

Digital Human Resource Management (HRM) in Irish SMEs : A
Qualitative study into the integration and barriers of digital HRM.

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Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Abstract.....	5
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation.....	6
Project Submission Sheet	8
Chapter 1 - Introduction	12
1.1 Introduction	12
1.2 Research Context	12
1.3 Research Aim	14
1.4 Research Questions.....	14
1.5 Research Design.....	14
1.6 Ethical Considerations.....	14
1.7 Research Structure	15
1.8 Conclusion.....	15
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.1 Introduction to Digital HRM	16
2.2 Relevance today	16
2.3. Benefits of Digital HRM Integration	18
2.4 Data Analytics	19
2.5 AI	20
2.6 Implications of failing to integrate digital HRM	22
2.7 Barriers preventing digital HRM integration	24
2.8 Disadvantages of digital HRM	26
2.9 Gaps in the literature and relevance to Irish SMEs	27
2.10 Conclusion	28
Chapter 3 - Methodology.....	30

3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Research Philosophy	30
3.3 Research Approach	31
3.4 Research Design.....	32
3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews.....	33
3.6 Sampling Strategy.....	34
3.6 Data Analysis.....	35
3.7 Ethical Considerations.....	35
3.8 Limitations	36
3.9 Conclusion.....	37
Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion	38
4. 1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 Limited digital HR practices	38
4.3 Recognising the benefits of digital HRM	39
4.3.1 digital HRM is not a quick fix	41
4.4 Barriers preventing digital HRM	43
4.4.1 Financial constraints / low priority.....	44
4.4.2 Insufficient Training	44
4.4.3 Lack of Managerial buy in / top-down decision making.....	46
Chapter 5 - Final Chapter.....	49
5.1 Research aims and objectives	49
5.2 Summary of Key Findings	49
5.3 Theoretical/Practical Implications	51
5.4 Recommendations	52
5.5 Areas of Future Research	53
5.6 Conclusion.....	53
Reference List:.....	55
Appendices	65
Appendix 1 – Consent Form	65
Appendix 2 – Interview Questions.....	66

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank my dissertation supervisor Rachel Doherty for her guidance, feedback and encouragement. I am grateful for her invaluable insights throughout the course of this study.

I am also thankful to the participants whom took part in this study and generously donated their time and input.

I want to thank my family and friends for their constant reassurance and patience. Additionally, I am grateful for their continuous support during the challenging time of this project.

Ultimately, I want to thank everyone who contributed to this study, whether in small or large ways. Without you this research could not have been complete.

Abstract

Digital HRM is continuously developing and driving organisational performance through the automation and streamlining of HRM processes in areas such as recruitment and data management. However, its dynamic within Irish SMEs remains understudied. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the dynamics of digital HRM within Irish SMEs, with a specific focus on the implications of failing to integrate digital HRM and the barriers preventing the integration of digital HRM.

A qualitative study approach was adopted whereby, nine participants completed semi-structured interviews. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure relevance to the research.

The findings indicate the main implication of failing to integrate digital HRM in Irish SMEs is the inability for HR professionals to adopt a strategic focus. This is due to heavy administrative work. Barriers preventing digital HRM were identified as costs restraints, insufficient training and managerial buy in. Ultimately, Irish SMEs should try to invest in digital HRM to relieve the administrative burden as strategic focus will pursue benefits such as improved productivity, employee satisfaction and competitiveness. However, HR professionals should remain cautious of over reliance on digitalisation. A fundamental element of human resources is the human; therefore, the value of relational HRM must not be forgotten.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to investigate digital human resource management (HRM) within Irish small medium enterprises (SMEs). Focus will be directed towards the implications HR professionals may face by failing to integrate digital HRM and the potential barriers HR professionals may face in attempting to integrate digital HRM. The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with an understanding of the research context and aims of the study. The methodology, including any ethical considerations will be outlined.

1.2 Research Context

The evolution of digital HRM has evolved massively, Bahri et al, (2025) refers to the digitalisation of HR, meaning the digitalisation of paper processes, such as payroll and employee records. The purpose of this digital development was to improve operational efficiency and reduce manual errors (Bahri et al, 2025). However, further evolution has established digital transformation, this is the process of integrating digital tools and systems into HR processes with the aim to enhance streamlining of administrative tasks, recruitment processes and improve decision making with the support of digital analytics (Bahri et al, 2025).

The current research is concerned with digital HRM in large enterprises, typically global multinational organisations. For example, Zarina et al, (2025) explored the advantages of digital HRM in Haier Group and found the digitalisation of functions such as performance management, recruitment and data management resulted in costs savings, data driven decision making and improved employee satisfaction. All of which enhance an organisations competitive advantage (Zarina et al, 2025). There is some research into the position of digital HRM in SMEs, such as Zhang et al, (2024) who completed a quantitative study by gathering data from 339 managerial employees employed in Chinese SMEs. The findings indicate that digital HR practices drive innovative behaviour and productivity in SMEs (Zhang et al, 2024).

Despite the research gathered by Zhang et al, (2024), some researchers take an alternative approach. Meurs et al (2024) completed a study into informal HRM collecting data from 3,337 SMEs across 28 European countries. The findings reveal that informal HRM practices, including the absence of digital HRM can foster innovation in SMEs, on the condition that the employees possess the correct competencies (Meurs et al, 2024). Additionally, Novo Melo et al, (2023) demonstrated that SMEs usually do not implement formal HRM functions, such as digital HRM practices. Rather HRM practices are carried out flexibly and informally, thus indicating that SMEs can successfully function without digital HRM (Novo Melo et al, 2023).

Nevertheless, there is a notable gap in understanding the role digital HRM plays in SMEs, specifically in understanding the implications that SMEs may face by failing to integrate digital HRM. Further to this, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OCED, 2021), published their findings into the digital transformation of SMEs and described digitalisation as an enabler of productivity and resilience. However, many SMEs remain behind in adopting digital practices and tools, not just within the HRM function but across entire organisations (OCED, 2021). The report does acknowledge challenges SMEs can face when attempting to integrate digital tools and practices, such as financial constraints and skills shortages. Despite this, the OECD, (2021), views digitalisation as highly beneficial for SME, noting they could be diminishing their efficiency, innovation and competitiveness by failing to integrate digitalisation.

The report was carried out by the OECD, (2021) on an international basis. However, it is significant in the Irish context as Ireland is the top EU country utilising digital practices such as AI (Eurostat, 2021), additionally, SMEs made up 99.8% of all enterprises in Ireland in 2021 and 69.2% of the population were employed by Irish SMEs (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2024). Therefore, understanding the barriers Irish SMEs are facing in prevention of digital HRM and the implications experienced from failing to integrate digital HRM will create awareness on wider organisational impacts such as enhanced productivity, greater resilience and competitiveness.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of the research is to explore and understand the impact of digital HRM within Irish SMEs. There are inconsistencies among the current research whereby some authors argue digital HRM needs to be integrated in SMEs to enhance organisational success. Conversely, other authors believe SMEs are structured in a way that support successful operations without the integration of digital HRM.

Therefore, this research aims to clarify these inconsistencies and provide a stronger understanding on the role digital HRM plays in Irish SMEs. To achieve the aim of this study, the below research questions were developed.

1.4 Research Questions

a). ***‘What are the barriers preventing the integration of digital HRM within Irish SMEs?’***

b). ***‘What are the implications of failing to integrate digital HRM within Irish SMEs, if any?’***

1.5 Research Design

To investigate the role of digital HRM integration in Irish SMEs, a qualitative approach was taken. This design was chosen to establish a deeper understanding and allow exploration into digital HRM within Irish SMEs. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to ensure participants most relevant to the aim of the study were chosen. The research was focused on SMEs based in Ireland. The participants were HR professionals or employees of managerial positions who carry out HRM roles and responsibilities. All participants have experience working in Irish SMEs. There were nine participants in total and the data was gathered through semi structured interviews. Thematic analysis was applied to examine the data obtained and coding and grouping was utilised to establish three main themes to respond to aim of the study.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taking into account throughout the entirety of the study. All participants agreed to participation through a consent form. They were made aware of the right to withdrawal at any time throughout the study. Additionally, they were briefed on their privacy, the purpose of their data and the manner in which it would be stored.

1.7 Research Structure

The structure of this research is outlined below.

Chapter 1 provides a background and overview of the research. It identifies the context in which this research is important and outlines the aims of the study.

Chapter 2 outlines the current literature into the role of digital HRM in SMEs and identifies any existing gaps.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodology used to complete the study. The research philosophy, approach and design has been presented including ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 examines the findings of the study by means of thematic analysis. Three main themes have been identified to discuss the findings in conjunction with supporting literature.

Chapter 5 concludes the research and advises on recommendations, practical and theoretical implications of the findings and areas of future research.

1.8 Conclusion

The aim of the study has been proposed, and the contextual background has been provided to clarify the purpose of this study. The research questions have been developed to address the aim of the study, and the methodology has been outlined to ensure the study has been carried out correctly and to prevent any ethical breaches.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the current literature relating to digital HRM in SMEs. It will discuss the benefits of digital integration with particular focus on data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI). The potential implications of failing to integrate digital HRM in addition to the barriers preventing integration will be examined and the potential drawbacks of digital HRM will be assessed. Gaps within the literature will be identified. Analysis of the literature will promote further exploration into the role of digital HRM and provide a greater understanding, ultimately contributing the aim of the research.

2.1 Introduction to Digital HRM

There is no clear definition of digital HRM. Strohmeier (2020) tries to conceptualise the term through introducing typology outlining the evolution of digital HRM. Firstly Strohmeier (2020) coins the ideal type ‘analog HRM’, this is traditional HR practices, carried out with no digital support. ‘Operational digital HRM’ is the second ideal type, this is the use of digital practices to automate routine HR tasks, resulting in operational efficiency (Strohmeier, 2020). Come next Strohmeier (2020) highlights the incline towards strategic HRM by identifying the third ideal type, ‘strategic alignment’. This is when companies align digital practices with HR strategies to support their implementation. Finally, the fourth ideal type is ‘strategic integration’, this is the integration of digital HR practices into the creation of HR strategies, basing the value of HRM on ‘the potentials of digitization’ (Strohmeier, 2020). While there is no definition of digital HRM, Strohmeier’s (2020) typology provides a structured framework, helping organisation’s in understanding their placement in the evolution of digital HRM. Additionally, Strohmeier (2020) emphasises the importance of ‘strategic integration’, in turn promoting HRM as a value adding function, rather than administrative.

2.2 Relevance today

Understanding an organisations degree of digital HRM has reached greater relevance in today's context whereby the recent Covid-19 pandemic plays a significant role in influencing an organisations implementation of digital HRM (Al-Alawi et al, 2023). Al-Alwari et al (2023) argues prior to the pandemic implementing digital HRM was relatively

optional, but Covid-19 has made it a requirement to 'function and survive'. This is evident in a study completed by Al-Alwari et al (2023) in Bahraini organisation's across multiple industries. The aim of the Al-Wari (2023) research was to identify the factors influencing digital HRM during the Covid-19 pandemic. Seven factors were identified including funding, top management support and technical support, all of which positively contributed towards digital HRM implementation (Al-Alwari et al, 2023). Organisations who implemented digital HRM experienced improvements in overall operational efficiency as well as improvements within HR practices such as recruitment processes (Al-Alwari et al, 2023). The research highlighted a positive employee perception towards digital HRM whereby 69.6% of employees wanted digital HRM to continue following the pandemic due to cost effectiveness and improved efficiency (Al-Alwari et al, 2023).

Shahiduzzaman (2025) agrees with Al-Alwari (2023) and argues Covid-19 encouraged the social acceptance of digital practices allowing for more innovative and adaptive HR practices. Shahiduzzaman (2025) insists Covid-19 stimulated the transition from digitalisation to digital transformation, whereby digital HRM takes a strategic shift to include people and culture, it is more than operational efficiency. This shift is practiced through the utilisation of emerging technology, such as 'AI, cloud based platforms, analytics and machine learning', all which operate in all areas of HR, including 'recruitment, training, employee engagement and employee retention' (Shahiduzzaman, 2025).

The study completed by Al-Alwari et al was carried out using a quantitative approach, that being an online survey sent to HR professionals across different industries in the Kingdom of Bahrain (Al-Alwari et al, 2023). Therefore, the reliability of the findings can be questioned as 'reliable survey data is very dependent on the survey structure and accuracy of answers provided by the respondents' (Queirós et al, 2015). Nevertheless, the findings of Al-Alwari et al, 2023 provides relevance into digital HRM within Irish small-medium enterprises (SMEs). Both Al-Alwari's (2023) study and Shahiduzzaman (2025) analysis supports the argument that a lack of digital HRM practices could result in operational instability. This is particularly important for Irish SME's, whereby most small-medium sized organisations lack 'digital maturity' and often operate on manual

or traditional HRM processes and practices (Yusuf, M et al, 2023). Additionally to Al-Alwari (2023), Shahiduzzaman (2025) claims digital tools have become a crucial element in building resilience, and the shift to strategic digital HRM has enabled digital maturity through revising strategies and reskilling employees to use new technologies. Therefore, they are more vulnerable to negative impacts stemming from external factors such as a pandemic. However, to further understand the importance of digital HRM, the literature outlining the benefits of digital HRM integration needs to be examined.

2.3. Benefits of Digital HRM Integration

The first stage of digitalisation within an organisation is operational digital HRM (Strohmeier, 2020). This is implementing tools and systems to enhance operational performance (Strohmeier, 2020). Alexandro (2025) describes this stage as the automation of routine HR tasks. He completed a study among micro, small and medium sized organisations in Indonesia and found that automating routine HR tasks such as recruitment, onboarding, and performance reviews reduced manual processing times (Alexandro, 2025). The benefit of this was it allowed HR teams to focus on strategic objectives (Alexandro, 2025). Additionally, other benefits of operational digital HRM included increased accuracy, faster response times and costs savings, all of which contribute to the organisations success (Alexandro, 2025). Alexandro (2025) argues that operational digital HRM is the foundation of enhancing organisational efficiency.

Begley et al, (2025) agrees with Alexandro (2025) and revealed through a qualitative study that digitalisation begins at the operational level. Automating routine HR tasks such as applicant tracking and personnel data management results in benefits such as reduced manual labour and faster response times (Begley et al, 2025). Consistent with Alexandro, (2025) the findings reveal operational digital HRM enhances HR capacity to take on strategic tasks as the administrative burden is reduced (Begley et al, 2025). Begley et al, (2025) aligns operational digital HRM with Strohmiere's (2020) typology and regards this stage as a stepping stone towards greater strategic alignment and digital maturity.

Advancing from operational digital HRM, Nayler (2024) argues the development of technology that can be used to transform HR practices is rapidly accelerating, and companies must be prepared for this. In order to prepare, HR leaders must implement a strategic approach to ensure the areas which will add most value are prioritised to align with the Company's business objectives. This perspective links to Strohmeiers (2020) third ideal type, whereby 'strategic alignment' is implemented to support the execution of strategy. This can be considered the first classification in 'supporting strategic goals by digitalisation' (Strohmeier, 2020). To be a successful approach, digital HRM practices must be utilised following the 'formulation of a business strategy' (Strohmeier, 2020). Nayler (2024) does highlight that introducing new technologies alone is not enough. HR professionals will need upskilling in new digital developments such as data analytics.

2.4 Data Analytics

Data analytics has emerged as a key player in digital HRM, whereby people analytics, meaning data about an organisations people is gathered and using the data from the workforce enables evidence-based decisions for the benefit of an organisation and its people (CIPD, 2021). The CIPD (2021) conducted a case study to understand how organisations can use people analytics to overcome business challenges. Global news organisation, The Financial Times, wanted to understand employee engagement in order to improve productivity (CIPD, 2021). The data was collected through the completion of a quarterly staff engagement survey and over four years of running the survey, they found that career growth was an area which needed to be improved on (CIPD, 2021). Subsequently The Financial Times implemented initiatives such as cross functional training opportunities to support career growth (CIPD, 2021). Engagement scores improved year on year by 5% against the benchmark, in turn improving productivity (CIPD, 2021).

Additionally, the CIPD (2021) conducted a case study into the Swiss Multinational Pharmaceutical company, Novartis who established a new approach to performance management through the gathering of data partnered with CEBMa (Center of Evidence Based Management) to look at secondary research which validated their decision (CIPD, 2021). Through a survey measuring the agreement scores of statements, they

found 5% of respondents wanted to return to the old performance management approach (CIPD, 2021). A key finding was employees favoured both individual reward and team reward rather than solely team rewards when receiving performance-based incentives (CIPD, 2021). As a result, Novartis implemented annual individual performance rewards and more frequent team-based rewards (CIPD, 2021). Ultimately improving overall employee performance. The HR team credited people analytics and support from secondary data as solid evidence which bolstered confidence in the new approach (CIPD, 2021). It is evident from these case studies that global organisations understand the benefits of digital HRM practices and showcase an eagerness to implement practices such as data/people analytics.

In comparison, some organisations may not exhibit the same eagerness or understanding towards digital HRM, particularly in the Irish context. Bartholin et al, (2019) conducted case studies into multiple Irish manufacturing companies. It was recognised that these companies understood the benefits of digital HRM practices such as data analytics, but a gap was identified between the theoretical basis of digital HRM and practical application (Bartholin et al, 2019). The case studies highlighted a sound understanding of the benefits stemming from evidence-based decision-making, but the companies did not have the tools and or resources to practically apply the theory (Bartholin et al, 2019). This paper does highlight the recognition companies in Ireland have towards digital HRM but who are often unable to practically apply the theory due to barriers and other relevant factors.

2.5 AI

Reverting to the benefits of digital HRM practices, Nayler (2024) claims AI is in the position to revolutionise HR processes across the employee lifecycle such as recruitment, onboarding, performance management and learning and development. Furthermore Eurostat (2021) recorded Ireland as the highest share of enterprises that used any of the four considered AI applications in 2020. This consisted of 23% of Irish enterprises using ‘machine learning, chat services, service robots and or natural language processing, generation or speech recognition’ (Eurostat, 2021). Additionally the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) (2021) recognises the impact of AI, whereby, a long-term strategy has been developed to ensure the keeping

up with AI developments, including the promise of AI education, skills and talent (DETE, 2021). Therefore, there is recognition for the positive impact of AI within the Irish context.

The positive recognition of AI is also used in a global context, IBM (International Business Machines) is a multinational technology company (Guenole et al, 2018). They utilised AI to streamline and automate the recruitment process whereby a system was created to assist job seekers in engaging from the first interaction with employers, while developing an understanding of their fit for the job role at the same time (Guenole et al, 2018). The system was called WCA (Watson Candidates Assistant), through leveraging AI, candidates and employers experienced real time interaction through a chat bot (Guenole et al, 2018). This resulted in a more personalised application process (Guenole et al, 2018). The chat bots got smarter with every interaction and IBM found they subsequently received an 'increased flow of high potential candidates' (Guenole et al, 2018). The trial study is reflective of the positive impact AI can have in recruitment processes, whereby IBM found the conversion from exploring to actually applying was 36% while using WCA, compared to 12% while using the traditional website (Guenole et al, 2018).

Additionally, IBM also demonstrates how AI can be used to enhance an employee's learning and development. Using AI IBM created a platform call 'Your Learning', described as a 'rich personalised digital market for learning' (Guenole et al, 2018). It is visited by 98% of employees every quarter and on average receives 60 hours of learning a year per employee (Guenole et al, 2018). Employees have the opportunity to sign up to learning channels and explore the skills needed for desired roles (Guenole et al, 2018). This platform also has a 24/7-hour chatbot on hand to answer any questions (Guenole et al, 2018). IBM has found an increase in enrollments and course completions resulting in 'strategic skill acquisition', also highlighting the statistical link between an employee's amount of learning and their level of engagement, in turn improving business performance'. (Guenole et al, 2018).

The trend towards utisling AI has only continued to grow. For example, Moderna made the organisational change to combine technology and human resource roles into one function (Bousquette, 2025). This move reflects the strategic shift encouraged by digital

HRM practices such as AI application (Bousquette, 2025). Actions resulting from this shift included the development of over 3000 GPT AI agents trained in internal data, designed to manage inquiries and delegate them to specific GPTs depending on the area, such as performance management or benefits (Bousquette, 2025). Tracey Franklin, head of HR, now the chief people and digital technology officer described this process as ‘what would normally be a junior-level HR analyst type, we’ve now converted into a GPT’ (Bousquette, 2025). She further adds that organisations need to move from “workforce planning” to “work planning” where it is decided whether tasks should be handled by people or AI agents (Bousquette, 2025).

Additionally, Gryncewicz et al, (2023) completed a study in a Finnish research institute using emotional AI to monitor employee wellbeing. They found employees had a positive response when this resulted in tangible benefits for their wellbeing (Gryncewicz et al, 2023). However, concerns were raised regarding privacy and data rights, such as questions around the data collection and control of the data (Gryncewicz et al, 2023). These concerns were resolved through the implementation of transparent policies and communication but Gryncewicz et al, (2023) emphasises that while many articles address the potential risks of AI, they do not delve into the deeper ethical implications. This is an area which must not be negated, AI application warrants careful attention and should not be underestimated (Gryncewicz et al, 2023).

The above case studies reflect the benefits stemming from digital HRM practices. However, Nayler (2024) again emphasises the need for strategic planning to identify skills gaps and resource requirements to ensure HR is equipped to handle digital transformation. Referring to Strohmeier's (2020) typology, there is a clear trend towards the alignment and or integration of strategy to ensure an effective digital HRM transformation. Furthermore, (Gryncewicz et al, 2023) identified considerations of AI application which must be taken into account. A broader inspection is needed across the whole of digital HRM practices to truly understand digital application.

2.6 Implications of failing to integrate digital HRM

The above case studies reference the need for strategic alignment and or integration to ensure successful digital HRM practices. Nayler (2024) argues that successful strategic alignment and or integration is exercised through change management. Strohmeier et

al, 2016 bolsters their typology through the development of the TOP framework. This is Technology, Organisation and People through which change management is needed across all three elements (Strohmeier et al, 2016). For example, people must be informed and collaborated with when introducing digital practices, this is to address any concerns or issues (Strohmeier et al, 2016). Failing to work with employees may result in resistance to the introduction of digital HRM (Strohmeier et al, 2016). Another example concerns top management support, this ensures organisation alignment as without the input from leader's, organisations run the risk of introducing the best technology but ultimately failing in the integration of digital HRM as the technology adds no strategic value (Strohmeier et al, 2016).

Furthermore Nayler (2024) highlights HR will need to ensure an entire company upskilling and training programme for all employees to prepare for new technologies (Nayler, 2024). They refer to research conducted by the Corporate Research Forum (CRF) which calls attention to a significant gap within digital skills in HR. This study found 91% of senior leaders believe their HR Business Partners need further development in digital technology. Much like Nayler, Reddy et al (2024) highlights that it is not enough to introduce new technologies. A careful approach must be taken to ensure that any new digital practices are user friendly and efficient to establish a positive employee experience (Reddy et al, 2024). Both Nayler (2024) and Reddy et al (2024) agree with Strohmeier's interpretation whereby strategy is key in ensuring effective digital HRM. The ideal type, 'operational digital HRM' identified by Strohmeier (2024) has essentially been deemed ineffective as it is not merely enough to introduce new technologies to perform routine tasks, change management must occur to enhance a successful digital transformation.

Therefore, there are implications stemming from failing to integrate digital HRM based on strategy or failing to integrate it at all. Yusuf et al (2023) examines how digital HRM practices can influence SME performance. This research is based on an Indonesian study and while Ireland may hold cultural differences, the findings can provide an insight into digital HRM practices within SMEs on a general basis. Yusuf et al (2023) argues that digital transformation within HRM positively affects the performance of SMEs through the improvement of operational efficiency, decision making and

innovation. Yusuf et al (2023) refers to the lack of data driven insights as an implication for SME's failing to integrate digital HRM practices. This is because data analytics can be used to assist in workforce planning, recruitment, and training. Not introducing digital practices can hamper SME's ability to make informed decisions, consequently resulting in inefficiencies in resource allocation and workforce management. This perspective is supported by the case study into the Financial Times, whereby the benefits of analytics and evidence-based decision making were deemed a successful use of digital HRM.

Additionally, Chapano et al (2023) completed a study in South Africa identifying the benefits of digital HRM practices. They found similar benefits identified by Alexandro, (2025) and Begley et al, (2025) including overall operational efficiency and improvements in areas such as recruitment, training and performance management. Consequently, it can be inferred that failing to introduce digital practices within HRM could result in employee dissatisfaction and a reduction in talent attainment (Chapano et al 2023). Referring back to Al-Alwari et al, 2023, Chapano et al (2023) also takes a contemporary approach to possible implications by identifying reduced resilience. Therefore, the argument that organisations lacking in digital practices are more inclined to experience disruptions such as the Covid-19 pandemic is highly supported (Chapano et al, 2023). Therefore, Irish SMEs could face implications resulting from a lack of resilience if they do not have effective technology put in place, ultimately affecting business continuity.

2.7 Barriers preventing digital HRM integration

While Yusuf et al (2023) has identified possible implications SMEs may face in failing to integrate digital HR practices, they do consider the barriers SMEs may face preventing them from introducing HRM technologies. Financial constraints is a barrier whereby SMEs may not have the money to invest in digital transformation. Yusuf et al (2023) highlights that SMEs tend to operate under tight budgets meaning they find it difficult to justify up front large investments in new technology. There is also uncertainty surrounding return on investment, particularly if the return is not seen immediately (Yusuf et al, 2023). Furthermore, Yusuf et al (2023) argues it is not only the cost of introducing new technology but also maintaining it. Chapano et al (2023) also raises the

issues of financial constraints, highlighting the funding competition between an organisations functions as

often HR is at the bottom of the priority list. Additionally, Al-Alwari et al (2023) reverts to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic whereby digital HRM emerged as an urgent initiative, yet many companies actually allocated resources to operational results and survival, ultimately placing digital HRM further down the list of priority.

Limited digital capabilities are flagged by Chapano et al (2023) as a key barrier preventing digital HRM integration. SMEs in particular often practice traditional HR methods, similar to what Strohmeier (2020) refers to ‘analog HRM’ and thus it is inferred they are likely to fail in digital HRM integration. Chapano et al (2023) supports this argument as many small organisations do not have the expertise or knowledge to implement and effectively use new technology. Furthermore, HR workers in these organisations are usually unfamiliar with digital technology leading to a lack of confidence in their use and ultimately increasing the use of manual HRM processes (Chapano et al, 2023). Telukdarie et al (2023) agrees with Chapano et al, 2023 adding the entire workforce, but in particular the HR team must be digitally literate. It's argued that technical training in SME's is often neglected which creates a knowledge and in turn a barrier hindering digital HRM integration (Telukdarie et al 2023).

SMEs are hesitant to incorporate digital practices due to ‘increased vulnerability to cyber threats and the lack of the correct infrastructure to support data protection (Alam et al, 2023). Alam et al (2023) notes that cyber security systems are often developed to benefit larger organisations, therefore, small organisations usually lack the finances, technical knowledge and ability to invest in effective cyber security. Additionally, Alam et al (2023) argues the complexity surrounding GDPR and data privacy laws can be intimidating for SMEs as they may lack a sound understanding of compliance regulations. Therefore, SMEs refrain from integrating digital HRM practices such as cloud-based HRM systems and AI tools. Kumar et al (2024) agrees and bolsters Alam et al's (2023) claims whereby weak data governance and ineffective cyber security infrastructure creates hesitation in integrating digital HRM. Kumar et al (2024) adds a lack of standardised protocols for safeguarding HR data adds complexity and risk to digital transformation with HRM.

2.8 Disadvantages of digital HRM

The possible barriers preventing digital HR practices that SMEs may experience have been identified. However, the disadvantages of digital HR practices also need to be considered and examined in relation to Irish SMEs. For example, Stone et al (2015) refers to the impersonal nature found in digital HRM practices. Digital recruitment and online learning can be considered impersonal, in turn which may create disengagement and distance between employees and the company, creating a real potential of alienating employees who value personal interaction. Chapano et al (2023) agrees with Stone et al (2015) and argues that employees accustomed to personal interaction may become detached, resulting in harm to the workplace culture. In addition, Madhuri (2015) takes a similar view emphasising that SME's value traditional HR practices centred on relationship building and personal interaction. Introducing digital HR tools could undermine the personal connections within SME's which are often crucial to operational success (Madhuri, 2015).

A different approach is taken by Ulas (2019) who identified erratic behaviour SME's practice towards recent technologies, including HR systems. The lack of consistency often results in a waste of resources and time. Yusuf et al (2023) further adds to this perspective arguing the benefits of HR technologies are not fully recognised due to poor integration. Without sufficient preparation, digital HR practices can often fall flat resulting in mediocre outcomes (Yusuf et al, 2023). Additionally, it is important to note that results stemming from digital HRM practices may not always be correct. Referring to The Financial Times case study, a limitation of the survey providers offering built in analysis tools was receiving misclassifications (CIPD, 2021). The example provided was the word 'stress' which could be processed as negative. However, in the context of a comment such as "I want to stress the importance..." it's actually a positive perspective (CIPD, 2021). Therefore, HR teams may need to manually review any information gathered through digital means to ensure accuracy and reliability. This limitation defends the argument that digital HRM practices may not be as beneficial as some make it out to be, particularly when a manual validation needs to be completed.

Additionally, manual validation contradicts benefits identified by Alexandro (2025), Begley et al, (2025) and Chapano et al, (2023) whereby advantages of operational digital

HRM included reduced manual work to increase capacity for strategic initiatives. Furthermore, sole reliance on operational digital HRM challenges the argument that digitalisation creates resilience. This weakness was exposed during the Iberian blackout which disrupted essential digital services all over Spain and Portugal, highlighting how digital systems can fail in times of disruption (Millard et al, 2025). This argument is further supported by Liu et al, (2023) who completed a study into the resilience of digitalisation. They revealed that digitalisation enhanced organisational resilience but only when HR capacity was available to respond in times of failure or crisis (Liu et al, 2023). They claim that organisations who go fully digital without human contingency risk reduced resilience during disruption (Liu et al, 2023).

2.9 Gaps in the literature and relevance to Irish SMEs

Much of the existing literature focuses heavily on the benefits of integrating digital HRM practices, specifically areas such as data analytics and AI. However, it is evident that much of the existing literature relies heavily on studies completed in countries such as Indonesia and South Africa. Limited research examines the benefits, implications and barriers specifically in the Irish context. There is some research into SMEs, however, the literature is also based in larger organisations. This dissertation aims to fill the gap by explaining the unique barriers and implications Irish SMEs face when integrating digital HRM practices, and the potential barriers hindering integration. This research will have far reaching implications as Ireland is the top EU country utilising digital practices such as AI (Eurostat, 2021), additionally, SMEs made up 99.8% of all enterprises in Ireland in 2021 and 69.2% of the population were employed by Irish SMEs (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2024). Further to this the IDA predicted that employment and talent in Ireland is continuing to grow. Therefore, an analysis on the implications Irish SMEs could face by failing to integrate digital HRM and potential barriers will be studied to identify the wider implications on the Irish economy and job market.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion Strohmeier (2020) tries to define digital HRM through their typology by outlining the evolution across the different classifications of digital HRM. Al-Alwari et al, (2023) explains that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, understanding the stages of digital HRM has become increasingly important as it ensures an organisations stability and continuity. Two key themes emerging from digital HRM are the use of data analytics and AI. Case studies into companies such as The Financial Times (CIPD, 2021), and IBM (Guenole et al, 2018) highlights the positive role data analytics and AI can have in key HR practices such as employee engagement, recruitment processes and learning and development. However, it is argued that to properly implement digital HRM practices, they must be aligned and integrated with an organisations strategy. This means to achieve effective digital transformation, organisations must be at the third and fourth ideal type identified by Strohmeier (2020).

Implications were identified from failing to integrate digital HRM practices, examples included a lack of data driven insights (Yusuf et al, 2023) and referring to Al-Alwari et al (2023) instability which could hinder an organisations continuity. It is important to recognise that some organisations may want to implement digital HRM but are unable to due to barriers and restraints. For example, research into Irish manufacturing companies found the organisations understood the benefits stemming from digital practices such as data analytics but did not have the correct tools or resources to practically apply the practices (Bartholin et al, 2019). Therefore, barriers preventing digital HRM was examined, and a key restraint was finances. SMEs lack the financial resources to implement digital systems but also maintain the systems (Yusuf et al, 2023), Smaller organisations also rely on traditional methods and can be reluctant to integrate digital HRM practices due to lack of knowledge and capability (Chapano, et al, 2023). The role of cyber security also revealed itself as a barrier as the complexity of GDPR and data privacy laws, creates hesitation in small organisations, often delaying the integration of digital HRM practices (Alam et al, 2023).

However, it is important to recognise the disadvantages of digital HRM. SMEs in particular often succeed through their personal nature. Integrating technology would create a sense of impersonality, ultimately leading to disengagement and distance

between employees Madhuri (2015). The Financial Times case study also revealed the inaccuracy of results that are sometimes achieved through digital means, this indicates that organisations will still need to rely on manual processes to validate any results gathered from digital HRM practices (CIPD, 2021). It is also important to highlight the gaps in this literature, many of the studies completed are taken from a non-Irish context and relate to large or multinational organisations. Therefore, this research will aid in identifying trends and patterns in Irish SMEs which will ultimately demonstrate any wider implications for the Irish economy.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology used to research the implications of Irish SMEs failing to integrate digital transformation within the HR function, and barriers Irish SMEs face preventing the implementation of digital HRM practices. It will begin by discussing the philosophical perspective underpinning the method, which is interpretivism, whereby the study is exploratory in nature, aiming to understand the meanings and behaviours of individuals through interpretation (Saunders et al, 2019). This will be followed by examining the research approach and design. An overview of the data collection methods and sampling strategy will also be included. Next, an analysis of the data will be completed, and any ethical considerations will be outlined. This chapter concludes by assessing the credibility of the findings and highlighting any limitations of the methods used.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Individuals experience different social realities based on 'different cultural backgrounds, under different circumstances and at different times make different meanings' (Saunders et al, 2019). Therefore, to achieve a rich understanding of a research topic, interpretivists take the meanings behind an individual's actions, experiences, and behaviours to interpret them within its context (Saunders et al, 2019). Collis et al (2014) agrees with Saunders et al (2019) by arguing there is 'no single objective truth'. Individuals make sense of their own environment, and it is the researcher's role to interpret this understanding. These researchers identify the benefit of interpretivism which allows for further development and knowledge of understanding within a specific research topic by interpreting the meanings from individuals (Saunders et al, 2019, Collis et al, 2014).

Interpretivism is the most appropriate philosophy for this research, as the aim is to understand the subjective experiences of HR Managers/Generalists and or General Managers of Irish SMEs with reference to digital practices within HRM. Linking to Saunders et al (2019) who explained that different groups of people within an organisation can experience 'different workplace realities.' Therefore, to develop an in-depth understanding of the research topic, interpretivism will be used. This is in

comparison to positivism, which is objective in nature and based on the idea that universal laws apply to everyone (Saunders et al, 2019). Positivists believe in the scientific grounding of measurable facts but are often criticised for disregarding the subjective nature of human experiences/behaviours, and ultimately the benefit interpretivism can have in further understanding research, specifically within social sciences (Raj, 2023).

3.3 Research Approach

Developing upon the interpretivist philosophy, this research will adopt an inductive reasoning approach. The justification for using inductive reasoning is because it is explicitly linked to interpretivism time and again. Saunders et al (2019) explain through inductive reasoning that a researcher 'would collect data and develop theory as a result of...data analysis'. This is in contrast to deductive reasoning, where data follows the theory, instead inductive reasoning allows theory to develop from the data (Saunders et al, 2019). Collis et al (2014) further agree and stress the exploratory and theory-building nature of inductive reasoning. They argue this approach is best used when completing research into a topic where not much is known as it promotes the exploration and development of different theories, ultimately enhancing a broad scope of knowledge and understanding within a specific topic (Collins et al, 2014). Therefore, inductive reasoning is a beneficial approach when researching the implications of Irish SMEs failing to integrate digital transformation within the HR function, and barriers Irish SMEs face preventing the implementation of digital HRM practices as this is currently an under-researched topic.

Additionally, Easterby-Smith et al (2018) raises the point that generalisability is not a guarantee through inductive reasoning but alternatively obtains an in-depth understanding within a research context. Therefore, while this research may lack generalisability due to the specific nature of the context, it will provide a greater knowledge and understanding with the potential for development into a conceptual framework. Furthermore, Quinlan (2019) examines the use of inductive reasoning within specific research designs. She explains how it is beneficial for qualitative methods such as interviews where researchers can use practices like open-ended

questions to explore and understand the research, often identifying themes and concepts (Quinlan, 2019).

3.4 Research Design

Much like Quinlan (2019), Saunders et al (2019) explain how qualitative research methods are aligned with interpretivism and inductive reasoning. They clarify that qualitative research is the most appropriate when a researcher wants to obtain a 'deeper understanding of a particular context or setting' (Saunders et al, 2019). They argue that it is most suitable from an exploratory or interpretivist philosophy. Bell et al (2019) agrees with Saunders et al (2019) and emphasises the positive role that qualitative methods have in research of a business or management context where the aim is to understand human behaviours and organisational culture (Bell et al, 2019). Therefore, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate when interviewing HR Professionals and or General Managers to understand their views and behaviours, such as their willingness to integrate digital tools within HR practices.

Saunders et al (2019) identify interviews as one of the key qualitative data collection methods, as they are suited to interpretivist and inductive reasoning approaches. Saunders et al (2019) outlines the different types of interviews but emphasises the benefits associated with a semi-structured interview whereby the research is given the ability to explore the meanings and experiences shared by the participants while also staying focused on the aim of the task. Bell et al (2019) also promotes the use of semi-structured interviews, highlighting the room for exploration as a key benefit. However, Bell et al (2019) delves further than Saunders et al (2019) by stressing the role of the researcher in shaping the conversation. In order to achieve rich detailed data, the researcher will need to lead the interview and carefully interpret the information collected from the participants (Bell et al, 2019). Quinlan (2019) takes a similar approach to both Saunders et al (2019) and Bell et al (2019), highlighting the ability to explore participants' experiences in order to collect purposeful data. However, Quinlan (2019) argues that not only does the interviewer need to shape the conversation, but also prepare in advance, including the creation of flexible interview questions and guides to support a semi-structured interview (Quinlan, 2019). This allows for exploration while also preventing drivel. It is also important to note that given the nature

of the participants and aim of this research, semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate as many interviewees do not have a lot of time due to work commitments. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance of focus and flexibility, allowing for exploration within an appropriate timeframe.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

The questions for this semi-structured interview were developed from the guidance of Saunders et al (2019). They recommended creating an interview guide, with a structure outlining open-ended questions which encourages participants to discuss their experiences. In contrast, Quinlan (2019) recommended developing a topic list, rather than a structured question guide or script. They argue that this is to provide a greater degree of flexibility which will in turn enhance reflective experiences of the participants (Quinlan, 2019). Despite Quinlan's approach, this semi-structured interview will be based on a structured guide outlining the questions, rather than a topic guide. This is to ensure the participants and interviewer remain focused, while also promoting a degree of flexibility. Collis et al (2014) agree and argue that questions must be prepared in advance to ensure they are carefully worded and minimise the risk of leading or biased questions.

The questions are broad and general, to give opportunity for participants to provide extensive information on their experiences (Bell et al, 2019). Following this, prompts and probes are used to narrow the responses to encourage any emerging themes or concepts (Bell et al, 2019). Pilot test questions have been used to ensure clarity and flow, and also to ensure that the participants understand the questions (Bell et al, 2014). To further support understanding, the questions have been developed in simple language, avoiding the use of abstract or complicated language which could cause confusion (Bell et al, 2014).

The interviews were conducted in a friendly, respectful, and professional manner, as identified by Collis et al (2014). This ensured participants felt comfortable. Neutrality was practiced in every interview to maintain unbiased responses; this meant there was no showing of non-verbal reactions (Collis et al, 2014). Saunders et al (2019) emphasises the importance of active listening which was carried out in all interviews to ensure the

experiences of participants were properly obtained. In this regard, interviewer intervention only took place to clarify or probe a participant's response.

Both Saunders et al (2019) and Collis et al (2014) stress the requirement of recording to ensure accuracy. Some of the interviews were audio recorded, and others were video recorded. This is because some of the interviews were conducted in person and others were conducted via Microsoft Teams. The reasoning is due to participant preference. To ensure fairness and consistency, the same interview structure and questions were followed or asked in all interviews. Field notes were also taken in the face-to-face interviews, to capture any nonverbal cues.

3.6 Sampling Strategy

In terms of qualitative research, Saunders et al, (2019) suggest using purposive sampling. This means selecting participants based on their relevance to the research question (Saunders et al, 2019). For this reason, the participants in this study were chosen based on their roles or earlier roles within Irish SME's and their involvement within HR functions. Saunders et al (2019) explain that purposive sampling is about the depth of information related to the research topic. Therefore, utilising a purposive sample ensures the information received will be related to digital HR practices within Irish SMEs and any potential barriers.

Nine participants were chosen to take part in the study. Saunders et al (2019) and Bell et al (2019) both argue that the quality of information is more important than numerical generalisability. Therefore, only a relatively small sample is needed. Guest et al (2006) refers to the idea of data saturation, again prioritising depth of information over sample size. To support this, Guest et al (2006) found that six to twelve interviews is enough when the participants share common contexts. In this case, it is experience working with HR practices in Irish SMEs. While Guest et al (2006) theory of data saturation provides foundational grounding, a more recent study from Hennink et al (2022) recommends a range of nine to seventeen interviews to obtain the desired level of saturation. Thus, nine participants were chosen to promote greater chance of data saturation and obtain indepth insights.

3.6 Data Analysis

The approach taken to analyse the data is thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2021) refer to this form of analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’. This approach was chosen as it corresponds with the philosophical stance underpinning the research, which is interpretivism (Saunders et al, 2019). Thematic analysis encourages researchers to interpret the information provided by the participants and group it into themes or concepts (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Braun and Clarke (2021) outline the best approach to coding and understanding data. This approach consists of six steps and was implemented manually within this research; Microsoft Word specifically was used to analyse the data. Following Braun and Clarke (2021) six steps, firstly to become familiar with the data, the transcripts were read multiple times and notes were made identifying any repeated thoughts. Step two involves coding, the transcript was reviewed line-by-line, and relevant pieces of information were given labels to summarise what was said (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Next patterns were identified across the interviews and were grouped together under themes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The following step consisted of checking the themes to ensure they were clear and corresponded with the obtained data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The fifth step was naming the themes correctly to ensure they captured the correct data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Lastly, the sixth step was the write-up of a report to present the different themes. (Braun and Clarke).

The six step approach to thematic analysis is widely used across qualitative research. However, there are alternative approaches such as the grounded theory which focuses on creating theory grounded in data (Bryant et al, 2019). It was considered unsuitable for this research as the aim is not to create new theory but to explore existing patterns and themes such as barriers preventing digital HR practices in Irish SMEs.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Saunders et al (2019) stresses the importance of ethics in research and explains that it must be considered at all stages of a research project. The key elements highlighted by Saunders et al (2019) are informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Therefore, prior to the commencement of the research project ethical approval was obtained from the National College of Ireland whereby an ethics form was completed

and submitted. Following the guidance from Saunders et al (2019), all participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used instead of real names in the transcripts and notes. All identifying information was removed and as Irish SMEs are a niche subject matter a conscious effort was taken to remove any indirect identifiers.

While Saunders et al (2019) references the importance of GDPR rules and regulations, Iphofen (2019) goes further and emphasises the requirement for researchers to align research with the legal mandates underscoring GDPR. Therefore, this research abided by legal requirements such as data minimisation and purpose limitation (Iphofen, 2019), In this case, only the necessary data was collected and used solely for the purpose of the research objective.

3.8 Limitations

While the research was conducted with careful attention to the method, its limitations need to be addressed. Prabhu (2020) explains that generalisability needs to be taken into account when completing qualitative research such as interviews. This is because qualitative methods generally use small sample sizes, which are normally carefully chosen (Prabhu, 2020). Therefore, researchers cannot claim their findings apply to everyone (Prabhu, 2020). This is referred to as statistical generalisation, and to combat this limitation Prabhu (2020) recommends using analytical generalisation. This approach claims that findings from one study may apply in similar contexts or situations (Prabhu, 2020). Therefore, while this research cannot apply to everyone, on the principle of analytical generalisation it may apply to other HR practitioners within the scope of Irish SMEs, ultimately defending the purpose of this study. Guenther & Falk (2019) agree with Prabhu (2020) and argue generalisability is no longer a sole argument to justify quantitative superiority as qualitative researchers can also generalise their findings when research is carried out under iterative reasoning (Guenther & Falk, 2019). Therefore, qualitative methods can produce meaningful findings applicable to similar contexts (Guenther & Falk, 2019).

Additionally conducting interviews via teams or on online platforms can be considered a limiting factor. Wakelin et al, (2024) compared face-to-face and Microsoft teams

interviews. While advantages such as flexibility and the ability to interpret visual cues were revealed during Microsoft teams interviews, challenges were also identified (Wakelin et al, 2024). These included connection disruptions and missed non-verbal cues which affected the rapport with the participants and ultimately the data quality (Wakelin et al, 2024). Roberts et al, (2025) agrees with Wakelin et al (2024) and explains data depth is related to the availability of non-verbal cues, which can be problematic when completing studies through online platforms. This is because the 'interviewers ability to interpret any non-verbal data that is observed is compromised by the lack of emotional connection' (Roberts et al, 2025). Moreover, Roberts et al, (2025) adds data depth is also limited through online means as often less words are obtained in comparison to in-person data collection methods. It is suggested that this may be the result of participant time constraints (Roberts et al, 2025). Alternatively, Roberts et al (2025) makes the counterpoint that participant time constraints frame online data collection methods as advantageous. This is because it may be more convenient for participants to participate through online methods (Roberts et al, 2025). Ultimately, the argument for remote data collection versus in-person data collection is based on particular conditions and the requirements of participants can play a major role in deciding the best practice (Roberts et al, 2025).

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion a qualitative research design was employed to carry out this study. A purposive sampling strategy was implemented to ensure relevant participants were chosen. Nine participants were interviewed, all of whom have HR experience in Irish SMEs. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth insights, which will be examined using thematic analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Three main themes emerged following thematic analysis of the study. Three themes will be examined in conjunction with discussion of their application to the study and supporting research. The three themes identified from the findings are:

1. Limited digital HRM
2. Recognising the benefits of digital HRM
3. Barriers preventing the integration of digital HRM

All three themes will be discussed below.

4.2 Limited digital HR practices

A strong theme of limited digital HR practices became evident as all participants identified there was very little digital HR within their companies when asked to describe their company's current level of digital HR practices. For example;

Caroline said there were *'minimal digital HR practices*.

Annie stated their level of digitalisation was *'very low...it's a very old company, some of the systems are still there from 40 odd years ago.'*

Similarly to Annie, Gregg explained that the HRIS system they use is *'old and antiquated...we are struggling with that'*.

Edna, explicitly stated that their level of digitalisation was *'very poor'*.

The emergence of this theme has not come as a shock as the literature clearly outlines a pattern of extremely low digital HR practices within SMEs on a global scale. Georg Thomas (2020) completed a quantitative study on German SMEs and found that the HR function tends to 'lag behind in terms of digitalisation'. He explains that SMEs usually employ a reactive approach towards digitalisation, only implementing practices when they are absolutely necessary, rather than a proactive approach which can increase overall efficiency (Thomas, 2020). Safrudin (2024) found in a qualitative study on Indonesian SMEs that while benefits of digitalisation such as effective recruitment and performance management are evident, there are still 'significant gaps in readiness to fully embrace digital transformation' within SMEs. Additionally, Zhang et al (2024)

identified that while the benefits of digital tools and practices are obvious, only some SMEs implement these tools and practices, many still lag behind.

It is important to note that while all the participants identified extremely low levels of digital HR practices and tools, most of them highlighted the benefits of digitalisation within HR and the desire to implement such. However, one participant noted that they have very little in terms of digital HR practices as they ultimately have no need for them.

Bertie stated, *'given the size of the company...eleven of a staff, digital practices aren't a necessity'*.

Bertie works in an extremely small SME without an actual HR department. In this regard the CEO (Bertie) acts as the HR function. This a regular practice in what Moake et al (2021) refers to as 'micro-enterprises' whereby 'small businesses do not possess the resources to have a HR department... busy managers... HR tasks drain time and energy" (Moake et al, 2021). For this reason, it is found that HR practices are managed manually and informally without the aid of digital tools or practices. Therefore, while the participants highlighted there is a very low level of HR digitalisation within their SMEs, it is apparent that this is normal within SMEs globally and in the Irish context, especially in micro-enterprises.

4.3 Recognising the benefits of digital HRM

The first theme identified low levels of digital HR practices and tools within Irish SMEs. However, many of the participants highlighted the benefits of HR digitalisation when they were asked about their personal opinion on digital practices and tools. For example:

Caroline said she was *'very much an advocate for digitalisation,'* she argued it *'improves compliance, increases efficiency within recruitment processes and ensures up-to-date employee data'*.

Annie she was *'all for it'* and further explained it *'removes the administrative burden allowing HR professionals to focus more on strategic HR.'*

Tina held a similar perspective to Annie whereby she said digital HR *'allows HR to focus on productive, meaningful tasks, such as strategy related projects.'*

Gregg referred to digital HR practices and tools as *‘very beneficial...it does so much for you in terms of having data at your fingertips’*. Gregg gave examples of headcount and retention. He currently uses an Excel spreadsheet and manually adds leavers. Whereas *‘systems are built to pull reports, give insights and recognise trends...using these systems reduces the risk of human error, allowing for accurate data collection.’*

The literature supports the benefits identified by the participants; Johnson et al (2020) refers to the use of AI and digital tools in reshaping the recruitment function in HR. He argues that digital practices allow for an improved candidate experience where automation provides faster feedback and recruitment is streamlined through applicant tracking systems (Johnson et al 2020). This in turn improves recruitment efficiency while supporting HR in making the best hiring decisions (Johnson et al, 2020).

Abuhantash (2023) agrees with Johnson et al (2020) and refers to the use of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) in reducing recruiting times, thus increasing the efficiency of the recruitment process. Abuhantash (2023) also touches on strategic involvement through the use of HRIS whereby HR professionals can use dashboards and analytics to make strategic decisions. However, Bondarouk et al (2016) present a stronger argument supporting both Annie and Tina’s perspective whereby digital tools and practices can be used to automate transactional tasks such as payroll, timekeeping, and leave requests. This provides administrative relief which sequentially encourages HR professionals to focus on strategic planning (Bondarouk et al, 2016). Additionally, McCartney et al (2022) further adds to Abuhantash (2023) advocacy for HRIS and explains how HRIS can capture and store workforce data which allows for accurate and centralised employee records. McCartney et al (2022) argue that HRIS encourages real time dashboards thus minimising the risk of human error from manual or outdated reporting.

In contrast to this perspective, Bertie noted that while digitalisation may benefit HR departments in larger companies, they said *‘given the area of HR which can be complex, you are probably better being more human’*.

Further to this Wee Chan et al (2024) completed a qualitative study into micro and small businesses in Malaysia. They identified ‘relational HR’ as a key practice whereby managers provide care to employees due to personal obligation and not from a

strategic perspective (Wee Chan et al, 2024). It was argued that implementing digital HR systems may undermine the personal nature of these companies (Wee Chan et al, 2024). Nalweyiso et al (2023) further supports this argument as their study highlights successful people management in Ugandan micro enterprises through relational HR. One of the key aspects of this success is the lack of a formal strategy, rather decisions are made collaboratively between managers and employees and in real time (Nalweyiso et al, 2023). Essentially without a formal strategy there is no necessity to implement digital HR practices (Nalweyiso et al, 2023).

In comparison to Bertie, Dominic is also employed in a micro-enterprise consisting of 6 employees, yet presents a more positive attitude towards digital HRM, in particular he references the use of AI and says *'I think it is incredible...if you remove the human element, the risk massively decreases because there is less chance of mistakes being made'*. This is an atypical response as most of the literature supports the perspective that micro-enterprises rely on relational HRM. However, Dominic's perspective demonstrates that there is a role for digital HRM in Irish SMEs.

Further to this Annie and Tina both referenced strategic focus as a benefit of digital HR practices. Both participants are employed in SMEs with less than 100 employees but still enough to integrate a formal strategy. Bertie, however, did not explicitly say their organisation lacked a formal strategy, but it can be inferred from the literature. Therefore, Bertie does not see the benefits of digital HR practices when relational HR is effective in their company. Nonetheless, Dominic presented an opposing perspective. However, to fully understand the role of strategy and its impact of digital HRM in SMEs, further research is required.

4.3.1 digital HRM is not a quick fix

While many of the participants identified benefits associated with HR digital tools and practices, they also advised that HR practitioners must be cautious in the implementation of such practices, as they have limitations.

Annie believes that digital practices such as Chat GPT and AI may become overly relied upon. This is dangerous as these systems can provide incorrect information. She gave the example of an employee querying a leave request who *'argued back that's not what*

Chat GPT told me'. Over reliance is highlighted in the literature, Varma et al (2023) argue that AI applications need to be continuously monitored by humans as from a HR perspective, AI applications pose challenges to fairness, transparency, and privacy (Varma et al, 2023). Tinguely et al (2023) agree with this approach and further argue that HR professionals should check any work automated through AI applications, especially those of a strategic nature or when completing non-routine tasks and projects. Through professional oversight, HR practitioners will have the ability to override the outcome if they need to (Tinguely et al, 2023).

Similarly, Dominic said '*...there is the barrier of over reliance*', he claimed that employees can become '*blindsided by AI*'. To combat this, he has held meetings to reinforce the importance of employees to '*use your brain first, and then AI second*', but explained '*it's quite difficult and challenging to manage*'.

Annie also stressed her argument by relating to more sensitive issues or topics which often arise in the HR profession. She said, '*people still need someone to talk to...they can't talk to a system.*' Bertie raised a similar concern and stated, '*HR can be extremely complex...it is probably better with less AI and more human connection*'. Mwita et al (2025) supports this view whereby they claim AI poses significant risks in dealing with sensitive or complex issues. AI lacks the empathy and emotional intelligence which is needed when working through concerns or problems employees may have (Mwita et al, 2025). While Bertie is employed by a micro enterprise where relational HR is more favorable to that of digital HR, it is a standard practice, no matter the size of a company or global context, that all HR employees must manage delicate and sensitive employee relations. Therefore, in this area of expertise, it can be argued that relational HR is more beneficial in comparison to digital HR. This theory is further supported by a study conducted by Mwita et al (2025) across 217 HR practitioners in Tanzania whereby they found 'in employee relations 67% agree that AI cannot handle the emotional nuances of workplace conflicts, and employees may distrust AI driven systems for conflict resolution'.

Caroline also highlighted that HR digitalisation is not a fix all solution as a '*one size fits all approach does not work cross departmental*'. She says that often '*departments in a company have different requirements...what works for one will not work for another*'.

Bondaruk et al (2016) emphasises that technology related tools and systems do not work solo, rather they need to be driven by people. In this case collaboration between company departments such as operations, HR and IT is a necessity as each department will have their own needs (Bondaruk et al, 2016). Carolines' perspective aligns with literature as she gave the example of wanting to implement a clocking app to monitor time and attendance. However, *'not all the employees within operations had a phone to support the app and we couldn't provide company phones as there was no other operational requirement for them...ultimately, we had to drop the idea as we couldn't find a solution to suit both HR and Operations.*

Gregg takes a similar approach to Caroline and further emphasises that not all systems or digital tools will have everything HR is looking for. He referred to switching HRIS as the old one did not provide certain functions they needed. They moved to a new HRIS which is *'great for employee engagement and has better applicant tracking for recruitment...but it is not great at tracking holidays...it is an American system so it is set up the American way and holidays are not considered as important over there...unfortunately, no system or tool ever does everything perfectly well.* Maier et al (2013) while an older perspective, highlights HRIS success is based on how well its functions or features meet the needs and requirements of the HR department. Like Bondaruk et al (2016), they take the approach that standardised systems should be avoided as requirements vary across departments. Therefore, customisation must be continuous to ensure the systems can function in accordance with the needs of HR and other departments (Bondaruk et al, 2016). Alkashami (2023) provides a more up to date review, but the argument remains the same. He claims standard systems cannot be relied upon, HRIS must be customisable to ensure it continuously meets the requirements of the company which can grow and change (Alkashami, 2023). Therefore, HR professionals and end users must be involved in the design and implementation to ensure alignment with the system, HR and the wider company (Alkashami, 2023).

4.4 Barriers preventing digital HRM

Many participants identified barriers preventing the integration of digital HR tools and practices. In this instance, there are a number of sub themes which have emerged.

4.4.1 Financial constraints / low priority

Financial constraints and or low priority appeared quite often among participants. For example:

Caroline stated *‘digital investment falls at the bottom of the priority list...due to cost cutting...prioritisation is directed towards general day-to-day operations.’*

Tina said *‘we are constantly pushed down to the bottom of priority’.*

Edna claimed *‘the company understands the benefits of digitalisation, but practices never come to fruition, operations always take priority over support functions like HR...I suppose with working in a small family-owned business they don’t have the finances to support the implementation of new systems.’*

Sean said *‘cost is the number one factor I look at when demoing any new system or digital tool’.*

Sagala et al (2024) completed a systematic literature review into the digital transformation success of SMEs and found the majority of SMEs lack financial literacy and highlights this as a key barrier preventing digital integration. Many SMEs do not fully understand principles surrounding financial literacy such as personal credit, return on investment, and capital management (Sagala et al, 2024). A lack of understanding among finances means SME managers and owners are less inclined to spend money on projects such as digital investment (Sagala et al, 2024). Further to this, digital HR practices and tools are deprioritised to an even further extent where HR is not considered a strategic function (Chapano et al, 2022). Antcliff et al (2021) explain that this is a common practice in SMEs. They completed a survey of SMEs in the UK and found SMEs do not view HR as a strategic function, rather operational support to provide advice and information (Antcliff et al, 2021). HR is ultimately viewed as low priority (Antcliff et al, 2021), therefore, SMEs are going to prioritise investment, including digital investment into functions which they view as strategic value, that being operations.

4.4.2 Insufficient Training

Insufficient training was identified as a key barrier for a number of participants. For example:

Annie said *‘we need training...there is a system there, but it is not being used...we still rely on Excel to complete manual reports...the system is seen as more of a hinderance as we can’t use it correctly’.*

Tina believes *‘training is a must...often systems and practices are implemented but end up half used as people are not properly trained on them’.*

Gregg stated *‘the training and time put into actually getting a system up running and working is essential’.*

Edna claims *‘there is lack of training and knowledge in house...there was apprehension over who would train employees on new systems...it seemed like too much time and too costly to hire in trainers and properly learn the systems functions...so the systems are then forgot about.’*

Kathy said *‘the challenge is the lack of skill and knowledge in HR...we are good at HR processes but not digitalisation. To be the best we now need HR and IT competencies...we need HR professionals who can do data analytics, reporting...more than Word or Excel. Competency is the biggest challenge...lots of training is needed’.*

Many authors have identified barriers preventing the integration of digital HR tools and practices. Alam et al (2024) look at these barriers specifically from a data analysis perspective. Firstly, they raise the technical skills gap whereby many HR professionals lack the technical knowledge and skills to utilise analytical tools such as statistics and data modelling (Alam et al, 2024). The second barrier identified is analytical competence, in this regard HR professionals lack the competency to read, understand and interpret data from analytical tools (Alam et al, 2024). This means HR professionals cannot align trends and patterns to business aims, consequentially providing poor strategic direction (Alam et al 2024). While Alam et al (2024) does not specifically relate the research to SMEs, this experience has also been identified from the participants, particularly Kathy who argues data analytics is now a required competency for the HR profession.

Stef et al (2024) agrees with Alam et al (2024) that lack of training is a key barrier preventing integration of digital tools and practices but takes a wider approach to

convey the entire digitalisation transformation process. They say there is a lack of digital skill and training among HR professionals resulting in resistance, fear of change and incorrect use of digital tools and systems (Stef et al, 2024). However, not just the technical factor acts as a barrier as Stef et al, 2024) emphasises that HR professionals need a mindset shift for those who lack clarity about the benefits of digitalisation. This clarity comes from communication from leadership and once achieved HR professionals will be more inclined to look at digitalisation more positively and less resistant to training (Stef et al, 2024).

In comparison to the research carried out by Stef et al (2024), the majority of the participants in this study looked upon HR digitalisation with positivity and any that did not, was because they argue digital practices are not needed within their organisations. For example:

Bertie said *'we have never experienced any barriers preventing the implementation of digital systems as we have never requested them...we have no need for these systems and feel we can effectively work without them'*

Stef et al (2024) fails to take this argument into account while Kallmuenzer, et al (2025) completed a study into the digital adoption in SMEs and found that digitalisation in general is normally considered non-essential, this is because the manual processes in place are working effectively. If managers are operationally satisfied, they don't see any need to integrate digitalisation Kallmuenzer et al (2025). Often the approach 'don't fix it unless it is broken' applies in SMEs.

4.4.3 Lack of Managerial buy in / top-down decision making.

The next sub theme to appear is lack of managerial buy-in and or top-down decision making. Chapano et al (2022) argues that 'top management support is viewed as the most influential factor' after completing a study on 312 HRM professionals and line managers in South Africa on the adoption of digital HRM practices. This is because top management provides the finance, support and emotional backing required to obtain successful implementation (Chapano et al, 2022). To do this HR professionals must highlight the benefits of digitalisation and demonstrate how digital HRM aligns with the overall business strategy (Chapano et al, 2022). Once top management support has

been obtained, the next step is managerial buy-in (Chapano et al, 2022). Managers must be involved in the design and roll out of any digital system or tool as it must be easy for them to use (Chapano et al, 2022). Training is also essential as similarly to Stef et al (2024), Chapano et al (2022) found that training will increase manager motivation and positive attitude towards the adoption of digital HRM. In addition to Chapano et al (2022), the CIPD (2021) conducted multiple case studies into European SMEs and found 'getting buy-in from the boss' to be one of the key factors affecting digital adoption of HR practices. For example, Deirde Breen, Head of HR at Flynn Ireland explained to adopt a cloud base HRIS she had to persuade one the managing directors to support her proposal, explaining the benefits of having a HRIS but also the pitfalls of not having one (CIPD, 2021). Key benefits include pulling reports more quickly for the finance team (CIPD, 2021). Consequentially, the managing director took Deirdres proposal onboard and put in place a technology group to look at digital platforms for all aspects of the business.

The findings identified in the literature were also demonstrated by the participants. For example:

Caroline stated 'it is decided by the board of directors...it slows down responsive to staff needs as communication is lost through every level'.

Annie said 'it is difficult for employees to convey the need for digital practices if managers can't get on board...they are afraid of change....we get alot of pushback ...systems were put in place to enable managers to do their own contracts...by they don't want the responsibility.'

Tina explained 'leaders think it will create more work for them, for example in the case of an older workforce, managers normally have to hand hold for a certain amount of time...they don't want to do this'. 'This is why it is difficult to persuade leaders to adopt digital practices.'

Edna said, 'senior management are open to suggestions, but we find it difficult to get them onboard...they ultimately shut down the idea due to operational priority and costs.'

Similarly to Edna, Sean said *'I am the HR department...I make the decisions...it is always based on the costs, whether it is economically viable or not'*.

Ultimately it appears that it is very difficult to gain support from leaders and management teams to buy into the adoption of digital HR practices. While Chapano et al, (2022) highlighted that managers and decision makers will take digitalisation onboard if the strategic value is demonstrated, Antcliff et al (2021) made the point that SMEs rarely have a formal strategy. Without a strategy, leaders and senior management teams will be apprehensive in adopting digital HR practices as they aren't looking at the wider picture, they become discouraged due to lesser factors such as cost and the need for training.

Chapter 5 - Final Chapter

5.1 Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to examine the role digital HRM plays within Irish SMEs and to understand the potential challenges Irish SMEs may face in trying to integrate digital HRM. To achieve this aim, this research focused on two objectives; firstly, to analyse the implications Irish SMEs could face by failing to integrate digital HRM and secondly, to analyse the potential barriers Irish SMEs could face in attempting to integrate digital HRM. The rationale behind this research stems from the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic whereby digital HRM substantially grew on the justification that it enhanced an organisations resilience (Shahiduzzaman, 2025). Additionally, the rapid development of digital practices and technologies across Ireland has secured their position as a European leader in digital integration (Eurostat, 2021). Therefore, the efficiency of digitalisation in Irish SMEs had to be examined as SMEs make up the majority of Irish organisations (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2024).

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

Key findings revealed there are limited digital HRM practices in Irish SMEs, but also identified a desire among HR practitioners to integrate digital HRM. This desire stems from challenges resulting from the failure to integrate digital practices. The biggest challenge identified was the administrative burden of operational tasks preventing strategic focus. Participants expressed that digital tools and systems could be used to perform routine HR tasks such as recruitment processes, managing employee data and generating accurate reports. However, they were not in the correct stage of digital maturity to automate these tasks. These findings affirm insights from Begley et al, (2025) and Alexandro et al, (2025) who both strongly support the automation of routine HR tasks to allow more strategic focus. However, one participant expressed preference for more relational HRM rather than digital HRM. This participant was employed in a micro-enterprise meaning there was very little in terms of administrative and operational tasks.

While challenges from failing to integrate digital HRM were identified, participants also expressed challenges in the use of digital HRM. These challenges included over reliance on tools such as AI and the lack of emotional connection which is only

achieved through relational HR and human engagement. These challenges align with the literature whereby Varma (2023) believes AI needs to be continuously fact checked by humans to ensure accuracy and reliability. Additionally, Mwita (2025) observed AI lacks the emotional intelligence and empathy to manage difficult employee relations.

The study exposed multiple barriers Irish SMEs face in attempting to integrate digital HRM. Firstly, financial constraints and or low priority was identified. Participants stressed that often SMEs operate on tight budgets, and any investment goes to the day-to-day operations, also known as the money-making functions, in comparison to HR which in most SMEs is seen as a support function. In this instance HR functions are overlooked and deprioritised. This corresponds with the findings of Antcliff et al (2021) who noted that HR functions in SMEs are not seen as value adding functions as they have no strategic involvement, therefore, it is difficult for organisations to justify investment within HR functions if they cannot see the strategic value.

Insufficient training was continuously identified by participants as a barrier to digital integration. Many highlighted that they had the systems and tools in place, such as HRIS' but due to insufficient training or absence of training, the tools and systems could not be effectively utilised, thus imposing greater administrative demands. The ability to manage and understand data analytics through an effective HRIS was flagged as a primary requirement for HR professionals as it enhances strategic value by using data to make informed decisions. However, the strategic shift required from HR professionals in SMEs is undermined as they do not have the competencies needed to add strategic value. Stef at el (2024) similarly expressed the same challenge whereby there is limited competency of digital skills among HR professionals. Alam et al, (2024) also raised HR professionals' inability to interpret and understand data, as again they lack the competencies.

Lastly managerial buy in / top-down decision making was revealed as a barrier preventing digital HRM integration in Irish SMEs. Participants expressed that they often are met with resistance when seeking support from managers in adopting digital practices. This is because mangers are reluctant to invest the extra time and effort to train employees on new systems, additionally they do not want to assume the potential responsibility and workload which could result from digital integration. Moreover,

participants employed in larger SMEs found that often communication was lost through the bureaucracy, meaning if requests for digital HRM integration reached top management, often no response was received as the communication was lost at the different levels of hierarchy. Conversely, participants employed in smaller SMEs flagged that while top management may listen to requests for digital HRM integration, action never followed. It was seen as an opportunity for management to maintain professional image. Chapano et al, (2022) noted that managerial buy in is one of the key factors preventing digital HRM integration, however, claimed that if strategic value can be identified then managers are more likely to support the objective.

5.3 Theoretical/Practical Implications

Theoretically, most of the literature and research in digital HRM integration focuses on large enterprises. Therefore, this study adds substantial value into the role of digital HRM in SMEs within the Irish context, bridging the gap in the literature. Authors such as Alexandro et al (2025) and Begley et al (2025) identify the key implication of failing to integrate digital HRM is the inability of HR professionals to focus on strategy, as the administrative and operational duties and responsibilities is too demanding. This was also revealed as a key finding in this study. Additionally, authors such as Antcliff et al (2021), Stef et al, (2024) and Chapano et al, (2023) note the barriers preventing digital HRM integration; these being financial constraints / low priority, insufficient training and managerial buy in / top-down decision making are all linked to strategic value. HR professionals are less inclined to face these challenges if they can demonstrate the strategic value in digital HRM integration. Therefore, the findings from this study contribute to the literature by revealing the importance of strategic value in the integration of digital HRM in SMEs. Furthermore, the findings extend Strohmeier's (2020) typology whereby an organisations digital maturity is measured against strategic value. Strohmeier's (2020) framework was designed with larger enterprises in mind, these are organisations with the means to integrate digital HRM. Nevertheless, SMEs appear to be placing the same emphasis on strategic value, this is unexpected as SMEs generally do not implement formal strategies.

In terms of practical application, the findings reveal digital HRM integration improves the administrative burden faced by HR staff. Routine tasks such as recruitment

processes and data management can be helped from automation and streamlining through AI tools and data analytics. These benefits can aid Irish SMEs in staying relevant and in competition with large global enterprises. However, the findings also highlight the importance of relational HRM which is more commonly practiced in SMEs. These findings demonstrate the need for SMEs to avoid dependence on digital tools like AI. Furthermore, these findings may also apply to larger enterprises where relational HRM may not be as common. Thus, emphasising the requirement for all HR professionals to continue building engagement and relationships with employees as human resources still requires a human element.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study multiple recommendations are put forward to support the integration of digital HRM in Irish SMEs. Firstly, Irish SMEs, including the owners and HR managers should invest in low-cost digital tools and systems to automate and streamline routine tasks. This will aid in relieving the administrative burden many HR professionals experience in their day-to-day responsibilities. Additionally, this will enable HR professionals to contribute strategically to the business.

Secondly, HR professionals should obtain training in any digital tool or system which is in place, or which is going to be implemented. A system is only as good as the individual using it, therefore, to ensure effective utilisation, HR professionals need IT based competencies. Additionally, training is required to understand and interpret the information obtained through digital means. This will enable HR professionals to make informed decisions using accurate and reliable data. Further to this, HR professionals should receive specific training on AI systems such as Chat GPT to avoid over-reliance on tools which may provide incorrect information and data.

Thirdly Irish SME owners and managers should be educated on the purpose of the HRM function. It is indicated from the findings that SME owners and managers do not see the strategic value HRM can contribute to a business. Rather it is seen as a support or administrative function. If the purpose of HRM is understood, SME owners and managers may be more agreeable to supporting the integration of digital HRM if the strategic value is demonstrated.

Lastly HR professionals need to continue building relational HRM. Humans play an important role in HRM which cannot be substituted by digital tools or systems. To practice relational HRM, HR professionals should create opportunities of employee engagement and voice through surveys and suggestion initiatives, additionally they should maintain direct contact with employees to build relationships and trust.

Actioning these recommendations could aid in the successful integration of digital HRM in Irish SMEs, ultimately enhancing successful business operations.

5.5 Areas of Future Research

This study does provide valuable insights into the integration of digital HRM in Irish SMEs, however, there are areas which warrant further investigation as a result of new questions stemming from the findings. The strategic value of HRM was raised by the participants in the study, even though they were never directly questioned about strategy. This was unexpected as the literature supports the interpretation that SMEs usually do not implement formal strategies. Thus, this raises the question on the role of strategy and how it affects digital HRM integration in Irish SMEs. It has been implied in the findings that strategy does play a role in Irish SMEs and positively contributes to digital HRM integration. However, further investigation is needed to justify this theory. This would be valuable as clarity would contribute to existing frameworks and concepts regarding strategy and digital HRM which are typically designed for larger enterprises. Widening the frameworks and concepts to the context of SMEs would enhance their applicability and address a gap in the literature.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research aimed to examine the implications of failing to integrate digital HRM in Irish SMEs and the barriers Irish SMEs may face in attempting to integrate digital HRM. The findings highlighted that digital HRM introduces benefits such as automated recruitment processes and accurate employee data management. Failing to integrate digital HRM thus resulted in administrative demands, preventing HR professionals to contribute strategically. The findings identified that HR professionals within Irish SMEs seek to integrate digital HRM practices but are often met with challenges such as financial constraints / low priority, insufficient training, and managerial buy in / top-down decision making. It is recommended that SME owners and

HR managers work towards mitigating these challenges to allow investment in digital HRM integration. However, careful consideration is warranted to ensure that digital integration does not replace the work of HR professionals. Ultimately, this study showcased the importance of digital integration to ensure Irish SMEs stay relevant and in competition against large global enterprises as technology continues to rapidly develop. Additionally recognising the implications of failing to integrate digital HRM in Irish SMEs has highlighted the importance of the strategic role HR professionals can contribute to in SMEs but future research should continue to explore this area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

- I.....agree to participate in Aoife’s research study.
- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for my interview with Aoife be audio-recorded and or notes taken.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation and any subsequent publications.
- I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

Signed:

Date:

Print Name:

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Can you please tell me a bit about your role or position in your company? How long have you been in this role?
2. Can you describe your involvement within the HR department? What HR activities/roles/responsibilities do you perform?
3. How would you describe your company's current level of digital HR practices? Can you give a few examples of any digital tools or systems you currently use within HR practices?
4. Can you describe your company's overall attitude toward digital HR Practices? Can you talk about why your company has this attitude or stance towards digital HR practices?
5. Can you describe your own personal attitude toward digital HR practices? Why do you have this attitude?
6. Have you ever experienced challenges or barriers when trying to implement digital HR practices? What were they?
7. Has staff ever requested the implementation of digital HR practices?
8. How are decisions around the implementation of digital HR practices decided in your organisation? Who makes them?
9. Have you noticed any impacts from digital HR practices which have been implemented?
10. Do external factors influence your position on HR digitalisation, for example the Covid-19 pandemic. How have they influenced your position?
11. Can you tell me about any future plans your organisation may have to implement digital HR practices?

