

# AN EMPIRICAL STUDY TO EXPLORE THE SOCIOMATERIALITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SERVICE INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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**Abstract :** The study explores to understand the interplay of Socio-materiality of HRM(Human Resource Management) systems in organizations. The paper tries to understand while materiality of technology is an integral aspect of organizational activity, it has either been ignored by management research, or investigated through an ontology of separateness that cannot account for the multiple and dynamic ways in which the social( organizations) and the material (technology) are constitutively entangled in everyday life . Specially with organizational sizes increasing , organizations have re-transformed the HR function from a regenerative and technically equipped body that has revolutionized itself with the Industry4.0 identified as digital disruptive era .Technologies like Enterprise Resource Systems, Learning Management Systems, Process Re-designing ,Data analytics ,Virtual Technology etc have had profound effect on the working of HR professionals today. This study tries to understand the interplay of the social factors like information diffusion, culture of execution, social inclusion and social cohesion that are impacted through use of technology in HR functions in organizations . The study proposes sensitization of social factors that have profound impact due to technology use for better accommodating changing technology in organizations.

**Keywords:** Socio-material, Social, Technology , information diffusion, culture of execution, Social Inclusion, Social Cohesion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today almost all organizations are driven towards technology and its thrust for evolvement. There are two views to understanding technology role in organizations .One is the techno-centric view , the *techno-centric* perspective is interested in understanding how technology leverages human action, taking a largely functional view. The *human-centered* perspective focuses on how humans make sense of and interact with technology in various circumstances. Multiple research areas within the field of information studies grapple with the notion of technology and its role in social processes and outcomes. Recent theorizations on socio-materiality reflect a renewed interest in studying the mutually constitutive nature of the relationships among technology, materiality and social contexts (e.g., Leonardi, Nardi, & Kallinikos, 2012; Orlikowski, 2007). In specific, the sociomaterial perspective offers a promising path for ‘information’ scholars to move from theorizing about the “effects” of specific technologies on organizational and societal outcomes to considering the constitutive “entanglement” among them.

Further to this the role of technology in organizations is extending beyond the scope of functional limitations. Human Resources which are an integral part of the organization are also in a big way taking leaps in the involvement of technology in its functional overview.

Through our research we would like to understand the adjustment of Human Resource Management systems in developing a dialogue between the social and the organizational/institutional realms .In the domain of technology in HRM the technology tools being used are HRMS (human resource management systems) , Learning Management systems , Analytics for Data View, Predictive Analytics ,Descriptive Analytics ,Virtual Technology etc which organizations are actively collaborating in its functional domains.

In the last two decades researchers have started to show interest in the field of HRIS though they focused more on areas such as predominate of HRIS (Martinsons, 1994),conditions for successful usages (Haines & Petit, 1997), use of HRIS (Ball, 2001) and current usages patterns (Hussain, Wallace, & Cornelius, 2007), areas in HRIS implementation (Ngai & Wat, 2006; Razali & Vrontis, 2010; Tansley & Newell, 2007), and achieving competitive advantage (Browning, Edgar, Gray, & Garrett, 2009). However, these authors have debated over the Material or the Social parameters of HRMS it has been treated as a matter of

interest only in certain particular organizational circumstances. Human resources considering the redundant transactional activities of growing organizations with growing employee maintenance are bound to get more complicated and technology in human resources is bound to stay. The role of technology in increasing efficiency of HR functions remains an indisputable. However role of technology in organizations is bounded rationality if we compare to just transactional expertise. Technology has become so entwined into the working structures of the HR function that its scope of influence has sedimented into many social factors into the organizations which the research wants to explore.

Thus the paper tries to understand the role played by technology in HR in mediating the social realms and the organizational / institutional properties. An understanding of the entities and their interaction would assist in designing systems in HR which are reciprocities, growing, people involving and symbiotically redefining it to organizational changes and employee needs.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

To identify and explore the interplay of the Social factors that interplay with Technology and Human Resource function in Service Industry

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *History of the Study*

In the 1960's and 1970's, large companies felt a need to centralize their personnel data part to Technology in HR is used to facilitate record keeping and meet regulatory needs. Programs were written on large mainframe computers that acted as a central data repository with little transactional processing, usually only for the compensation and payroll department.

The Human Resource Information System (HRIS), also known as a Human Resource Management System (HRMS) became prevalent in the 1980's with the popularity of Enterprise of Resource Planning (ERP) applications, many big organizations however could afford the packages of ERP like SAP and Oracle.

However, Software as a Service (SaaS) found significant adoption in a downsizing economy. HRIS basically had all the functions of HR namely recruitment, performance management systems, learning and development, compensation management and training and development automated into the HRM system with employee repository into a single HRMS database so that employee information is recorded, maintained, updated singularly across all HR functions maintaining the data integrity. A change in employee information is impacted correspondingly across all the HR functions.

Companies are now integrating HRMS with business intelligence (BI) reporting suite and make management decisions based on facts, figures and trends using descriptive modeling and predictive modeling to predict employee behavior, attrition rate, productivity, scheduling etc. The advent of disruptive technologies like IoT, Artificial intelligence, Machine learning is changing the ways in which HR functions can optimize on devising newer ways of doing the old concepts of HR. Like a company like Shell is building Gaming and Simulation Centre's to test generative ideas before implemented in actual. Google analytics can be used for recruitment, it can shortlist a candidate with video and face analytics without being physically present, Attrition analysis of high performers can be gauged much in advance to mitigate the risks of losses etc.

### *3.1 Interplay of Social Factors and Technology in Organizations*

Constructs and Measures identified from Literature are Information diffusion, culture of execution, Social inclusion and Social cohesion.

**3.1.1. Information diffusion:** Capacity to absorb information to be converted in to organizational processes Capacity to absorb information to be converted in to organizational processes. It has been defined as "the extent to which the full potential of the innovation has been embedded within an organization's operational or managerial work systems. The HRMS function plays a crucial role in integrating the various HR functions in integrating the diverse functions. Work flow mapping of the system through

**3.1.2 Culture of execution:** The growing culture of transparency. The concepts of openness, and indeed participation in tools exemplified in the open source technology tools. One of the recent technology acceptance models, UTAUT, synthesis. Balthazard et al. [81] found the constructive organization culture norms positively related to individual employee outcomes including role clarity (the extent to which organizational members know what is expected of them), job satisfaction, and behavioral conformity (the extent to which organizational members are required to think and behave differently than otherwise would be the case, person/norm conflict). The parameters are involvement, consistency, adaptability, shared vision. Culture: It is also considered to be the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population. Organization Culture Involvement through HRMS assists in Cooperation and collaboration across functional roles is actively.

**3.1.3 Social inclusion:** Social inclusion is the process of improving the dignity, ability and opportunity regardless the basis of the identity to take part in society. In a nutshell, social inclusion is the process of opportunity enhancement for building or re-establishing social bonds by facilitating the access of all citizens to social activities, income, public institutions, social protection and programs and services for assistance and career-inclusion being “the effective participation of individuals and communities in all dimensions of the knowledge-based society and economy through their access to ICT”.

**3.1.4 Social Cohesion:** Literature shows that collaboration considerably improves business performance when there is a high level of trust between collaborating partners (Svensson, 2001; Zedtwitz and Gassmann, 2002; Varda et al., 2012). The literature also emphasizes that the effect of collaboration on business performance cannot be accomplished in isolation from organizational capacity (Gaiardelli et al., 2007; Romero et al., 2007). In other words, trust and organizational capacity are prerequisites to collaboration and, accordingly, they form second tier constructs to business performance.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey design methodology. The purpose of descriptive surveys, according to Ezeani (1998), is to collect detailed information and collect actual information that describes an existent phenomenon. A thorough review of literature was conducted before selecting the topic of the study. In this study, we focused on exploring the social factors at play with the prevalence of technology in organizations which would help understand the development, implementation and incorporation of material (technology) and social phenomenon's in organizations. The target populations of the study were 50 Executive to middle level managers and HR personnel's who were selected from Service Industry namely HR Consultancy, Logistics and Supply Chain in E-commerce and Financial Consulting firms. The breakdown is as follows:

Table I: Distribution of Respondents:

Sno	Organization	Managen	Executives	HR personnel's
1	HR Consultancy	14	7	2
2	Logistic-E-commerce	6	6	2
3	Financial Consulting	7	3	3

#### 4.1 Instrument:

A set of 4 measures were selected for the study after going through the literature. A structured questionnaire was constructed **inclusive of social factors namely information diffusion, culture of execution, social inclusion and social cohesion** for each section of the questionnaire for the collection of data on the study. The questionnaire was specifically designed to accomplish the objectives of the study. The first section collected information such as age, sex, experience, professional status and position. To assess the validity of the questionnaire, expert judgment method was applied. So, the developed questionnaire, along with explanations regarding terms and concepts were presented to 3 university professors, two managers each from the representing organizations. As such, they were asked to express their views about the construct, and the measures and the questions pertaining to measure the same and on a recommendation two open ended questions were included while finalizing the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items in which the perception of the participants is central. These items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “I strongly disagree” to 5 “I strongly agree”. The questionnaire was filled out by the research community belonging to middle managerial level and Executive Level from all the organizations in HR department of the organization. After the mentioned questionnaires were filled out, the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cranach's alpha. The overall reliability co-efficient of the modified instrument after the pilot survey yielded an  $r = 0.560$  Cranach alpha which showed that the questionnaire was reliable. **The social factors as identified from literature review are as follows:**

Table II Construct & Measures – Social I Factors interplay through Technology in Human Resource Management in Organizations.

Social Factors	Measure Items	Question Items
<b>Information Diffusion</b>	1. Capacity to absorb organizational information to processes.	1.1 I feel processes are designed to absorb all organizational information. 1.2 I get better functional support for my work. 1.3 I get opportunity to up-skill my functional domain knowledge.
	2. Mapping of processes on to technology .	2.1 I become aware of consistent processes . 2.2 I feel all processes are mapped on system. . 2.3 I perform very few functional work/tasks out of the system. 2.4 The processes can incorporate changes quickly...
	3. Work flow information	3.1 I feel enhanced team synergy within the project. 3.2 I have better cross functional access to my role. 3.3 Better task identity. 3.4 I can better manage work outcomes.
<b>Culture of Execution</b>	4. Transparency	4.1 I am better aware of Management practices and policies. 4.2 I feel better connected to leaders in the organization. 4.3 I feel information flow has become transparent
	5. Availability of information	5.1 I aware of information through technology 5.2 We share information among employees through technology. 5.3 Quality of information has improved
	6. Accountability of work	6.1 I feel my bosses are more aware about my work. 6.2 I feel I am responsible for my work as it can be tracked now using technology.
	7. Performance Mapping	7.1 Performances are mapped in the processes. 7.2 Performance is tracked of mine on the system by bosses.
<b>Social Inclusion</b>	8. Equal opportunity	8.1 I feel motivated due to equal opportunity to all through technology. 8.2 Any new project is shared openly for all employees. 8.3 Female and male have no biases for performance with access to technology.
	9. Equal participation	9.1 I better say in work as I am connected with technology always in my team. 9.2 Digital Collaboration has created equal representation.
	10. Access to HRMS system	10.1 We have better access to HRMS system which not there earlier.
<b>Social Cohesion</b>	11. Collaborative tool	11.1 Employees can communicate and interact better now. 11.2 I can interact better across the organization with technology. 11.3 I am aware of organizational policies and tool.
	12. Social building	12.1 I am more equipped and informed to handle external parties like clients/vendors. 12.2 I am better connected with my customers.(CRM) 12.3 I am connected to my friends and colleague better.
	13. conflict management	13.1 With technology w are better equipped to handle conflict. 13.2 Negative feedback is easier to share with technology.
	14 Feeling of solidarity	14.1 I feel connected to my organization with technology. 14.2 Technology makes me feel connected to all colleagues in my organization.

V ANALYSIS

Loading of variables recognized in the component, and Varimax orthogonal approach was used to interpret the variables. Subsequently, the confirmatory factor analysis was used through rotation method :Varimax with Kaiser Normalization The rotation converged into 6 iterations. The results are as follows in Table 3.0 :

Table III: Component matrix

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
ProcessCapacity Info		.529	.505	.189		-.593

<b>HR Functions mapping</b>	.684	-.372	.533			-.200
<b>Info HR availability</b>	.475	-.254	-.297	.580		
<b>Workflow info</b>		.313	.724	-.133		.418
Transparency	-.343		.273	.594	.380	-.180
availability of info		.103	.485	.393	-.582	.181
Accountability	-.381	.174		.775	-.210	.334
performance mapping		.532	-.536		.369	.255
<b>equal opportunity</b>	-.729			-.107	-.385	.473
equal participation	.233	-.851		-.245	-.138	.289
access to HRMS	.774	-.218	.187	.191	.208	.331
Collaborative tool	.506	.449	.259	-.291	-.407	
<b>Social relationship building</b>	.503	.635	-.149	.245	.266	.317
Conflict management		-.242	.345		.720	.347
Feeling of solidarity	-.246	.138	.548	-.543	.298	
HR Technology	.691	.539	-.157	-.186	-.144	.109

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
a. 6 components extracted.

The factor analysis shows that 6 factor were emergent namely :

Factor 1: Information Mapping : Process Capacity Information and HR information mapping

Factor 2: Social Collaboration : Social relationship building ,collaborative tool

Factor 3: Transparency with information flow:workflow information, ,transparency

Factor 4: Informed Processes: HR info availability , process mapping

Factor 5:Information availability for conflict resolution:Conflict management , information availability

Factor 6:Equal Access :equal opportunity,Access to HRMS system

Thereafter a correlation was performed to understand the relationship between the factors . A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between technology and social factors at play in organizations .The analysis results have been updated in the Anexure 1.0 . There was a strong, positive correlation between HR Functional Mapping (  $r = .506$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and Collaborative tool (  $r = .550$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and Information availability (( $r = .030$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ),however there is high negative correlation between performance mapping (( $r = -.695$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ )and equal opportunity ((( $r = -.39$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

Further , a regression analysis was conducted to understand the social variables impacting the technology play in organizations. The table 4.0 provides the R and R2 values. The R value represents the simple correlation and is 0.72, which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R2 value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable i.e. HR Technology can be explained by the independent variables namely processCapacityInfo, Transparency, equalparticipation, equaloppurtunity, Collaborativetool, Socialrelationshipbuilding, Conflictmanagement . In this case it is 51.8%, can be explained, which is reasonable.

Table 1V: Component Analysis



The next table is the ANOVA table, which reports how well the regression equation fits the data (i.e., predicts the dependent variable) and is shown below:

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.720 <sup>a</sup>	.518	-.326	1.14709
a. Predictors: (Constant), ProcessCapacityInfo, Transperancy, equalparticipation, equaloppurtunity, Collaborativetool, Socialrelationshipbuilding, Conflictmanagement				

Table V Regression Model

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.653	7	.808	.614	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.263	4	1.316		
	Total	10.917	11			

a. Dependent Variable: HRTechnology

b. Predictors: (Constant), ProcessCapacityInfo, Transperancy, equalparticipation, equaloppurtunity, Collaborativetool, Socialrelationshipbuilding, Conflictmanagement

The table 5.0 indicates that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. Here,  $p < 0.0005$ , which is less than 0.05, and indicates that, overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (i.e., it is a good fit for the data). The Coefficients table 6.0 provides us with the necessary information to predict HRTechnology from ProcessCapacityInfo, Transperancy, equalparticipation, equaloppurtunity, Collaborativetool, Socialrelationshipbuilding, Conflictmanagement as well as determine whether these independent variables contributes statistically significantly to the model. As seen equaloppurtunity, equal participation, collaborative tool, social relationship and process capacity info seems to be most significant.

Table VI Coefficients Table

**Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-3.537	6.636		-.533	.622
	Transperancy	.650	.541	.492	1.201	.296
	equaloppurtunity	-.530	.735	-.346	-.721	.511
	equalparticipation	1.035	1.168	.405	.886	.426
	Collaborativetool	.387	.920	.200	.420	.696
	Socialrelationshipbuilding	.162	1.073	.080	.151	.888
	Conflictmanagement	-.196	.773	-.146	-.254	.812
	ProcessCapacityInfo	.096	.508	.112	.189	.859

a. Dependent Variable: HRTechnology

b. Predictors: (Constant), ProcessCapacityInfo, Transperancy, equalparticipation, equaloppurtunity, Collaborativetool, Socialrelationshipbuilding, Conflictmanagement.

**VI. RESULTS**

The explanatory factor analysis was performed with maximum probability approach and the variables were interpreted with Varimax rotation approach. The results showed that 5 factors came out from the Interplay Social and Institutional Factors and Technology. Following were the extracted variables as in Table 1.0 reveals information accessibility, sharing, transparency, social collaboration and equality access to HRMS systems was found be the dominant factors in use of technology in HR function.

Further the correlation score indicates that There was a strong, positive correlation between HR Functional Mapping ( $r = .506$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and Collaborative tool ( $r = .550$ ,  $n = 12$ ,  $p = .005$ ), indicating that all HR processes have been included in technology resulting in collaborative work between various HR functions. However performance mapping and equal oppurtunity

are negatively correlated stating that performance evaluation through technology still is debatable and access to opportunities in organizations through technology in HR functions is still not visible. This could be a demotivational contributor to employees in HR function. Technology has been impactful in creating transparency through information availability, work flow mapping, access to HRMS systems equally however leadership control for performance and opportunity provider lacks where in the top management can give a thrust to the system so that employees feel democratic workplaces.

Lastly as seen in the regression model as seen equal opportunity, equal participation, collaborative tool, social relationship and process capacity info seems to be most significant constructs for the technology impact in HR functions. Hence HR leaders and management practices can provide a platform for equal opportune interface by developing career up-skilling platforms, mentoring chat boxes, Open platforms for new role openings which could motivate employees to see transparency in their personal growth and not just functional efficiency of work to which technology in HR function is limited to currently in organizations. Also social cohesion is another area of opportunity that technology unfolds in the arena of social development of communities within organization which could be a great attrition beholder that organizations should aggressively work by designing collaborative formal and informal ways of interaction.

## VII DISCUSSIONS :

Thus our study has suggested that information technology in Human Resources through HRMS has a major social role to play. So long the studies on technology role in HR functions have been precisely restricted to the functional benefits and gains in organizational contexts. However seeing the profound role of interaction of employees with technology getting entangled social implications of the relationship between technology and the social order of the organization needs to be studied. This could open a plethora of opportunities for HR employees and management to devise strategies to bring about change management initiatives in social order of the organization through technology which would be cost effective, strategically aligned and company widespread because of reach of technology across physical boundaries. Thus the social and material is entangled and closely knit, rather than to treat them in isolation organization needs to devise mechanisms to hybrid them in to synergetic systems.

## VIII. MANGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE :

This study has been performed to understand the role of technology in HR functions with special area of concern as Social factors that interplay. The reason has been that HR functionaries are the lifelines of the organization. Understanding the nuances of relationship between technology and social order amongst them would provide a big eye view to further implementation and acceptability of technology in the organization. Challenges and opportunities combated with the HR functionaries can provide a better understanding of technology changes and influences that can be productively churned for practices and policies governing the rest of the organization.

## IX. LIMITATIONS :

The study has been limited to study of social factors only in service industry and the scope could be diversified further to manufacturing sector as well. Also the study could be cross departmental and functional areas to view the differences in opinions.

## X. CONCLUSION :

Technology is here to stay, this is an inevitable truth hence organizations need to adapt and comply with the changing technological advancements as it is the need of the hour. The gaining inseparability of technology and people is not astounding any more with smart devices, internet connectivity etc. Hence organizations need to dwell in to not just the functional adoption of technology but the process of social sedimentation of practices that could be happening due to the technology use in organizations. This would be a step further to major cultural, social collaboration enhancer and a digital collaborative tool for retention of employees in organization. Social inclusion and social cohesion could be areas of interest and opportunities which the HR can unleash from technology use in organizations to develop cultures of performance, transparency and efficiency with social bonding among employees of the organization. The methodology section outline the plan and method that how the study is conducted. This includes Universe of the study, sample of the study, Data and Sources of Data, study's variables and analytical framework. The details are as follows;

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**ANNEXURE I**

Correlation Matrix:

	Process Capacity Info	HR Functions mapping	InfoHR availability	Workflow info	Transparency	availability of info	performance mapping	equal opportunity	access to HRMS	Collaborative tool	Social relationship building	Conflict management	Feeling of solidarity	HR Technology
Process Capacity Info	1	.139	-.345	.167	.233	.220	-.282	.280	.129	.316	-.370	.113	-.129	-.010
HR Functions mapping	.139	1	.497	-.529	-.176	.497	-.506	-.587*	.098	.200	-.657*	.408	.059	.374
InfoHR availability	-.345	.497	1	-.564	-.340	.176	.055	-.674*	-.404	-.355	.000	.380	.340	.055
Workflow info	.167	-.529	-.564	1	-.155	-.188	.058	.598*	.258	.529	.158	-.135	-.155	-.058
Transparency	.233	-.176	-.340	-.155	1	-.437	.045	.185	.467	-.293	.245	-.522	-.520	.045
availability of info	.220	.497	.176	-.188	-.437	1	-.492	-.225	.081	.071	-.297	.127	.049	-.055
performance mapping	-.282	-.506	.055	.058	.045	-.492	1	-.070	-.075	-.418	.368	-.432	-.225	-.695*
equal opportunity	.280	-.587*	-.674*	.598*	.185	-.225	-.070	1	.000	.181	.094	-.081	-.185	-.139
access to HRMS	.129	.098	-.404	.258	.467	.081	-.075	.000	1	.098	.000	-.522	-.733**	-.075
Collaborative tool	.316	.200	-.355	.529	-.293	.071	-.418	.181	.098	1	-.598*	.357	.293	.550
Social relationship building	-.370	-.657*	.000	.158	.245	-.297	.368	.094	.000	-.598*	1	-.533	-.245	-.368
Conflict management	.113	.408	.380	-.135	-.522	.127	-.432	-.081	-.522	.357	-.533	1	.731**	.432



Feeling of solidarity	- .129	.059	.340	-.155	-.520	.049	-.225	-.185	-.733**	.293	-.245	.731**	1	.496
HR Technology	-.010	.374	.055	-.058	.045	-.055	-.695*	-.139	-.075	.550	-.368	.432	.496	1
Accountability	-.410	.066	.330	-.351	.136	.330	-.357	-.210	.000	-.464	.485	-.237	.000	.204
equal participation	.234	.076	-.188	.200	.155	.188	-.408	.120	.258	-.076	.316	-.270	-.465	.058

