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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-HRM PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY AND SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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## Abstract

Electronic Human Resource Management (E-HRM) is an act of improving the HRM functions to create dynamic and operational capabilities and contributes greatly on organizational performance. This paper examines the relationship between E-HRM practices, organizational agility, sustainable competitive advantage and organizational performance. We conduct a large scale survey of 317 SMEs in Thailand. Data analysis was performed using Pearson correlation analysis, multiple hierarchical regression techniques and structural equation modelling. Results of the study suggest that organizational agility mediates the influence of E-HRM practices on organizational performance. The study also found that E-HRM practices indirectly through sustainable competitive advantage influences organizational performance. The findings suggest the key organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage include speed, responsiveness, flexibility, competency, operational effectiveness, relational effectiveness, and strategic effectiveness. Through finding this paper contributes to the emerging literature on E-HRM and has practical implication for organization adapting to achieve organizational performance.

**Keywords:** E-HRM Practices, Organizational Agility, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Organizational Performance

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## **Introduction**

Today, many organizations are facing sustainable in a dynamic and unpredictable environment. The highly competitive environment challenges in strategic role of creating new value for innovation in technology and the modern methods (Aamer et al., 2020; Rijkers et al., 2014; Abraham et al., 2019). Globalization is an important factor that influences organizations that compete for customers with high expectations in performance, quality and low cost (Nivlouei, 2014; Friedman, 2007).

In the current decade, information technology has influenced in all parts of the organization. Information technology plays an important role in sustainable competitive advantage and perfect view to their resources, especially human resources (Mosahkani et al., 2011). Organizations can use of information technology systems for the management of HR process through some practices as knowledge management effectively. E- HRM has become an important strategy to support strategic decisions to enhance sustainable competitive advantage (Alameeri et al., 2020; Emeagwal & Ogbonmwan, 2018; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2020).

As the technological systems of E-HRM can help organizations improving of cost savings, efficiency, flexible services and employee's participation. Organizations are recognizing the importance of E- HRM in order to attract and retain the existing professional employees (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Alaali et al., 2021; Alsuwaidi et al., 2020). Organizational agility is a firm's ability of an organization's human resources to the survival of business environment in the way that create competitive advantage that help organization to enhance agility in E-HRM (Shill et al., 2012; Hamidianpour et al., 2016; Saha et al., 2017).

However, regardless of the important role of E- HRM Practices in enhancing organizational performance, there is a lack of empirical studies that link E- HRM to organizational performance via organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Shamout et al., 2022).

This paper is arranged wherein next section presents theory and hypotheses. Section 3 and Section 4 deal with methods and results followed by discussion, implications and limitations of the study in Section 5.

## **Literature Reviews**

### **E-HRM Practices and Organizational Performance**

E- HRM is defined as “ The planning, implementation and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities” (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009; Strohmeier, 2007). Further, E- HRM can develop and integrate between competencies of HRM duties and information technologies to manager and employee (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2020; Sagum, 2015). E-HRM Practice activities such as E-Recruitment & E-Selection, E-Training & Development, E-Compensation, E-Performance Appraisal and E-Communication (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Al-kasasbeh et al., 2016; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Shamout et al., 2022; Winarto, 2018).

E- HRM had adopted to run faster the HR function as technological tools to enhance its performance. E- HRM implementation can develop organization efficiency, effectiveness, financial capability etc. As a result of that E-HRM can improve organizational performance (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Khashman & Al-Ryalat, 2015). Several past studies suggest that E-HRM has a significant positive impact on organizational performance (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Masum et al., 2020; Al-kasasbeh et al., 2016; Alrawashdeh et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 1 ( H1) . E- HRM Practices is positively associated with Organizational Performance.

### **E-HRM Practices and Organizational Agility**

Today, Information technology has made organization have comprehensive and perfect view to their resources, especially human resources (Mosahkani et al., 2011). Agility can survival and growth of the organization in business environment that help organization to enhance agility is electronic human resource management through effective rapid response to changes and creating products, services and processes based on customer desire (Hamidianpour et al., 2016; Govuzela & Mafini (2019)

E-HRM as a competitive solution for business and it can be aligned to the organization's strategic choices. E-HRM can be more flexible, cost-effective and more strategic for management of all processes, activities, data and required information (Srivastava, 2010; Pratheepan & Arulrajah, 2012; Stone & Lukaszewski, 2009). Several past studies suggest that E-HRM has a significant positive impact on organizational agility (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Hamidianpour et al., 2016; Ebrahim, 2021).

Hypothesis 2 (H2). E-HRM Practices is positively associated with Organizational Agility.

### **E-HRM Practices and Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

A successful organization includes Information Technology tools, the modern methods of conducting business as well as the moving towered sustainable, effort and cost in the organization to minimize the cost of HR practices (Ghazzawi et al., 2014). E-HRM can help the potential to affect both efficiency and effectiveness of HRM. Efficiency can be affected by reducing resource and creation of HR service quality in an organization to increase its value. Effectiveness can be affected by upgrade the capabilities of both managers and employees to make better, timelier decisions in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Lengnick-Hall & Moritz, 2003; Rangarao & Raju, 2014; Alkalha et al., 2012; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021) Several past studies suggest that E-HRM practices has a significant positive impact on sustainable competitive advantage (Shamout et al., 2022; Alkhodary, 2021). Battour et al. (2021) found that HRM strategies impact on sustainable competitive advantage.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). E-HRM Practices is positively associated with Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

### **Organizational Agility and Organizational Performance**

Ability is a series of capabilities and competencies of an organization's human resources to respond to survival and growth of the new business environment favours innovation and agility. (Saha et al., 2017; Shill et al., 2012; Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2009). Organizational agility is a firm's ability to stay competitive in its markets by adapting to new value that create unique products, services, process and business models (Mavengere, 2014; Shill et al., 2012; Govuzela & Mafini, 2019). Organizational agility dimensions such as speed, responsiveness, flexibility, competency (Akkaya & Mert, 2022; Akkaya & Tabak, 2020; Kuleelung & Ussahawanitchakit, 2015; Kavosi et al., 2021; Di Minin et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2010).

Agility can have a big impact on company success and company performance (Ulrich & Yeung, 2019; Ashrafi et al., 2019). Organizational agility is a competitive advantage that positive relationship with organizational performance because agility can respond to environment that rapid changes to adopt the strategy in creating new business opportunities (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020; Alegre & Sard, 2015; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Chamanifard et al., 2015). Several past studies suggest that Organizational agility has a significant positive impact on organizational performance (Akkaya & Mert, 2022; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Govuzela & Mafini, 2019; Dabiri & Gholami, 2015; Salih & Alnaji, 2014) From the previous studies have shown that EHRM and OP could be mediated by a third variable such as organizational agility (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021).

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Organizational Agility is positively associated with Organizational Performance.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Organizational Agility mediate the relationship between E-HRM Practices and Organizational Performance.

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantage and Organizational Performance**

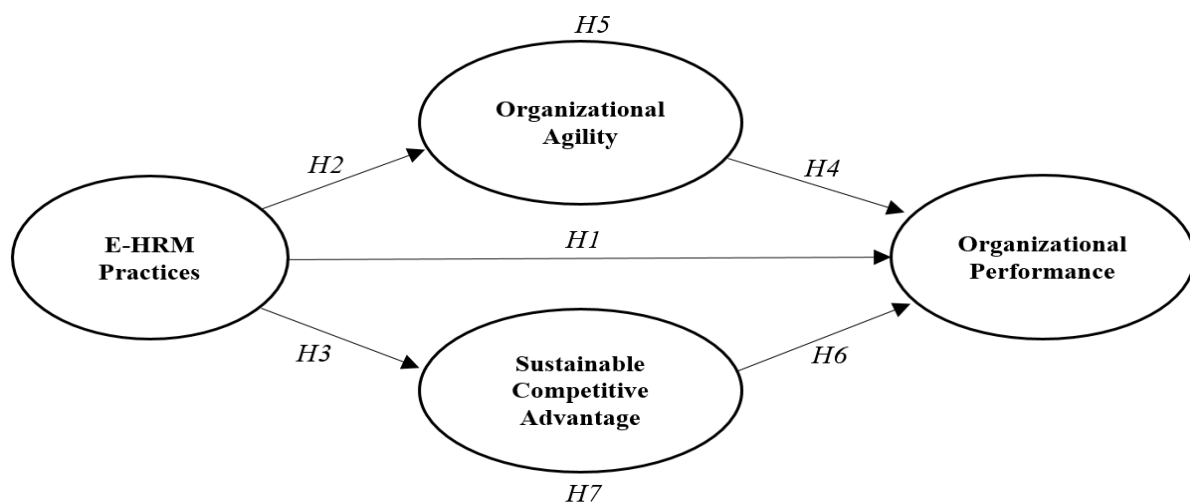
Sustainable competitive advantage is an important the long-term success of firms, the different types of strategies that may help companies achieve competitive advantage differentiation. By having competitive advantage, the company will be able to easily determine what strategy will be run. (Kim et al., 2011; Guimarães et al., 2017; Daou et al., 2013). Shamout et al. (2022) found that sustainable competitive advantage dimensions such as operational effectiveness, relational effectiveness and strategic effectiveness. The key of new horizon that improve of the technology can be addressed by E-HRM, making welfare of employees easier which would ultimately help organizations more effectively (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021).

A sustainable competitive advantage is the ability of company to organize its resources and competencies are rightly so that it can be anticipated to lead to higher performance, composed of dynamic capacities (Kotler & Keller, 2011; Fahy, 2000; Teece et al., 1997). Several past studies suggest that sustainable competitive advantage has a significant positive impact on organizational performance (Supriyadi, 2020; Baah & Jin, 2019; Guimarães et al., 2017; Asante & Adu-Damoah, 2018).

Hypothesis 6 (H6). Sustainable Competitive Advantage is positively associated with Organizational Performance.

Hypothesis 7 (H7). Sustainable Competitive Advantage mediate the relationship between E-HRM Practices and Organizational Performance.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there was no conceptual or empirical study that addressed the indirect relationship between E-HRM practices and organizational performance via organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage as a mediating variable. To fill this gap in literature, the following hypothesis was proposed (see Figure 1):



**Figure 1** Theoretical framework

## **Research Methodology**

### **Data Collection and Participants**

The current study set out to test hypothesis, a questionnaire survey, with the targeted sample has included the owner/managers of the SMEs in Thailand. The business level was the unit of analysis in this study. Questionnaires were distributed to 628 owner/manager of the SMEs which were sampled. There are 317 valid questionnaires, and effective response rate is 50.4%.

### **Measurement**

The survey questionnaire that consists of four construct categories that are E-HRM practices, organizational agility, sustainable competitive advantage and organizational performance. The

questionnaire was consisted of a total number of 44 questions: 15 questions to measure the E-HRM practices (Al-kasasbeh et al., 2016, Alrawashdeh et al., 2021), 12 questions for organizational agility (Govuzela & Mafini, 2019; Hamidianpour et al., 2016), 9 questions for sustainable competitive advantage (Kising et al., 2016; Karanja, 2017), and 8 questions for organizational performance (Guimarães et al., 2017).

**Table 1** Composite reliability, and average variance extracted.

| Constructs                                  | Factor Loading | AVE   | CR    | Cronbach's $\alpha$ |
|---|----------------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| <b>Electronic Human Resource Management</b> |                |       |       |                     |
| EHRM1                                       | 0.727          | 0.721 | 0.521 | 0.925               |
| EHRM2                                       | 0.860          |       |       |                     |
| EHRM3                                       | 0.808          |       |       |                     |
| EHRM4                                       | 0.874          |       |       |                     |
| EHRM5                                       | 0.790          |       |       |                     |
| <b>Organizational Agility</b>               |                |       |       |                     |
| OA1   | 0.848          | 0.831 | 0.657 | 0.900               |
| OA2   | 0.845          |       |       |                     |
| OA3   | 0.902          |       |       |                     |
| OA4   | 0.819          |       |       |                     |
| <b>Sustainable Competitive Advantage</b>    |                |       |       |                     |
| SCA1  | 0.866          | 0.789 | 0.800 | 0.852               |
| SCA2  | 0.825          |       |       |                     |
| SCA3  | 0.828          |       |       |                     |
| <b>Organizational Performance</b>           |                |       |       |                     |
| OP1   | 0.888          | 0.782 | 0.758 | 0.842               |
| OP2   | 0.888          |       |       |                     |

Note: CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

## Results and Analysis

For the purpose of the data analysis, the current study has used the descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple hierarchical regressions techniques. Moreover, the discriminant validity was examined by using LISREL 8.80 software confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The variance-based approach was used to spread around its mean value, while the covariance-based approach was used to determine the directional relationship between the analyzed variables. The SEM technique was used for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The outcomes of the CFA analysis have revealed that the data were good fit for the four-factor hypothesized model i.e., ( $\chi^2 = 567.94$ ;  $df = 893$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ; CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.91 and SRMR = 0.047).

### Descriptive Analysis

The values of correlations, mean, and standard deviation (SD) are presented in Table 2. Table 2 shows that there is a significant and positive connection between all constructs including: independent, mediator, and dependent. Table 2 a positive relationship between the electronic human resource management and sustainable competitive advantage (0.723\*\*), organizational performance (0.671\*\*), organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage (0.804\*\*), organizational performance (0.577\*\*), Sustainable Competitive Advantage, and organizational performance (0.778\*\*).

**Table 2** Correlation

| Variables                         | Mean | SD   | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4 |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| E-HRM Practices                   | 4.31 | 0.45 | 1      |        |        |   |
| Organizational Agility            | 4.34 | 0.40 | .695** | 1      |        |   |
| Sustainable Competitive Advantage | 4.41 | 0.39 | .723** | .804** | 1      |   |
| Organizational Performance        | 4.43 | 0.42 | .671** | .577** | .778** | 1 |

Note: (\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two tailed).

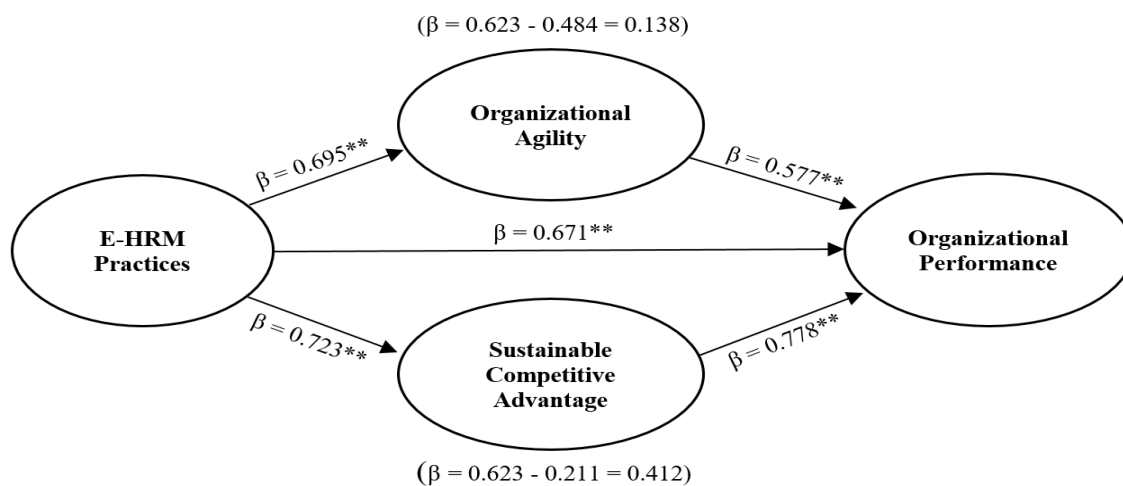
### Testing Hypotheses

**Table 3** Direct effect of Model

| Hypotheses | Path |    |     | Std. Beta | P Values | Result    |
|------------|------|----|-----|-----------|----------|-----------|
| H1         | EHRM | -> | OP  | 0.671     | 0.000    | Supported |
| H2         | EHRM | -> | OA  | 0.695     | 0.000    | Supported |
| H3         | EHRM | -> | SCA | 0.723     | 0.000    | Supported |
| H4         | OA   | -> | OP  | 0.577     | 0.000    | Supported |
| H6         | SCA  | -> | OP  | 0.778     | 0.000    | Supported |

Note: GHRM (electronic human resource management); OP (organizational performance); OA (organizational agility); SCA (sustainable competitive advantage).

The above table shows the result for the direct hypotheses 1 to 4 and hypothesis 6. E-HRM has a positive and significant impact on innovation performance with ( $\beta = 0.671$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). E-HRM has positive and significant on organizational agility with ( $\beta = 0.695$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). E-HRM has a positive and significant impact on sustainable competitive advantage with ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). The impact of organizational agility on organizational performance is positive and significant with ( $\beta = 0.577$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ), and the impact of sustainable competitive advantage on organizational performance is positive and significant with ( $\beta = 0.778$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). Thus, all five direct hypotheses are positive and significant.



**Figure 2** Coefficients of regression analysis. \*\* $p < 0.01$ , two tailed.

The results of the mediation analysis show in the table indicate that E-HRM has an indirect relationship with organizational performance through the mediation of organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage. The results show a significant mediation effect with ( $\beta = 0.138$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) for E-HRM and organizational performance through the mediated of organizational agility and ( $\beta = 0.412$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) for through the mediated of sustainable competitive advantage.

**Table 4** Indirect effect of Model using the SPSS version of PROCESS

| Hypotheses | Path |           |    | Std. Beta | P Values | Result    |
|------------|------|-----------|----|-----------|----------|-----------|
| H5         | EHRM | -> OA ->  | OP | 0.138     | 0.000    | Supported |
| H7         | EHRM | -> SCA -> | OP | 0.412     | 0.000    | Supported |

Note: GHRM (electronic human resource management); OP (organizational performance); OA (organizational agility); SCA (sustainable competitive advantage).

## Conclusion and Discussion

The study about the H1 confirms the positive association between the E-HRM practices and organizational performance. These results demonstrate that organizational performance in the SMEs depends on the integration and the technological of HRM. Existing empirical studies also found a positive association between E-HRM practices and organizational performance (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Masum et al., 2020; Al-kasasbeh et al., 2016; Alrawashdeh et al., 2021).

H2 show the direct link between the E-HRM practices and organizational Agility. The results of H2 confirm the positive association between the E-HRM practices and organizational Agility. Specifically, the results suggest that the E-HRM practices of E-Recruitment & E-Selection, E-Training, E-Compensation, E-Performance Appraisal, and E-Communication a positive role in the development of organizational Agility. These findings confirm the H2 of the study and they are consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Hamidianpour et al., 2016; Ebrahim, 2021).

H3 of the study show that E-HRM practices is positively associated with sustainable competitive advantage. The results confirm that the E-HRM practices positively contributes toward sustainable competitive advantage through the provides technology that build the human resource management process in the company sustainable competitive advantage. These findings confirm the H3 of the study and they are consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Shamout et al., 2022; Alkhodary, 2021). Furthermore, H4 of the study show a positive relationship between the organizational agility and organizational performance. The results reveal that the association between the organizational agility and organizational performance is also statistically supported and confirm H4. The previous studies (Akkaya & Mert, 2022; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Govuzela & Mafini, 2019; Dabiri & Gholami, 2015; Salih & Alnaji, 2014) also suggested a positive association between the organizational agility and organizational performance. Fifth, the mediating role of the organizational agility in the relationship between E-HRM practices and organizational performance according to the result that confirm H5. Sixth, the study confirms a positive relationship between the sustainable competitive advantage and organizational performance. The findings about the H6 reveal that the sustainable competitive advantage significantly contributes to the organizational performance. Finally, H7 of study confirms the mediation effect of the sustainable competitive advantage between the E-HRM practices and the organizational performance is also confirmed. These findings reveal that E-HRM practices contributes to the improvement of organizational performance in the presence of the sustainable competitive advantage.

In conclusion, the current study considered the antecedent of the organization performance of the SMEs based on the E-HRM practices of these SMEs in Thailand. Moreover, the mediating role of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage have also been tested. Seven hypotheses were formulated and validated in the current study. The findings have revealed a significant connection of E-HRM practices with organizational performance. Finally, the mediating role of organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage have also been confirmed by findings of this study.

### **Contributions to Theory**

This research contributes to theory especially in the domain of the current study develops an organizational performance model for the SMEs which explains how a combination of different factors like the E-HRM practices, organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage can influence the organizational performance of the SMEs. These findings are consistent with the existing studies that empirically validated the relationship between E-HRM practices understanding and the technological of HRM to manager and employee and organizational performance (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2020; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021).

The second contribution of this research refers to the examination of the E-HRM practices for the improvement of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage. The organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage represent an important ability of an organization that more flexible, cost-effective and more strategic for management of all processes, activities, data and required information, and upgrade the capabilities of both managers and employees to make better, timelier decisions in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Srivastava, 2010; Pratheepan & Arulrajah, 2012; Rangarao & Raju, 2014; Thathsara & Sutha, 2021). The current study considers this gap and focus on the E-HRM practices as a pre-condition for the organizational agility, sustainable competitive advantage and organizational performance.

Third, although the existing literature has already explained that the organizational supportive the technological of HRM is the key to the organizational performance (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Khashman & Al-Ryalat, 2015). Only a few studies have suggested that the E-HRM practices provide a strong base for organizational performance through the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage. In this study, the research has investigated and found support for the mediating effect of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage on the organizational performance. The current results confirm that the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage mediate between the E-HRM practices and organizational performance. The aim of this study is not only to explain the effect of the E-HRM practices on organizational performance, but also to contribute to accelerating the organizational agility, sustainable competitive advantage and organizational performance.

### **Practical Implications**

This research has some significant implications for the management in practice. First, our findings suggest that the E-HRM practices and enhance organizational performance with the help of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage, by focus on the integration and the technological of HRM in order to attract and retain the existing professional employees (Alrawashdeh et al., 2021; Aamer et al., 2020). By doing so, the organizations must focus the ability to integrate and the technological of HRM. Developing of the E-HRM practices is not sufficient for achieving the organizational performance; the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage are important for achieving the organizational performance (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Govuzela & Mafini, 2019; Supriyadi, 2020; Baah & Jin, 2019). Second, this study suggests that the E-HRM practices is the pre-conditions and powerful predictor of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, in order to increase the level of the organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage, the organizations must focus on the development of the E-HRM practices that will help them enhance their ability toward the organizational performance (Thathsara & Sutha, 2021; Shamout et al., 2022; Supriyadi, 2020).

### **Limitation and Future Research**

Several limitations of this study can be noted for future research. First, the current study focused on the relationship between E-HRM practices and organizational performance: the mediating role of organizational agility and sustainable competitive advantage. I recommend that future research should further explore and test the relationship of organizational agility and



sustainable competitive advantage. Second, the current study only considered the SMEs, therefore its findings cannot be generalized to the other sectors. Moreover, due to the context differences, the findings of the current study cannot be generalized to other SMEs of other countries. Finally, some other exogenous variables may affect the association we have studied. In future, the researchers are required to focus on some other important determinants of the organizational performance like organizational leadership, and organizational structure etc. Therefore, the future research should be conducted by considering some other factors as well. It would be also interesting to analyze the relation between my one exogenous variable, E-HRM practices, which could lead to some interesting results.

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