the employees, that was decided to

implement the HRM functions. This is important since, as [19] have demonstrated, web experience and task interdependence impact intranet usage and perceived ease of use.

The e-HRM platform the UA is personalized, secure, and accessible from any computer with an internet connection. Obviously, the e-HRM limits access to information to only authorized users in the UA: privacy is an important issue, because HR information is confidential and not suitable for posting on a website for everyone to see. Currently, the e-HRM offers the following main functions to employees, but every year the features and functions of e-HRM are improved:

- Enroll in and participate in training programs online (e-learning).
- Time attendance tracking.
- Time off request.
- Check holiday entitlements and request holiday periods.
- View and print the payroll online.

Moreover, the e-HRM system of the UA supports other functions as e-recruiting and knowledge sharing. For example, all the new job positions are made public on the UA web portal; all the information about health care and other benefits, UA's policies regarding work hours and holiday periods, and model documents are available on the UA web portal.

Besides, UA employees keep their personal records up to date by themselves. For example, an employee can submit an address or bank account change through the e-HRM. With employees helping themselves to information transaction and changes, UA is able to cut the number of staff members required to administer some HR tasks and it is able to offer a more personalized and up-to-date information, which concurs with the benefits and drawbacks presented before.

4.4 The activities and actors: e-HRM functions in the University of Alicante.

4.4.1 The employee's perspective

As it was explained before, the Campus Virtual of the UA is used to track and monitor administrative employees' attendance accurately in real-time. Instead of employees punching a time-card, they simply connect to the Campus Virtual, enter their user and password and select the function to punch in. Employees can punch in only from their assigned computer; therefore, it is avoided fraudulence: an employee cannot punch in at home or from another computer in the University.

Figure 4 shows the e-HRM interface that is used punch in both the entrance and the exit. As we can observe, the interface is very simple: the time of the last punching is shown, and two buttons allow the employee to punch in the coming in or the coming out.

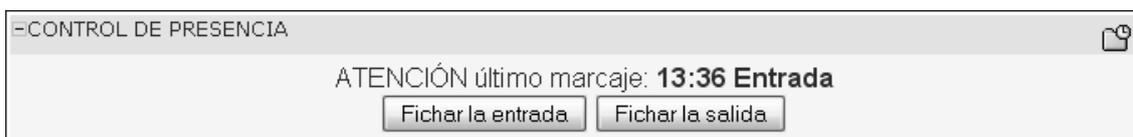


Figure 4. Punching in work

Sometimes, employees can make a mistake and can forget to punch in at the right time. In this case, the employee has to use the function to correct a mistaken punching: the employee has to fill up the date and time of the mistaken punching, the event (come in or come out) and the reason, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Correcting a mistaken punching

Moreover, the e-HRM offers an on-demand report generation that allows employees to review their own attendance data and to check their balance (theoretical and real hours), as shown in Figure 6. This is very important since for the most bureaucratic organizations, wages and productivity are usually calculated in according to working hours. In this report, special events, such as bank holidays or sick leaves, are shown with a different color.

LEYENDA														
FIN DE SEMANA	INCIDENCIA	AUSENCIA	FESTIVO	AUSENCIA COMPLETA	AUSENCIA PARCIAL	VACACIONES	MARCAJE H. EXTRA							
El sistema es consciente de que se consume más tiempo por fichar por el ordenador.														
CONSULTA MARCAJES DE FEBRERO - MARZO 2010														
Semana Anterior	FEBRERO - MARZO 2010												Semana Siguiente	
Día	Marcajes						Horas						Brutas	Saldo Diario
	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.	Teóricas	Ampliado	Neto	Aumento Saldo				
15/2/2010	09:19	18:14					07:00	03:44	08:55			08:55	01:55	
16/2/2010	09:02	15:23					07:00	00:53	06:21			06:21	-00:39	
17/2/2010	08:48	14:08					07:00		05:20			05:20	-01:40	
18/2/2010	08:05	19:24					07:00	04:54	11:19			11:19	04:19	
19/2/2010	08:52	15:10					07:00	00:40	06:18			06:18	-00:42	
20/2/2010														
21/2/2010														
Saldo semanal (15/02/2010 - 21/02/2010) : +003:13														
Día	Marcajes						Horas						Brutas	Saldo Diario
	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.	Teóricas	Ampliado	Neto	Aumento Saldo				
22/2/2010	09:02	18:12					07:00	03:42	09:10			09:10	02:10	
23/2/2010	09:03	20:28					07:00	05:58	11:25			11:25	04:25	
24/2/2010	08:52	14:10					07:00		05:18			05:18	-01:42	
25/2/2010	09:04	15:01	16:15	17:58			07:00	02:14	07:40			07:40	00:40	
26/2/2010	09:14	14:39					07:00	00:09	05:25			05:25	-01:35	
27/2/2010														
28/2/2010														
Saldo semanal (22/02/2010 - 28/02/2010) : +003:58														

Figure 6. Time attendance balance report

On the other hand, employees can make time off requests and enter time off taken through the e-HRM of the UA. Figure 7 shows the interface of this function, where the employee has to fill up the reason and the starting date and ending date of the time off.

SOLICITAR AUSENCIAS, PERMISOS Y LICENCIAS

Motivo: ASUNTOS PROPIOS
Información: 6 DÍAS (1 DÍA CADA 2 MESES TRABAJADOS)
Motivación: **Año imputación:** 2010

Fecha inicio	Fecha fin
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Días tomados (2010) = 3

Año: 2010 Días totales disfrutados: 3

Pulse el botón para guardar los datos

Figure 7. Requesting time off

The requests for time off are automatically routed to their supervisors and automated email notifications notify supervisors the existence of pending time off requests. Supervisors could approve or reject with detailed comments any request. Automated email notifications notify employees when time off requests are approved or rejected.

Lastly, employees can also request holiday periods, as shown in Figure 8. The employee has to fill up the type of holiday period and the starting date and ending date of each one of the holiday periods.

SOLICITAR VACACIONES

Días hábiles:	concedidos o disfrutados 0 le corresponden 22 + 0 días adicionales
Días naturales:	concedidos o disfrutados 0 le corresponden 30 + 0 días adicionales o mes completo

Tipo de Vacaciones: Seleccione Tipo Vacaciones
Turno: Seleccione Turno **Año imputación:** 2010
Días adicionales: 0

Comentario:

Rango de fechas	
Fecha inicial	Fecha final
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Pulse el botón para guardar los datos

Figure 8. Requesting holiday periods

4.4.2 The supervisor’s perspective

Supervisors can monitor and manage employee attendance and absence in real-time from any computer with internet connection. The e-HRM allows supervisors to note exceptions such as tardiness or absences and adopt corrective decisions.

For example, Figure 9 shows the time attendance tracking of an employee during a week. A mistaken punching that the employee has corrected is highlighted with yellow background color. The supervisor can check the reason and can approve or reject this correction.

Día	Marcajes					
	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.	Ent.	Sal.
13	09:08	15:08				
14	09:13	15:37				
15	09:23	17:00 [A][D]				
16			EN PROCESO DE ESTUDIO ASISTENCIA A CURSO (172.17.193.62)			

Figure 9. Time attendance tracking of an employee

Regarding time off and holiday period requests, supervisors receive automated email notifications. Supervisors review time off and holiday period requests and approve or reject them with detailed comments according to scheduling criteria or whether balances will be available. Then, automated email notifications notify employees when time off and holiday period requests are approved or rejected. Figure 10 shows the interface of this function, where the supervisor has to fill up the reason of rejecting a time off request.

Solicitante: [REDACTED]

Unidad Administrativa: [REDACTED] GESTION DE PERSONAL S07021100 (833)

Motivo: EXAMENES

Información: PRUEB. SEL. INGR. AD. PÚBL., EX. FINALES, PRUEBAS APTITUD Y EVAL. CENT. OF.

Motivación: FINAL DE PRIMER CUATRIMESTRE

Motivación de la denegación:

Rango de fechas		Rango de horas	
Fecha inicial	Fecha final	Hora inicio	Hora fin
20/11/2006	20/11/2006		

Estado de la solicitud		Enviada Responsable Unidad	
Fecha Solicitud:	15/11/2006	Fecha Baja:	
Enviado a Resp. de Unidad:	15/11/2006	Enviado a Resp. Final:	
Fecha visto bueno:		Fecha autorización:	
Fecha desestimación Resp. Unidad:		Fecha desestimación Resp. Unidad:	

En el año natural ha solicitado 1 ausencias y ya se le han autorizado 0 ausencias del tipo EXAMENES que hacen un total de 0 días autorizados.

Pulse el botón para guardar los datos

Figure 10. Approving or rejecting a time off request

Finally, UA's e-HRM platform allows supervisors to generate on-demand reports. Supervisors can review the time attendance of a particular employee or can check the balance of all the members of a work group. For example, Figure 11 illustrates a report about the time attendance and time off requests of five employees from May to June.

Different colors are used to highlight the special events, such as bank holidays, employee holidays and full and part-time time offs. It is easy to see and compare the dates of attendance and time off of every person, thus providing their supervisor with exact and relevant information concerning the work time of their employees.



Figure 11. Report of time attendance

4.5 Discussion

The present comparison of perspectives aims to help the organization to understand the electronic interactions between managers and employees, preventing miscommunications and misinterpretations of information, as posited by [2]. For instance, online presence control may be considered overwhelming for the less willing employees, because they felt that they are under constant vigilance. Measures against this feeling should be set up.

Other topic regarding the collusion of the employees and supervisors' jobs that should be addressed is the possibility of correcting mistakes produced by the employees that use the system without direct surveillance, limiting the damage in time. This will help to counteract computer anxiety [40] or the degree of an individual's apprehension, or even fear, when she/he is faced with the possibility of using computers.

Besides, any reports on performance and time management generated by the system should be discussed between employees and managers to generate feedback on the causes and consequences of their performance. In accordance with [4], the difference in perspectives must be addressed not only when data discrepancies arise, but also when tacit incongruencies may happen, due to diverse frame domains.

As for the nuances that must be introduced in TAM's questionnaire, the analysis of the context (that of a public organization, highly bureaucratic and formalized), the strategies (platform of mandatory use from top management) and activities (self-management of time functions are the most developed) lead to think that, out of the two dimensions considered by Davis [9], we should concentrate on the perceived usefulness of the platform. The perceived easiness of use will also affect the attitude towards its use and the acceptance of online control of their tasks, especially considering the role that web experience has on this dimension, as was shown by [34]. Nonetheless, if the employees feel more in control of their time despite the online supervision process, then they will accept the platform more easily as seen in [37], especially in terms of trust and

communication between employees and supervisors. Trust, communication and support are all interrelated, even more where IT is concerned, like [18] establish.

The intention to use, on the contrary, is not relevant in itself, due to the compulsory nature of the application, but it should be considered because it may be a source of future “mistakes” due to negligence and carelessness from the employees and supervisors. Therefore, we strongly feel the need to add the voluntariness dimension to the questionnaire, as proposed by [40].

5 Conclusions, limitations and future research.

In this paper we have presented a case study following Strohmeier's framework, consisting in the organizational analysis of the intranet that supports the e-HR functions of a Spanish university, the University of Alicante, as the context and technology supporting e-HRM policies. We have also considered the perspectives of the administrative staff of the UA in regards to the deployment of these functions, as channeled by the IT staff that support the intranet. This case is doubly interesting because it is a public administration, with its special cultural features, and center for science development itself, which means that it benefits from an advanced tailor-made IT system to support e-HRM. This paper provides the reader with illustrative examples of how e-HR technology may be strategically aligned with HR needs, even in such a big enterprise with a diverse workforce and a bureaucratic culture.

Indeed, IT offers the opportunity to combine both perspectives due to its ability to break the trade-off between reach and richness of information within the organization. A strategically planned IT system may provide with dynamicity, adaptation and low costs, save time and supply useful information for better decision making.

The intranet is the most commonly deployed IT system for e-HRM, due to its adaptability and scalability. The intranet's main advantages are increased efficiency in decision making and a decrease in the required time for internal and external communication. These both result in a cut down of coordination and communication costs, removing bottlenecks in the decision making system and eliminating duplicated and routine administrative tasks. These positive effects could also be transferred onto HR policies to lessen their subjectivity, with the help of a rigorous competency management system, as presented by Valdes-Conca et al. [39].

HR managers now face the challenge of shifting from a bottom-line, expense control perspective towards organizational effectiveness and knowledge sharing. This is even more radical when they work for public administrations, characterized by their bureaucratic attitude against change in their work routines. Evidently, cultural issues are bound to exist and have to be taken care of by means of training programs and other benefits. Therefore, motivation and communication programs should be in the agenda of e-HR managers to increase willingness and acceptance of changes.

According to our results, the main issues to consider carefully when setting up e-HRM applications are those of communication, conflict management and trust between employees and supervisors. If these needs are not addressed, people will be reluctant to accept the system therefore creating more challenges than benefits. These findings will be introduced in the deployment of the TAM in a second stage of the research, so that it tailors to the specific characteristics of the UA's administrative workforce.

Our main limitation is that of presenting only the qualitative part of the case study, along with the small size of the sample. We are currently engaged in the quantitative

study regarding the satisfaction levels, attitudes and expectations of the UA administrative employees. It will be necessary to adapt the model to give more importance to the issues of commitment, trust, leadership and motivation, and less to those related to intention of use. Moreover, we have found that there is a lack of studies regarding the attitudes of University's employees towards e-HRM, in particular, and public employees faced with mandatory use of intranets, in general. Future lines of work in this field are the promotion of more case studies from which to learn directly the opportunities and threats of e-HRM, and the solutions provided by field-HR managers.

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