

The Impact of Digital Human Resource Practices on Employee Development in the Banking Sector in Sri Lanka

Dayananda H.H.R.N.¹, Anuja Raveenther^{2*}

Department of Business and Management Studies, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary human resource management, increasing attention has been directed toward the role of digital transformation in shaping employee development. The banking sector in Sri Lanka is characterized by high competitiveness and a strong reliance on technology, rendering employee skills and adaptability essential for organizational success. This study investigates the impact of Digital Human Resource Practices (DHRPs) on employee development, concentrating on the dimensions of Digital Recruitment and Digital Onboarding, with Performance Management and Competence Development identified as key outcomes within the banking sector of Sri Lanka. The research employs a quantitative design and collects data from 229 employees across five major banks using a stratified random sampling technique. A structured self-administered questionnaire was utilized for data collection, and SPSS (version 27.0) was employed for data analysis. Statistical methods, including descriptive analysis, correlation, and multiple regression, were applied to test the hypotheses. The findings reveal that DHRPs significantly positively impact employee development, with both digital recruitment and onboarding contributing robustly to performance management and competence development. These results indicate that the effective implementation of digital HR practices enhances employees' skills, motivation, and confidence, ultimately bolstering organizational performance. This study contributes to the human resource management literature by validating the relevance of the Technology Acceptance Model, Human Capital Theory, and the AMO Framework within the context of digital banking. The practical implications emphasize the necessity for banking institutions to integrate digital HR practices into their strategic frameworks to foster a skilled and motivated workforce.

Keywords: Digital Human Resource Practices, Employee Development, Digital Recruitment, Digital Onboarding, Performance Management.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are increasingly adopting digital tools and systems to enhance their business functions. Consequently, Human Resource Management (HRM) has undergone significant transformation through the integration of digital technologies. Digital Human Resource Practices (DHRPs) offer innovative approaches to support continuous learning, skill enhancement, and career growth. The banking sector, which relies heavily on skilled human capital, is actively embracing these technologies to improve internal efficiency. The banking sector has experienced a major transformation due to rapid technological advancements, which have reshaped the majority of banking operations, including the conduct of Human Resource (HR) functions and the training of employees. HR departments within banks increasingly depend on technology to assist in the management of their workforce (Gospel Onyebuchi Okoro, 2024). In the rapidly evolving technological landscape of the modern world, organizations are shifting toward greater integration of digital solutions in their core operations, especially in HRM. DHRPs encompass the application of digital technologies to implement, support, and enhance HR tasks such as recruitment, onboarding, training and development, performance management, and employee engagement (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). Globalization has further accelerated this integration, facilitating rapid communication and connection among people in the business realm. As a result, Digital Human Resource Management (DHRM) has gained prominence over Traditional Human Resource Practices (THRMPs) due to the heightened demands placed on modern organizations. Most firms rely on effective DHRPs to enhance overall performance. Therefore, HR departments must embrace digital transformation and revise their policies to align

with contemporary digital trends (Varadaraj & Al Wadi, 2021). The significance of DHRM extends beyond merely improving internal operations; it has broader implications for individuals, organizations, society, and the economy as a whole. DHRM facilitates easier access to learning and development opportunities, thereby enabling employees to enhance their skills in a rapidly changing work environment (Dachner et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

The issue of employee development and digital human resource practices has garnered significant attention across various fields; however, there remains a substantial gap in understanding these concepts specifically within the banking sector. This study aims to address the critical gaps identified in the existing literature and practice concerning digitalization in human resource management (HRM), a topic that has attracted global interest due to the rise of automation, artificial intelligence, and big data technologies. Several researchers have explored the impact of digital HR practices on organizational effectiveness and individual performance, establishing a positive correlation with outcomes such as productivity, innovation, and efficiency (Halid et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the relationship between digital HR practices and employee development remains complex and insufficiently understood.

Previous studies highlight the significance of digital HR tools. For instance, Gospel Onyebuchi Okoro (2024) emphasizes that e-learning platforms and virtual training modules play a crucial role in skill-building and overall employee development. Additionally, Shiferaw and Birbisa (2025) conducted a systematic literature review demonstrating that digital HR practices facilitate continuous learning and prepare employees for future challenges in a dynamic business environment. Other researchers, including Dachner et al. (2021) and Roma Tripathi & Pooja Kushwaha (2017), have focused on how digital practices can revolutionize employee development through performance tracking and career planning. Despite these positive findings, a lack of consensus persists regarding the scope, magnitude, and contextual impact of digital HR practices on employee development. For example, while Gospel Onyebuchi Okoro (2024) identifies a strong relationship between digital HRM and employee development in Nigeria, Cooper and Kurland (2002) and Nelissen et al. (2017) note that digital development tools may lead to professional isolation, reduced informal learning, and decreased team cohesion in remote or hybrid work environments. Zhao et al. (2025) argue that the effectiveness of digital solutions is contingent upon employees' digital literacy, whereas Halid et al. (2020) suggest that user-friendly platforms can help mitigate these barriers. Such inconsistencies underline the challenges of generalizing the impact of digital HRM across different sectors, locations, and organizational contexts.

Moreover, specific areas within this field remain under-researched. While some studies have examined the relationship between organizational performance and e-HRM (Fenech et al., 2019; Halid et al., 2020), few have isolated employee development as a direct consequence of e-HR interventions. Additionally, most research has concentrated on sectors such as IT, education, and manufacturing, with limited data available from the banking sector, which operates in a highly regulated and customer-centric environment. In the Sri Lankan context, there is a noticeable lack of empirical evidence regarding employee development in relation to digital HR practices. Although the banking sector in Sri Lanka is gradually adopting digitalization, this transformation is not adequately reflected in academic literature. Existing research primarily addresses employee satisfaction, turnover intention, and general HR practices, with insufficient focus on the digitalization of HRM functions and their impact on employee development outcomes.

Research Objectives of the Study

- To assess the current level of digital human resource practices for employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.
- To examine the impact of digital recruitment on performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.
- To evaluate the effect of digital recruitment on competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.
- To analyze how digital onboarding influences performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.
- To determine the impact of digital onboarding on competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.
- To investigate how digital human resource practices affect employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Conceptualization

(Source:(Gospel Onyebuchi Okoro, 2024))

A Conceptual framework is an arrangement of ideas and relationships that facilitate the researcher throughout the study. It shows how ideas relate and gives a clear direction to study and matters. According to (Leshem & Trafford, 2007) a conceptual framework helps to show the relationship between theory and practice. It helps researchers to organize thoughts and build a strong foundation for their arguments. Without a proper framework the researcher becomes confuse. So, a well-developed conceptual framework is very important to ensure the meaningfulness of study.

Conceptual framework important to take together all the main ideas, theories, and findings from earlier research into one clear model. It helps to explain the key variables' relations. And it helps to make decisions as clear and logical. It allows others to understand how the research was developed and why decisions were made. Also, it supports the development of research hypotheses and guides the entire research design and contributes to create new knowledge.

In the literature review comprehensive literature review was conducted. It explained the meanings, dimensions, and importance of the main variables. And it covered a wide range of theories and many empirical studies that explored different factors affecting the dependent variable. It provided broad understanding of the key concepts such as digital recruitment, digital onboarding, performance management, and competence development. A conceptual framework in this study was developed based on these reviewed theories and empirical evidence.

In particular, elements of the Technology Acceptance Model developed by Davis (1989), the Resource-Based View developed by Barney (1991), and the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Framework were combined to formulate the foundation of this framework. These theories were selected because they have previously been utilized in research on digital HRM and employee development. As an example, digital tools in HR are more likely to improve development outcomes when users perceive them as useful and easy to use. Also, employees are given digital opportunities, along with the right motivation and ability, their performance and growth improve significantly. These theoretical factors have shown strong significance in influencing employee outcomes, which validates their inclusion in the framework.

Hypotheses for the study

Theories and existing literature that demonstrate the close relationship between employee development and digital HR practices provide strong support for each of the study's hypotheses. The aim of the research is to test these hypotheses. The study aims to give a better understanding of how digital HR tools help employees develop and perform better in the banking industry.

H1: Digital recruitment has a positive impact on performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.

H2: Digital recruitment significantly enhances competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

H3: Digital onboarding positively influences performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.

H4: Digital onboarding significantly impacts competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

H5: Digital human resource practices have a significant effect on employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Response Rate

A questionnaire is distributed to collect the primary data of this study. The questionnaire was given to a sample of 245 bank staff employees who were employed in chosen private and public banks in the Gampaha District. Out of 245, 229 valid responses were obtained. This accounts for an effective response rate of 93.47%, which is good in survey-based studies. Table 1 illustrates the overall response rate of the present study.

Table 1: Response Rate

No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of responses received	No. of responses considered	Effective response rate
245	229	229	93.47%

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

Additionally, the primary data set was examined for missing values through frequency analysis in SPSS. No missing values existed, and all the responses were duly entered into the software for further analysis.

Reliability Statistics

Dimension reliability and composite reliability were assessed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency. Reliability statistics are given in table 4.2.

Table 2: Reliability

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Digital Human Resource Practices	16	0.931
Employee Development	16	0.932

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

As depicted in table 2, Cronbach alpha of internal consistency coefficients of independent and dependent variables and three composite variables are greater than 0.7 indicating that multi-item measurement scales are reliable enough and have no bias.

Sampling Adequacy

Table 3: Sampling Adequacy

Variable	KMO coefficient	Bartlett's Test [chi-Square]	Sig.
Digital Human Resource Practices	0.941	1850.607	0.000
Employee Development	0.949	1798.937	0.000

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

According to the KMO coefficient more than 0.7 and the respective P values for these composite variables given in the table 3, the study sample seems statistically adequate.

Findings Of the Study

Findings of objective one

✦ To assess the current level of digital human resource practices for employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of Variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Digital Rescruitment	229	1	5	3.63	0.609
Digital onboarding	229	1	5	3.60	0.634
Performance Management	229	1	5	3.65	0.613
Competence Development	229	1	5	3.74	0.594

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

Findings of objective two

✚ To examine the impact of digital recruitment on performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka

To achieve the above objective, researcher has formulated the hypotheses and that hypotheses measured through regression analysis.

Hypotheses Testing

○ Hypothesis One:

H1: Digital recruitment has a positive impact on performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 5: Model summary table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.834 ^a	.695	.694	.33949
a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Recruitment				
b. Dependent Variable: Performance Management				

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

From the model summary, the R value is 0.834, which shows a strong positive relation between digital recruitment and performance management. This means that since digital recruitment practices improve, the level of performance management also increases significantly. This R Square value of 0.695 shows that 69% of the variation in performance management can be explained by digital recruitment, which is considered a substantial result in social science research. The remaining 31% of variation may be due to other factors not included in this model. These findings suggest that effective digital recruitment plays a major role in strengthening performance management. Therefore, banks that wish to improve performance outcomes should continue to invest in digital recruitment strategies, such as enhancing online employer branding, streamlining applicant tracking systems, and improving digital hiring processes, since these directly contribute to better employee performance management.

Findings of objective three

✚ To evaluate the effect of digital recruitment on competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

To achieve the above objective, researcher has formulated the hypotheses and that hypotheses measured through regression analysis.

○ Hypotheses two:

H2: Digital recruitment significantly enhances competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 6: Model summary table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.833 ^a	.694	.692	.32996
a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Recruitment				
b. Dependent Variable: Competence Development				

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

From the model summary table, the R value is 0.833, which indicates a strong positive relationship between digital recruitment and competence development. This means that as digital recruitment practices improve, employees' competence development also increases significantly. The R Square value of 0.694 shows that 69% of the variance in competence development can be explained by digital recruitment, which is considered a substantial finding in social science research. The remaining 31% of the variation may be attributed to other factors not included in this model. These results highlight the important role of digital recruitment in developing employees' skills and capabilities. Therefore, banks that aim to strengthen competence development should focus on improving digital recruitment methods, such as better candidate matching, using advanced applicant tracking systems, and enhancing digital assessments, as these practices strongly contribute to building employee competencies.

Findings of objective four

✚ To analyze how digital onboarding influences performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.

To achieve the above objective, researcher has formulated the hypotheses and that hypotheses measured through regression analysis.

○ Hypotheses three:

H3: Digital onboarding positively influences performance management in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 7: Model summary table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.755 ^a	.571	.569	.40305
a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Onboarding				
b. Dependent Variable: Performance Management				

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

From the model summary, the R value is 0.755, which shows a strong positive relationship between digital onboarding and performance management. This means that as digital onboarding practices improve, employee performance management also increases. The R Square value of 0.571 indicates that 57% of the variance in performance management can be explained by digital onboarding, which is a substantial proportion in social science research. The remaining 43% of variation may be attributed to other factors outside this model. These results suggest that digital onboarding plays an important role in strengthening performance management by providing clear guidance, role understanding, and feedback during the early stages of employment. Therefore, banks that wish to improve performance outcomes should continue to enhance their digital onboarding systems, such as interactive training, feedback mechanisms, and supportive integration processes, as these significantly contribute to effective performance management.

Findings of objective five

✚ To determine the impact of digital onboarding on competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

To achieve the above objective, researcher has formulated the hypotheses and that hypotheses measured through regression analysis.

○ Hypotheses four:

H4: Digital onboarding significantly impacts competence development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 8: Model summary table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.800 ^a	.641	.639	.35733
a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Onboarding				
b. Dependent Variable: Competence Development				

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

From the model summary, the R value is 0.800, which shows a strong positive relationship between digital onboarding and competence development. This means that as digital onboarding practices improve, employees' competence development also increases significantly. The R Square value of 0.641 indicates that 64% of the variance in competence development can be explained by digital onboarding, which is considered a substantial result in social science research. The remaining 36% of the variation is likely explained by other factors not included in this model. These findings suggest that digital onboarding plays a key role in building employees' skills and knowledge. Therefore, banks that seek to improve competence development should continue strengthening onboarding systems through effective digital training modules, interactive orientation programs, and continuous learning support, since these factors strongly enhance employee competence.

Findings of objective six

✚ To investigate how digital human resource practices affect employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

To achieve the above objective, researcher has formulated the hypotheses and that hypotheses measured through regression analysis.

○ Hypotheses five:

H5: Digital human resource practices have a significant effect on employee development in the banking in Sri Lanka.

Table 9: Model summary table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.873 ^a	.762	.761	.28357
a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Human Resource Practices				
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Development				

(Source: Survey Data, 2025)

From the model summary, the R value is 0.873, which indicates a very strong positive relationship between digital human resource practices and employee development. This means that as digital HR practices improve, employees' development in terms of performance management and competence growth also increases significantly. The R Square value of 0.762 shows that 76% of the variance in employee development can be explained by digital HR practices, which is a very substantial result in social science research. The remaining 24% of the variation may be influenced by other factors not included in this model. These findings strongly suggest that digital HR practices through digital recruitment and digital onboarding are key drivers of employee development in the banking sector. Therefore, organizations aiming to enhance employee outcomes should focus on strengthening digital HR systems, since improvements in these practices translate directly into higher employee performance and competence.

CONCLUSION

This research examines the impact of Digital Human Resource Practices (DHRPs) on employee development in the banking sector of Sri Lanka. The study focuses on understanding how key dimensions of DHRPs, specifically digital recruitment and digital onboarding, influence employee development outcomes, such as performance management and competence development. In light of digital transformation within the banking sector, this research aims to provide empirical evidence regarding how digital HR practices contribute to employee growth, career advancement, and organizational success in a competitive industry. A quantitative research approach was employed to achieve these objectives. Data were collected from 229 banking employees across five public and private banks in the Gampaha District using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Stratified random sampling ensured adequate representation of respondents from various job levels and banks. This methodological approach enabled a reliable and comprehensive understanding of the effects of digital HR practices on employee development within this specific regional and industrial context.

The findings of the study provide clear answers to the research questions. The results indicate that the level of digital HR practices in the Gampaha District banking sector is moderately high, suggesting that banks are progressively adopting digital systems. Digital recruitment has a notably positive effect on both performance management and competence development, implying that technology-driven recruitment procedures facilitate better employee-job fit and promote long-term development. Similarly, digital onboarding also positively influences performance management and competence development, indicating that technology-driven and formalized onboarding processes enhance confidence, motivation, and learning during the early stages of employment.

Furthermore, the overall results confirm that digital HR practices collectively have a significant positive impact on employee development. This underscores the notion that digital tools not only streamline HR functions but also enhance employee performance, skills, and adaptability. This research contributes to the field of human resource management by validating the Human Capital Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model, and the AMO Framework in the context of employee development in the digital era. It supports the argument that

employees develop most effectively when digital HR systems are perceived as useful, easy to use, and aligned with their abilities, motivation, and opportunities. By integrating digital recruitment and onboarding practices into their HR policies, banks can cultivate an efficient and future-oriented workforce. Digital human resource practices play a crucial role in shaping employee development within the banking industry of the Gampaha District. When effectively implemented, these practices enhance performance management, strengthen competence development, and contribute to employee satisfaction and organizational competitiveness. However, the study acknowledges its limitations, particularly regarding the cross-sectional design and the focus on a single district. Future research could adopt longitudinal approaches or compare findings across different regions and industries to further broaden the understanding of the impact of digital HRM practices on employee development.

Future Research Directions

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several suggestions for future research have been proposed to enhance the understanding of how digital human resource practices support employee development, particularly in the banking sector. Future researchers can build on this work by expanding both the scope and depth of investigation. One important area to explore is the examination of additional aspects of digital HR practices beyond recruitment and onboarding. For instance, digital training platforms, performance appraisal systems, HR analytics, and employee self-service portals may each exert different levels of influence on performance management and competence development. Utilizing advanced statistical models, future studies can identify which types of digital practices are most impactful for employee development in various banking contexts. Given the limitations of a cross-sectional design, future studies would benefit from a longitudinal approach. A long-term study would help trace how employee development changes over time as banks continue to expand their digital HR systems. For example, repeated surveys or time-series analysis could reveal whether digital onboarding has lasting effects on competence development or if its influence diminishes after the first year of employment. Longitudinal studies would provide a clearer picture of how digital HR practices contribute to continuous learning, motivation, and career growth in the long run.

Cross-cultural research also presents a promising opportunity. Since employee attitudes toward digital tools and HR systems may be influenced by cultural expectations, comparing data across districts in Sri Lanka or even between countries could offer valuable insights. For instance, banks in highly urbanized areas may exhibit stronger acceptance of digital systems compared to rural banks, while cultural attitudes toward authority and technology could shape how employees engage with digital HR practices. Such comparisons could reveal patterns unique to particular cultural or organizational settings. Future research could also focus on the role of organizational support mechanisms in enhancing the impact of digital HR practices. Factors such as leadership style, mentoring programs, feedback culture, and recognition systems may act as mediators or moderators in the relationship between digital practices and employee development. Advanced analyses such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) could be used to test how these factors either increase or reduce the effectiveness of digital HR practices. This would help banks create a balanced digital work environment where technology is supported by strong, human-centered HR policies. Researchers may also consider combining quantitative and qualitative methods for a richer understanding. While surveys can measure statistical relationships, interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into employees' real experiences with digital HR systems. This mixed-methods approach could uncover hidden challenges or opportunities that numbers alone may not elucidate, giving future research both breadth and depth.

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Authors

1. **First Author** – Dayananda H.H.R.N , B.Sc in HRM, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka
2. **Second Author** – Anuja Raveenther, M.Sc in Management, PhD (Reading), Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, ranuja1235@gmail.com/anujar@esn.ac.lk
3. **Correspondence Author** – Anuja Raveenther , ranuja1235@gmail.com/anujar@esn.ac.lk, +94763545550