



EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HRIS IN EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY MARKETING - A PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper examines how the human resource information system (HRIS) supports employee advocacy marketing (EAM), especially within the context of a multinational organization setting in Pakistan. Focus group interviews with 10 respondents from managerial and non-managerial levels, and the subsequent NVivo-based data analysis revealed the need to upgrade the functionalities of Human Resource Information Systems through the integration of computerized workflows, training modules, and gamified features to encourage participation in advocacy by all employees across all levels. The implications of our study include the strategic and accessible design of HRIS tools, increased brand visibility, employee engagement, and organizational belonging. Although this study relies on self-reported data and is limited to the Pakistani context, it has some valuable implications regarding the ability of HRIS to address operational and cultural challenges in advocacy marketing. This study contributes to the rapidly growing literature on HRIS by highlighting its potential to foster sustainable, culturally sensitive advocacy in diverse organizational contexts.

Keywords: HRIS integration, employee advocacy marketing, workforce engagement strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In the rapidly evolving business environment, organizations are looking for ways to engage their workforce to increase brand visibility, build customer trust, and drive engagement. EAM has become a revolutionary strategy where employees become brand ambassadors to communicate the organization's values, products, and services through personal and professional networks (Hien & Nhu, 2022). EAM humanizes the brand by using credible, authentic voices to amplify organizational messages, which is not a traditional marketing approach. This strategy, therefore,

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not only improves organizational reach but also strengthens internal cohesion by instilling a sense of belonging and alignment among its employees (Lee & Kim, 2020).

The success of EAM depends on employees' contributions to strategic organizational goals and also on equipping them with the appropriate tools and resources that enable them to make practical contributions. The more complex and competitive the environment is, the more critical it becomes to have effective alignment. Indeed, well-implemented EAM programs are predicated on good communication, uniform training, and the capacity for real-time strategy measurement and adaptation (Thomas, 2020a) . All these imply the necessity for a strong technological infrastructure to ensure smooth management and scale-up advocacy processes.

From its original administrative use, such as payroll and attendance, HRIS has developed into full-fledged systems that support strategic human resource management. Contemporary capabilities of HRIS include real-time engagement tracking, data analytics, targeted communication, and employee training, making them indispensable tools for implementing and managing EAM programs (Johnson et al., 2016) . Kovach et al. (2002) state that HRIS is both an administrative facilitator and a strategic enabler, aligning human resource practices with broader organizational objectives. Leveraging HRIS enables organizations to identify key employee influencers, tailor advocacy programs to specific demographics, and measure the impact of these initiatives with precision.

1.2 Importance in Organizational Contexts

As organizations strive to adapt to the demands of digital transformation and heightened competition, the role of HRIS in driving EAM is becoming increasingly crucial. HRIS platforms enable seamless communication between employees and management, track the effectiveness of advocacy efforts, and provide data-driven insights to optimize engagement strategies (Wang, 2024) . These systems enable organizations to ensure

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that their employees accurately represent them, fostering a cohesive and effective operation. For example, analytics on HRIS may identify individuals with strong social networks or high engagement levels, enabling an organization to reach a broader audience and maximize the impact of their advocacy campaign (Yona & Meilani, 2024).

Furthermore, HRIS encourages transparency and inclusivity in the workplace as it provides employees with easy access to training modules, communication tools, and performance metrics. This way, employees at all levels within the organization are enabled to participate meaningfully in advocacy initiatives that strengthen organizational cohesion and alignment (Thomas, 2020). Nevertheless, the adoption and use of HRIS may differ across organizational hierarchies. Managerial employees typically appear to have a deeper understanding of HRIS functionalities. In contrast, non-managerial employees often view transactions as merely administrative routines or monotonous clerical work, such as handling tasks like payroll management or leave tracking (Janath Opatha & Dooradarshani, 2023). This gap in awareness necessitates targeted interventions to eliminate knowledge gaps regarding the effective use of HRIS-driven advocacy programs.

1.3 Challenges within Diverse Cultural Settings

The deployment of HRIS and EAM in ethnically diversified contexts is a unique challenge that requires sensitive applications. In the case of Pakistan, where organizational culture has been rooted in highly collectivist values, hierarchical order, and powerful social norms, the behavior of its employees and their inclination towards advocacy would be influenced by these cultural dynamics (Ho & Astakhova, 2020).

Employees in such an environment may be reluctant to participate in advocacy programs due to a perceived incongruity with their personal or societal values, fear of negative consequences, or uncertainty about their role in these programs (Hien & Nhu, 2022).

For instance, an EAM initiative must be culturally sensitive to motivate

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the workforce. Thus, the organization should ensure that its advocacy programs foster alignment with its cultural values and ethics, while also fostering a sense of inclusiveness and volunteerism. HRIS can go a long way in addressing these issues by incorporating localized content, cultural sensitivity training, and compliance monitoring tools (Janath Opatha & Dooradarshani, 2023). For instance, HRIS platforms can offer region-specific training modules on local cultural norms. This way, employees are not afraid of conflict or deviation from their values while engaging in advocacy efforts (Lee & Kim, 2020). HRIS systems can also facilitate real-time feedback mechanisms, enabling organizations to promptly address employee concerns and adapt strategies to meet cultural expectations.

Technological barriers also complicate the adoption of HRIS in emerging markets. Limited digital literacy, inadequate training, and resistance to change are common barriers that prevent the effective use of HRIS for advocacy marketing (Thomas, 2020). Non-managerial employees, for instance, often struggle to navigate complex HRIS interfaces or comprehend the strategic significance of their participation in advocacy initiatives (Yona & Meilani, 2024). All these barriers necessitate an all-around approach that involves user-centric system design, targeted training programs, and leadership support in fostering a culture of engagement and innovation.

1.4 Study Objectives

This research will investigate how HRIS can enhance the effectiveness of EAM within a multinational company based in Pakistan. It aims to identify both enabling and inhibiting factors, as well as best practices, for implementing HRIS within a multicultural environment. For this purpose, this study will identify the strategies through which HRIS culture, technological, and organizational barriers can be addressed to involve employees at a more significant level in advocacy marketing efforts.

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1.5 Contribution to the Field

The findings of this research will contribute to the literature on HRIS and EAM by providing, for the first time, a nuanced view of their interaction in culturally diverse contexts. The existing literature has elaborated on the various administrative and strategic applications of HRIS (Johnson et al., 2016; Kovach et al., 2002), but has given little attention to HRIS in its role in advocacy marketing, particularly in developing markets such as Pakistan. This gap is addressed in this study by providing actionable insights for organizations to harness the full potential of HRIS in enhancing employee engagement and brand advocacy. It further emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity, ethical practices, and targeted training in the implementation of HRIS-driven initiatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 HRIS and strategic human resource management

2.1.1 Evolution of HRIS

The development of HRIS represents broader technological changes that have revolutionized organizational management strategies over the last few decades. Initially, there was a notion to conceptualize the structure as a support for automating typical administrative tasks. Thus, these platforms were designed to incorporate payroll processing, benefits administration, and attendance recording, among other functionalities (Kovach et al., 2002). Such early systems focused on reducing manual processes, improving data accuracy, and enhancing operational efficiency. In the early stages, HRIS was primarily viewed as a cost-cutting tool and a means of ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, particularly in large organizations.

However, as organizations began to realize the power of technology in streamlining workforce management, HRIS evolved into a multifunctional tool, providing support for a range of complex human resource management functions. Johnson et al. (2016) highlight the level of development of HRIS that can be considered a strategic enabler,

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enhancing the use of features such as real-time communication tools, workforce analytics, and employee engagement tracking. This marked a shift from merely an administrative system to one that supports strategic decision-making and organizational alignment with HRIS. With the trend toward data-driven insights and ever-increasing expectations for agility from HR functions, HRIS has become an important strategic tool in SHRM. Modern HRIS platforms are integral to talent management, performance management, and organizational culture. They provide the entire spectrum of managing an employee's life cycle from recruitment and onboarding to training and performance management. Additionally, workforce planning, succession management, and employee development capabilities have been integrated into HRIS systems, providing HR leaders with tools to manage human capital in support of organizational objectives (Johnson et al., 2016).

2.1.2 Strategic Capabilities of HRIS

Modern HRIS systems generate strategic capabilities by delivering actionable insights through the application of data analytics. It enables HR managers to monitor and track key performance indicators, such as employee engagement levels, turnover rates, and training session outcomes, on a data-driven basis (Wang, 2024) . HRIS analytics can identify trends in employee behavior; therefore, organizations can implement targeted interventions to address potential challenges, such as low engagement or a high turnover rate (Yona & Meilani, 2024).

Moreover, HRIS software tools enable automation of fundamental HR functions such as onboarding, training, and benefits administration. These automated processes not only enhance operational efficiency but also ensure that employees receive fair and personalized experiences. For instance, an HRIS system can offer customized training aimed at achieving organizational strategic goals, equipping workers with the necessary knowledge and skills to operate effectively in their roles. This is where the ability stands out, since advocacy initiatives mainly require

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consistent and aligned messaging while working towards common organizational objectives and goals (Johnson et al., 2016).

It also plays a strategic role in performance management by tracking the progress of employees in line with specific goals set, providing immediate feedback, and constant development. Since the data to be tracked will always be linked to broader organizational objectives, HRIS ensures HR leaders can track employees who are contributing to the organization's success through meaningful contributions. Linking HRIS to performance management processes is essential to help organizations foster employees' engagement and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement.

2.1.3 HRIS in Multinational Organizations

Joyce et al. (2024) explain that HRIS systems enable customization according to the needs of different markets, allowing an organization to stay in line with all cultural complexities while maintaining consistency in its HR practices. This adaptability is crucial in the context of a country like Pakistan, where the organizational structure and employee expectations differ significantly from those in the Western markets (Ho & Astakhova, 2020). Localization capabilities are one of the most valuable strengths of HRIS, as they enable organizations to tailor their HR practices to accommodate local norms, legal requirements, and cultural expectations.

In addition to localization, the HRIS can help multinationals manage talent globally with consistent performance management. Providing HR leaders with an employee database that enables the organization to make better-informed decisions regarding workforce planning, talent development, and succession management is highly imperative for multinationals, where such alignment is crucial in the global HR strategy alongside local operations.

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2.2 Employee Advocacy Marketing: Concepts and Mechanisms

2.2.1 Core Principles of EAM

EAM is based on the notion that employees, through their insider status, can bring authenticity and credibility that traditional channels may not. Here, employees can leverage their personal networks and professional connections to disseminate information about organizational values, products, or services, thereby enhancing visibility, trustworthiness, and engagement (Hien & Nhu, 2022).

EAM ensures that employees' values align with the organization's mission and goals, fostering a sense of pride and ownership among employees and encouraging them to participate in advocacy initiatives. When employees appreciate the alignment of their organizational values, they are more likely to engage in advocacy activities, share positive messages about the organization, and promote its products or services among their networks (Lee & Kim, 2020). Moreover, EAM initiatives enhance organizational culture by providing employees with opportunities for a greater connection to the brand. By participating in advocacy programs, employees become more attached to the organization's mission and values, which can lead to increased job satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement among team members.

2.2.2 Mechanisms of EAM

Communication, training, and measurement represent three critical mechanisms that often lead to ineffective EAM initiatives.

- **Communication:**

It is essential to ensure that employees understand the objectives of advocacy programs and their intended contributions to achieving these objectives through clear and consistent communication. Organizations must provide employees with access to resources such as pre-approved content, social media guidelines, and real-time feedback to encourage their involvement (Thomas, 2020). Adequate and proper communication ensures that employees

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understand how they can contribute to achieving the goals of an advocacy program. Additionally, communication must be two-way, enabling employees to share their feedback and experiences, which will help improve the program over time.

- **Training:**

Another essential part of EAM is training. HRIS-based training programs enable targeted and specific training for specific skills and knowledge, enabling employees to communicate effectively for advocacy initiatives. Such modules can range from teaching brand messaging, social media etiquette, and audience engagement strategies, among others (Yona & Meilani, 2024). All these will thus allow employees to communicate professionally and authentically in their representative capacity. Additionally, HRIS systems can offer employees ongoing training and development in new advocacy strategies and tools.

- **Measurement:**

Measures will be crucial to assess the effect of EAM activities and identify where they need improvement. HRIS can track employee participation rates, campaign reach, and audience engagement, among other metrics that can help the organization gain insight into the need for strategic readjustment in its strategy (Hien & Nhu, 2022). It enables organizations to determine which strategies are most effective and adjust them accordingly to improve their campaigns. Measurement also enables organizations to demonstrate the benefits of EAM to stakeholders, such as senior management and investors, by highlighting the tangible implications of advocacy for brand awareness, customer loyalty, and revenue growth.

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2.3 Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations in Advocacy Marketing

2.3.1 Influence of Cultural Dynamics

The key success factor of EAM initiatives in a society like Pakistan is cultural sensitivity, especially when that society is very diverse and hierarchical. Organizational behavior in these societies is shaped by collectivist values, respect for authority, and the importance of maintaining group harmony (Ho & Astakhova, 2020) . In collectivist cultures, workers may be motivated more by the interests of the group or organization than by personal recognition or rewards. The consideration of cultural dynamics in the design of EAM initiatives involves ensuring that employees feel comfortable and motivated to participate.

According to Hien and Nhu (2022) , cultural barriers must be addressed to make advocacy programs effective. For instance, delivering localized content or culturally appropriate training may enable employees to participate in advocacy activities without fear or hesitation. Collectivist cultures would focus on group rather than individual advantages, like supporting the organization or a collective cause.

2.3.2 Ethical Considerations in EAM

Designing and implementing EAM initiatives raises equivalent ethical issues. Participating employees must feel that their involvement is by choice, respecting their individual and cultural values. Ethical EAM efforts ensure the visibility of a plan to achieve program goals, providing awareness of why a particular individual was selected and their involvement is necessary for the project.

HRIS should prioritize transparency, opt-in processes, and effective feedback loops. This ensures that participation in EAM, being optional and aligned with values, creates positive and ethical responses that enhance employees' engagement and trust in their organizations.

2.4 HRIS and EAM Integration

2.4.1 Enhancing EAM through HRIS

EAM provides distinct advantages from the standpoint of HRIS, as all three communication, analytics, and training are embedded into a single package. According to Hien and Nhu (2022), HRIS can pick top advocates and campaigns specifically for given demographics, as well as tracking effectiveness in advocacy programs. Analysis of data through HRIS helps organizations identify those who will best contribute in terms of employee advocacy.

HRIS can support the delivery of customized content and training to facilitate employee engagement with advocacy initiatives, ensuring that they receive the relevant resources. Additionally, HRIS can track employee participation and engagement in any campaign launched by an organization, providing valuable insights into its success.

2.4.2 Addressing Barriers to EAM

These often include barriers, such as lower technological literacy or resistance to change, which can be mitigated by using HRIS systems with user-friendly and accessible interfaces, as well as providing training courses tailored to these needs (Wang, 2024). In such a case, an organization can eliminate the barriers that prevent employees from actively participating in advocacy processes and thereby ensure the success of its EAM programs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative approach as recommended to seek in-depth analyses of what the employees believe, feel, or experience concerning HR practices in the multinational organizations and to extract the intricate linkages between HRIS capabilities and employee advocacy towards cultural concerns within a non-Western setting.

3.1 Research Design

The research adopts an exploratory qualitative research design to understand how HRIS supports employee advocacy marketing in Pakistan.

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The research design has been chosen because it can reveal the subtle nuances of employee experiences and organizational dynamics, as well as their broader cultural influences (Mir et al., 2002) . The exploratory nature of the research is well-suited to fill the gaps in the existing literature and provide new insights into the role of HRIS in employee-driven marketing efforts, particularly within a culturally diverse environment.

The study focuses on multinational firms based in Pakistan, as these companies often utilize state-of-the-art human resource (HR) technologies and operate within multicultural settings. Multinational organizations are suitable for this research, as they present a challenge to integrating global HR practices with local cultural norms and remain an interesting area of research for the integration of HRIS in employee advocacy marketing.

3.2 Sampling

We used a purposive sampling technique to ensure that participants have experience of using HRIS and direct involvement in advocacy initiatives. The sample size consisted of 20 participants, with 10 from each of the managerial and non-managerial employee groups, to capture perceptions, experiences, and challenges at both hierarchical levels. It was expected that managerial employees would provide a strategic view of HRIS and advocacy initiatives. In contrast, non-managerial employees would give insights into the operational and experiential aspects of these systems.

3.3 Data Collection

The data was gathered through focus group discussions, as this approach allows opportunities to explore both collective and divergent perspectives (Mir et al., 2002). There were two focus group sessions. One was conducted with managerial employees, and the other with non-managerial employees. The segregation ensured that participants felt free to share their views without the hierarchical constraints of the discussion. In a focus group setting, sometimes power dynamics can

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affect the flow of conversation when participants are at different organizational levels.

The focus groups were conducted in a neutral setting to eliminate bias. The discussions were recorded with the respondents' permission, and later transcribed for analysis. Respondents were briefed on the research objectives and assured confidentiality so that they could give honest, open responses.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents findings from focus group interviews conducted with managerial and non-managerial employees working within multinational organizations in Pakistan. The data is analyzed using NVivo, which facilitates the identification of various themes and sub-themes emerging across different responses. Using a thematic approach, an in-depth discussion with participants was conducted to assess how important they perceive HRIS in terms of employee advocacy marketing. The further elaboration on each theme provides a clear understanding of the inferences drawn from it.



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4.1 Awareness and Understanding

4.1.1 Understanding of Employee Advocacy Marketing

Employee advocacy marketing involves enabling employees to promote the organization's values, products, and services through their personal networks. The employee further elaborated on this, citing the example of a KFC manager:

Employee advocacy marketing involves sharing the company's brand message through employees' social media or word-of-mouth, building trust, and extending the company's reach.

This view highlights the strategic position employees hold as advocates or ambassadors of the company brand. Other management respondents identified advocacy marketing as instrumental in capitalizing on the trustworthiness of employees to increase organizational trust and loyalty. This is similar to the insights from Lee and Kim (2020) and Hien and Nhu (2022), who found employee advocacy to be an important motivator of trust and organization visibility. One respondent commented:

When employees are advocates for their organization, it humanizes the brand, making it more relatable and trustworthy.

Non-managerial employees shared the same views but less detailed. A non-managerial employee described it as:

Promoting the organization's brand through personal networks, enhancing reach and trust.

However, non-managerial employees often confuse advocacy marketing with regular promotional efforts, a sign of possible lack of awareness and training. For instance, one participant mentioned:

I thought it was just about sharing posts or forwarding company updates, but I'm now learning it involves more structured efforts.

Ammupriya and Subrahmanyam (2023) suggest structured training programs to address these gaps, particularly for non-managerial employees. Both groups agree that employee advocacy strengthens

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organizational identity and fosters employee belonging within the organization. Joyce et al. (2024) also suggest consistent training to bring the efforts of employees in line with the organizational goals. A non-management employee added:

If we were taught exactly how to align our social media with the company's message, it would feel more meaningful and less like a task.

4.1.2 Familiarity with HRIS Functionalities

The managerial staff were highly confident about the functionalities offered by the HRIS, especially those related to employee data management, payroll processing, and performance tracking. One of them mentioned:

I am well-exposed to using HRIS for managing benefits, tracking performance, and accessing real-time data. It is integral to our operations.

According to Kovach et al. (2002), this is an indication of the administrative and strategic capabilities of HRIS. Managerial respondents indicated that HRIS enables focused communication and simplifies advocacy campaigns through the centralization of employee-focused functions. Yona and Meilani (2024) opined that HRIS is becoming a tactical method of assimilating the activities of employees with those of the organizations. Another manager said,

HRIS is not just an administrative tool; it is a strategic asset for advocacy, helping us align employee efforts with the organization's goals.

Non-managerial employees, however, were only somewhat aware. While they acknowledged the use of HRIS for standard HR activities, such as accessing payroll, many did not know how to effectively leverage the tool to support advocacy work. A non-managerial employee commented:

I primarily use HRIS for checking my leave balances and performance tracking, but I have no idea how it supports advocacy programs.

According to Janath et al. (2023) , these inequalities in awareness

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represent the need for training initiatives that make HRIS functions familiar to all types of employees. Another participant further suggested: ***More workshops on HRIS should be organized, particularly on how it relates to advocacy marketing.***

This recommendation aligns with Wang (2024) in emphasizing the importance of training initiatives in maximizing the utility of HRIS in organizational context.

4.1.3 HRIS's Role in Advocacy Initiatives

The two groups recognized HRIS as a key enabler of advocacy programs. Managerial employees pointed out the following reasons:

- Ease of accessing employee information
- Allowing effective communication to targeted areas
- Simplifying mechanisms for engagement

A manager said:

HRIS enables us to identify those who have a solid social network and whose advocacy activities are directed towards organizational goals.

Thomas (2020) supports this through the strategic benefits of utilizing HRIS in finding and engaging good key employee advocates. Non-managerial employees appreciated HRIS since it would help centralize communication and provide training resources. As one respondent noted: ***The platform makes it easier to stay informed about advocacy initiatives and access resources, such as training modules.***

The above perceptions align with the findings of Wahyono and Riani (2024), which emphasize the importance of employee involvement through accessible and centralized resources within the HRIS. However, some non-managerial employees mentioned that there should be friendlier interfaces to increase participation and engagement, as noted in this comment from an employee:

Sometimes, it feels like navigating through a million tabs to find the most relevant advocacy information.

Van Camp (2022) notes that simplifying HRIS interfaces can significantly

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improve user engagement, particularly among non-managerial staff.

4.2 Barriers to Participation

4.2.1 Challenges Faced

Time constraints, unawareness, and undertraining were challenges mentioned by both groups. This result aligns with the findings by Ho and Astakhova (2020), indicating that time management is one of the key issues. Non-managerial staff members also identified several issues, including unclear goals for the programs and unattractive incentives. Cultural resistance was mentioned several times, as one respondent mentioned:

Some employees may be hesitant to post content on social media due to personal or cultural reasons.

Hien and Nhu (2022) emphasize the importance of overcoming cultural barriers to enhance employee engagement in advocacy programs. Another employee further added:

We are sometimes unsure if sharing some content aligns with our personal values or social norms.

These findings are similar to those of King et al. (2020), who indicate that the dynamics of culture play a role in influencing employee behavior. This result indicates that both individual and organizational factors influence employee participation in advocacy programs. Moreover, a non-managerial employee mentioned:

It is hard to be motivated when advocacy does not seem to be a priority for leadership.

4.2.2 HRIS Solutions to Address Challenges

Participants offered various ways through which HRIS could mitigate issues. Managerial employees suggested the following:

- Pre-approved social media content and content calendars
- Automated reminders to encourage participation
- Gamification to make advocacy interesting

Non-managerial employees emphasized the need for accessible training

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modules and user-friendly tools. A participant stated the following:

HRIS can provide tutorials and workshops on advocacy strategy. That would make it easy for people to contribute.

Johnson et al. (2016) believe that such programs can significantly increase employee engagement by making complex systems more transparent and less mysterious. Another employee suggested:

Adding a feature that allows employees to share their challenges or ideas would be helpful.

The above recommendation aligns with the opinion of Yona and Meilani (2024), who discuss how incorporating mechanisms for employee feedback into HRIS will impact organizational culture. These solutions can be viewed through the lens of utilizing HRIS capabilities to create a support environment for advocacy marketing.

4.3 HRIS Features and Functionalities

4.3.1 Useful Features

Managerial employees viewed the most beneficial HRIS feature as employee engagement tracking, followed by communication tools and performance analytics. One of them said:

The analytics dashboard provides insights into employee participation and campaign effectiveness, which helps us fine-tune our strategies.

According to this observation, Johnson et al. (2016) argue that analytics play a crucial role in optimizing HRIS for strategic purposes. Non-managerial employees highly appreciated communication portals and training modules as being accessible and user-friendly. Both groups shared the view that these features increase the efficiency and effectiveness of advocacy activities. According to Yona and Meilani (2024), accessible training modules are essential for employee engagement. An employee narrates:

The training modules are quite accessible while simultaneously portraying to me what is expected of us in the advocacy programs.

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4.3.2 Suggested Enhancements

Improvements to HRIS capabilities were a universal theme in all discussions. Managerial employees proposed incorporating advanced analytics and social media tools to enable real-time tracking and measurement of impact. One manager said,

Advanced analytics would enable us to measure the return on investment (ROI) of advocacy programs more precisely.

This suggestion aligns with the recommendations of Kovach et al. (2002) for integrating advanced technological features into HRIS. Non-managerial employees recommended integrating AI-driven content recommendations and real-time feedback mechanisms. One of the participants remarked:

AI could help personalize content for advocacy campaigns, making them more relevant and engaging.

Thomas (2020) also highlighted the potential of AI in tailoring advocacy efforts to the strengths of individual employees, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the program. One participant suggested adding tools for automated compliance checks, which is consistent with recommendations by Ammupriya and Subrahmanyam (2023).

These insights underscore the need for continuous innovation in HRIS design to meet the changing needs of organizations and employees (Johnson et al., 2016; Wang, 2024).

4.3.3 Tracking and measuring advocacy impact

Both groups confirmed the function of HRIS in monitoring the impact of the advocacy effort. Employee participation rates, campaign reach, and engagement levels were frequently cited measures, but everyone consistently complained that it is far from sophisticated. One managerial employee summed it up:

While the current metrics are helpful, more profound insights into social media engagement and conversion rates would provide a more comprehensive view of program success.

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Another participant said:

A graphical representation of data, such as graphs and heat-maps, might make the impact analysis more intuitive.

These findings support Joyce et al. (2024) suggestions for better data visualization to be used in decision-making for advocacy programs. Kovach et al. (2002) further note that to track ROI effectively, advanced data analysis tools should be incorporated into HRIS.

4.3.4 Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations

Participants emphasized the need to conduct advocacy marketing in an ethical and culturally appropriate manner. Managerial employees indicated that their organizations accomplished this by doing the following:

- Clearly defined guidelines
- Providing cultural sensitivity training
- Monitoring advocacy content for conformity

Non-managerial employees underscored the need for periodic revisions in their policies and increased transparency. One of the participants elaborated:

Clear guidelines and regular training would ensure that our advocacy practices align with the culture.

This finding aligns with Lee and Kim (2020), who emphasize the importance of cultural fit in promoting employee engagement. Moreover, Opatha and Dooradarshani (2024) suggest that localized characteristics be integrated into HRIS to account for regional differences in cultural and ethical standards. Another employee noted:

Cultural training sessions help us understand the dos and dont's of advocacy in a diverse environment.

4.5 Success Stories

Participants shared stories of success, highlighting HRIS's capabilities in advocacy marketing. A managerial employee narrated:

Using HRIS, we implemented an advocacy program that improved

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engagement by 25%. The analytics and feedback tools within the system proved crucial to this achievement.

This is exemplified in Johnson et al. (2016) , which highlighted the strategic relevance of advocacy programs being driven by data. Non-managerial employees further supported this assertion through their testimony regarding how HRIS-driven programs helped improve brand recognition. As noted by one participant:

Our HRIS helped us streamline training and communication for the past advocacy campaign, resulting in significant employee involvement.

This is supported by Thomas (2020) , who argued that streamlined HRIS tools are a factor in employee advocacy. Another participant provided an example, which suggests that the successful integration of HRIS features can yield measurable outcomes, as noted by Wahyono and Riani (2024).

4.6 Managerial vs. Non-Managerial Perspectives

The comparison between managerial and non-managerial employees revealed nuanced differences in several dimensions, highlighting the disparate priorities and problems faced by the two groups.

- Awareness and understanding:

Managerial employees had a deep appreciation for HRIS functionality, often accompanied by descriptions of its strategic applications. They were quick to emphasize how HRIS can be utilized in activities such as targeted communication, data-driven decision-making, and aligning advocacy with organizational goals. For example, a managerial participant related:

HRIS enables us to measure employee engagement metrics effectively, allowing us to build more effective advocacy campaigns.

On the contrary, non-managing employees had low awareness levels; their understanding typically focused only on payroll or leave management administration. One such non-managing employee remarked,

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For me, HRIS is just a tool to check my attendance and salary slips; I did not realize it could help with advocacy.

These differences underscore the need for training programs tailored to the specific needs and knowledge gaps of various employee groups.

- **Barriers to Participation:**

Non-managerial employees often cited cultural resistance and lack of incentives as major obstacles. Many were reluctant to share company content on personal platforms because they felt it was not in line with their personal values or social norms. A non-managerial respondent said:

I feel uncomfortable posting company updates on my social media because they don't align with my identity.

In contrast, the managerial staff identified time constraints and the lack of integration between HRIS and workflows as the most significant barriers. A manager once commented:

We often find ourselves too busy with operational activities to actively engage in advocacy efforts, even when we recognize their value.

Both groups felt that HRIS should be able to simplify advocacy processes through enhancements, such as automated reminders and gamified engagement tools.

- **Engagement Strategies:**

Managerial employees proposed that advocacy programs align with organizational key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure continuous engagement. They further proposed that the tasks involved in advocacy be integrated into existing workflows, thereby making participation smoother and more rewarding. For instance, a manager said:

If advocacy activities were linked to performance appraisals or recognition programs, it would motivate employees across all

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levels.

Non-management employees still wanted direct incentives, such as rewards or recognition. One participant pointed out:

When we see tangible benefits, such as bonuses or shout-outs in meetings, it encourages us to be more actively involved.

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Ethical Concerns:**

Most often, managerial employees discussed the strategic role of HRIS in relation to compliance with ethical and cultural norms. In this regard, they appreciated the inclusion of content moderation and training modules on cultural sensitivity. A managerial respondent explained:

HRIS can standardize guidelines and provide real-time checks to ensure advocacy remains culturally appropriate.

Non-managerial employees stated that support must be localized and that expectations about advocacy should be communicated clearly. One participant said:

If HRIS could offer some examples or templates tailored to our regional audience that would surely help us navigate the cultural challenge much better.

5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the role of HRIS in supporting EAM within the organizational and cultural environment of multinational corporations in Pakistan. Through the focus group discussions, this research demonstrates how HRIS can serve as a crucial bridge between operational effectiveness and strategic employee activation.

5.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

Double vision of HRIS by employees is one of the most important implications of this study. Managerial employees view HRIS as an organizational alignment-facilitating tool that enhances advocacy through advanced features, such as real-time monitoring, communication tools, and analytics-driven insights (Johnson et al., 2016; Kovach et al.,

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2002) . This aligns with the existing literature, which highlights the revolutionary nature of HRIS in enabling strategic human resource management.

In contrast, non-managerial personnel perceive HRIS as a transactional system that is rarely used in routine administrative tasks, such as payroll and attendance tracking. Their limited exposure to the broader applications of HRIS is a significant gap that must be addressed through targeted training and capacity-building programs (Opatha & Dooradarshani, 2023) . Such a perception gap presents a challenge to organizations seeking comprehensive engagement in advocacy activities, underscoring the importance of systems that benefit workers at all organizational levels.

A crucial outcome of this study is also the impact of societal and cultural norms on the adoption and success of HRIS-based EAM. The collectivistic culture in Pakistan, combined with vertical organizational structures, present unique challenges for advancing advocacy programs (Hakro et al., 2021) . For example, employees may regard advocacy activities as incongruent with their values or societal norms if such activities lack local relevance (Hien & Nhu, 2022) . Local content-based HRIS, region-specific training modules, and compliance check tools can help address these issues and make the advocacy programs employee-centric at both personal and cultural levels (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Technological challenges, such as low digital literacy and complex interfaces, also discourage the use of HRIS amongst non-managerial employees. Simplifying the user interface, incorporating gamification elements, and offering continuous training were identified as feasible solutions for enhancing usability and engagement. Based on Yona and Meilani (2024) , human-centered design methodologies must become a priority to best leverage the potential of HRIS in promoting advocacy marketing.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Enhancing HRIS Functionalities

Organizations need to invest in the development of HRIS platforms with sophisticated analytics, real-time feedback loops, and automated workflows. These enable organizations to monitor advocacy efforts, quantify their impact, and correlate them with key performance indicators (KPIs). For example, dashboards that provide visual insights into employee engagement and campaign results can help managers make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and strategy improvement (Johnson et al., 2016).

6.2 Addressing Cultural Sensitivities

In multicultural settings, such as Pakistan, it is crucial to develop advocacy programs that are sensitive to local values and norms. HRIS systems can help achieve this by incorporating culturally relevant training modules and providing region- and employee-specific content. For instance, advocacy campaigns highlighting collective gains and organizational cohesion are more likely to appeal to employees in collectivist cultures (Hakro et al., 2021).

6.3 Promoting Inclusivity and Engagement

Organizations can utilize HRIS to create an environment where all employees feel appreciated and empowered at every level. Features like gamified engagement tools, individualized communication, and appreciation programs can inspire employees to be actively engaged in advocacy campaigns. For example, gamified features such as leaderboards and badges can promote a sense of accomplishment and constructive rivalry among employees (Hien & Nhu, 2022).

6.4 Bridging Knowledge Gaps

Targeted training programs are critical for addressing the knowledge gaps identified in this study. Organizations must ensure that non-managerial employees understand the strategic relevance of HRIS and their role in advocacy marketing. This can be achieved through regular

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workshops, online training modules, and mentorship programs that equip employees with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate HRIS platforms effectively (Thomas, 2020).

6.5 Streamlining Communication

HRIS should be used as a central channel of communication for employees. These sites will provide the necessary advocacy tools and pre-approved content. Real-time updates should be sent automatically to encourage the regular participation of employees in advocacy initiatives. Moreover, the two-way communication feature facilitates the sharing of employees' feedback and suggestions, making them feel part of the system (Kovach et al., 2002).

7. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this research provides important insights, it also opens avenues for future exploration:

7.1 Quantitative Impact Analysis

Future studies may employ quantitative approaches to measure the impact of HRIS advocacy marketing on organizational performance indicators, including employee engagement, brand awareness, and customer loyalty.

7.2 Incorporation of New Technologies

The role of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, in HRIS design should be further explored. These technologies can enhance HRIS functionalities by enabling predictive analytics, personalized content recommendations, and automated decision-making, ultimately improving advocacy outcomes (Wang, 2024).

7.3 Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Comparative studies on the adoption and effectiveness of advocacy for HRIS in diverse cultural and organizational settings may provide insight into the factors that contribute to employee engagement.

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