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Journal of Strategic Information Systems

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jsis

Analyzing the impact of HRIS implementations on HR personnel's job satisfaction and turnover intention

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

(Un)intended individual-level consequences
Work-related outcomes
IT acceptance
Job satisfaction
Turnover intention
HR identity
e-Recruiting system
HRIS
Implementation

ABSTRACT

An in-depth case of an e-Recruiting system implementation is used while focusing on the level of Human Resource (HR) employees to research unintended consequences during the implementation of Human Resources Information Systems (HRISs). We develop a model that integrates the belief and attitude component of the technology acceptance literature with work-related consequences. We provide evidence for an indirect effect of attitudes toward the HRIS on turnover intention that is fully mediated by job satisfaction. Our results contribute to the literature on systems implementations and technology adoption by suggesting work-related outcomes as important additional success variables.

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1. Introduction

While advances in technology and management have routinely been used to advance primary business processes, the professionalization of Human Resources (HRs) processes often lags behind. Despite the widely acknowledged importance of “human capital” for firm success, HR processes are often typical of other support processes that are not well strategically aligned, suffer from low Information Systems (ISs) support, and hence can hardly help realize the strategic potential hidden in Human Resources Management (HRM). A key move toward realizing that potential is to go from HRM to e-HRM by implementing Human Resources Information Systems (HRISs). Like enterprise resource planning systems in other areas, an HRIS can automate HR activities in the HR department (Bondarouk et al., 2009; Lee, 2007; Strohmeier, 2007, 2009; Tansley et al., 2001) and provide efficient HR services for the entire organization (Ulrich, 1996), thus making the HR department a strategic player within the firm (Hussain et al., 2007).

During this transformation of HR from administrative expert to strategic partner (Wright, 2008), the tasks, work routines, competencies, and capabilities of HR employees change as well. Thus, two key questions are whether HR staff will accept these changes (Wiblen et al., 2010) and whether there are unintended consequences. Despite well researched organization-level consequences of this strategic transformation, individuals working in the HR department in particular are strongly affected, often in unanticipated ways. Drawing on insights from a large-scale strategic e-HRM implementation project at a global automotive supplier, we find that HRIS implementation not only affects HR staff job satisfaction (Boudreau and Robey,

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2005) but even their turnover intention. Thus, the goal of this paper is to uncover the impact of strategic HRIS implementations on employee job satisfaction and turnover intention. The research question is:

How does the implementation of HRIS in organizations affect HR personnel job satisfaction and turnover intention?

Drawing on the literature on technology adoption and work-related consequences, we develop six hypotheses regarding how HRIS- and job-related attributes and beliefs influence HR personnel turnover intentions. We employ data from 106 HR employees of a global firm that is in the midst of implementing a new HRIS for its recruiting department. Our results contribute to technology adoption and HRIS implementation literature by considering work-related outcomes as additional dependent variables in technology acceptance models for mandatory usage settings and as additional success variables in HRIS implementation success models.

2. Theoretical background and research model development

For understanding the consequences of an HRIS implementation for the affected employees or potential system users, technology adoption research provides well-researched theories and models that explain an individual's adoption of an IT innovation (see Venkatesh et al., 2003 for an overview). Such research, frequently based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM, Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989), provides empirical evidence that an individual's beliefs about an information system and attitude toward using it influence the intent to use the system and consequently the respective usage behavior (Davis, 1989). These relationships have been evaluated and discussed extensively in several studies (Williams et al., 2009). A major tenet of these approaches is that an employee's attitude toward using an information system, defined as "an individual's degree of evaluative affect toward the target behavior" (Davis, 1986), is a key factor for predicting usage behaviors. However, it is claimed that this does not hold true for predicting employees' usage behavior in organizations, especially when use is mandatory (Brown et al., 2002). Because organizations that implement new information systems insist that they be used, employees will indeed use them, although they may have negative beliefs and attitudes about such use. Consequently, an individual's attitude toward using a newly implemented information system is not necessarily linked to the behavioral intent to use it and the corresponding usage behavior (Brown et al., 2002). In addition, the investigation of "outcomes in technology adoption research . . . is very limited" (Venkatesh et al., 2007, p. 277), particularly the consequences of employees' negative attitudes toward an information system remain unexplored. This is more precisely stated by Brown et al. (2002), who ask "[i]f an employee's attitude is not related to his/her intention to use technology, what does it influence?" (p. 293) and subsequently suggest that "[a]ttitudes can have a significant influence on an individual's perception of the work environment and organization" (p. 291).

To explain the consequences of perceptions of an information system and the general attitude toward using an information system, we assume there to be a relationship between attitudes about a newly implemented IS and work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intention. This proposition is in line with the phenomenon described earlier that the implementation of HRIS has individual-level based consequences. Our proposition is based on Brown et al. (2002), who state that "[o]ne possibility is to examine the intention to turn over as a result of the system implementation" (p. 293). Additionally, Morris and Venkatesh highlight the importance of analyzing the influences of "technology characteristics . . . on job characteristics and/or job outcomes" (p. 155). By explaining the impact of employees' perception of a new information system on work-related consequences, we are able to illustrate both the expected and unexpected consequences of HRIS implementation for HR employees.

In the following sections, we develop a research model to explain the impact of HRIS implementations in organizations on employee job satisfaction and turnover intention. The model is based on technology adoption research (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003) and on research discussing work-related consequences (March and Simon, 1958).

2.1. HRIS-related beliefs and attitudes

As an organization introduces an HRIS, each employee who works with the system evaluates the new technology, for example, in terms of its usefulness and ease of use (Davis et al., 1989). The skills required to operate the new system represent a crucial success factor for HRIS employees (Panayotopoulou et al., 2007), as large numbers of HR employees do not have skills and knowledge to use the system (Lukaszewski et al., 2008). This restricts HR employees from exploiting the full potential of an HRIS. When employees are not even aware of all the possibilities of an HRIS, they may evaluate the system rather negatively. Conversely, HR employees who know how the system performs and thus how it facilitates their work and provides them more time for strategic task, perceive the HRIS as more useful. There are thus some important perceptual beliefs linked to HR personnel perceptions of the usefulness of an HRIS, defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989, p. 320), and the perceived ease of use, defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). These perceptual beliefs about an HRIS factor in the overall evaluation of the entire HRIS, which is reflected in the attitude toward the IS. Moreover, it is argued that the more an individual perceives an information system as easy to use, the more she perceives the system as useful (Davis, 1989). Thus, we assume:

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