The Adoption of Electronic Records Management System in an Organization: A Systematic Literature Review Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the key factors influencing the adoption of Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS) in organizations, with a particular focus on developing countries. Through a systematic literature review (SLR) of 16 high-quality studies, this research identifies 12 critical factors driving ERMS adoption, including relative advantage, compatibility, management support, and government policies. By integrating the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework and Task-Technology Fit (TTF) theory, this study presents a novel, holistic framework for understanding ERMS adoption. The findings highlight the importance of organizational readiness, management support, and training in ensuring successful ERMS adoption. Policymakers, IT vendors, and organizations can leverage these insights to address technical, managerial, and environmental challenges, accelerating ERMS adoption and enhancing operational efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have revolutionized service delivery across business, governance, and communication sectors, enabling better access to information, streamlined operations, and more informed decision-making. In this context, Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS) have become indispensable for modern organizations. By automating processes such as creating, storing, and retrieving records in digital and paper formats, ERMS significantly improve operational efficiency, reduce errors, and streamline workflows (Abdullah et al., 2020; Mukred et al., 2016). The transition from manual, paper-based records management to ERMS has addressed inefficiencies such as time delays and data redundancy while offering enhanced security, privacy, and flexibility. These systems also play a pivotal role in organizational decision-making, regulatory compliance, and fostering transparency, accountability, and data protection (Al-Emran et al., 2018; Howard & Hair, 2023). Globally, ERMS adoption has seen notable progress,

particularly in developed countries. In the United States, for example, nearly 96% of non-federal acute care hospitals and 78% of office-based physicians had adopted Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems by 2021, compared to less than 30% in 2011 (Rahurkar et al., 2023). Other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and several European nations, have implemented frameworks like the Electronic Medical Records Adoption Model (EMRAM) to enhance ERMS usage. Advanced stages of EMRAM adoption in countries like Singapore and South Korea demonstrate robust integration of ERMS into healthcare and governance systems, yielding efficiency, security, and interoperability (Davidson et al., 2018; Hansen & Baroody, 2023).

However, in developing regions like Africa, ERMS adoption remains uneven. South Africa has taken the lead, with government departments increasingly leveraging these systems to enhance accountability and efficiency (Asogwa et al., 2021). Pilot projects in countries such as Kenya and Uganda also highlight the potential of ERMS in healthcare and public administration despite challenges like limited funding, infrastructure deficits, and a lack of skilled personnel (Matlala & Ncube, 2024; Shonhe & Grand, 2020). In Nigeria, the adoption of ERMS has been steadily advancing, driven by government initiatives and private sector efforts to improve operational efficiency and governance. However, inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and technical skill gaps remain significant barriers (Amodu, 2021; Omotayo & Haliru, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on ERMS underscores their transformative impact on organizational efficiency, decision-making, and regulatory compliance. These systems facilitate the automation of records management processes, reducing inefficiencies such as data redundancy and time delays while enhancing security, privacy, and transparency (Mukred et al., 2016; Shonhe & Grand, 2020). Developed nations have demonstrated substantial progress in ERMS adoption, particularly in the healthcare and governance sectors. Frameworks like EMRAM have been instrumental in advancing electronic system integration, resulting in improved data interoperability, clinical decision support, and operational efficiency (Hansen & Baroody, 2023). In contrast, ERMS adoption in Africa has been slower due to resource constraints and technical challenges. South Africa's public sector demonstrates significant progress, while countries like Kenya and Uganda have initiated pilot projects in healthcare and administration, revealing the potential benefits of ERMS despite existing barriers (Asogwa et al., 2021; Matlala & Ncube, 2024). In Nigeria, efforts to integrate ERMS into e-government initiatives have shown promise. Increasing interest in cloud-based solutions, which are scalable and cost-effective, offers a viable path for small and medium-sized enterprises to adopt these systems (Adeshina & Ojo, 2020; Yakubu et al., 2020).

Adoption rates of ERMS are critical indicators of digital transformation within organizations and sectors. They provide insights into the challenges hindering widespread implementation, such as financial limitations, infrastructure deficits, and resistance to change (Mukred, et al., 2021). Policymakers and organizational leaders can leverage these insights to develop targeted interventions, including increased funding, regulatory reforms, and training programs, to facilitate smoother transitions and maximize the benefits of ERMS (Renukappa et al., 2022). Moreover, adoption data informs best practices for effective implementation and resource allocation, ensuring the systems achieve their intended outcomes in governance, healthcare, and private sectors (Kabukye et al., 2020; Semantha et al., 2021).

Despite global advancements, research on ERMS adoption remains limited, particularly in developing regions. Existing studies, such as those by Shonhe and Grand (2020), Mukred and Yusof (2018), and Yang et al. 2020), have explored implementation and effectiveness. However, gaps persist in understanding the contextual factors influencing adoption. This study addresses these gaps by integrating the Technological,

Organizational, and Environmental (TOE) framework and Task Technology Fit (TTF) theory, offering a comprehensive analysis of ERMS adoption determinants. By examining global and regional trends, the research seeks to provide actionable insights and contribute to the growing literature on ERMS adoption.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review (SLR) is a rigorous and transparent method for synthesizing empirical data to address specific research questions (Al-Emran et al., 2020; Salisu et al., 2021). By examining key literature, researchers can evaluate the scope and depth of existing knowledge, identify gaps, and establish areas for further investigation (Juntunen & Lehenkari, 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019). This process is essential for ensuring the relevance and rigor of research and framing its scope and objectives (Manz, 2019).

This study employs an SLR to identify the key factors influencing the adoption of ERMS in organizations. The SLR was conducted following the framework proposed by Xiao and Watson (2019), which provides evidence-based guidelines and methodological rigor. By synthesizing existing literature, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of ERMS adoption and provides a robust foundation for future research. The methodology employed in this SLR is outlined in the following subsections.
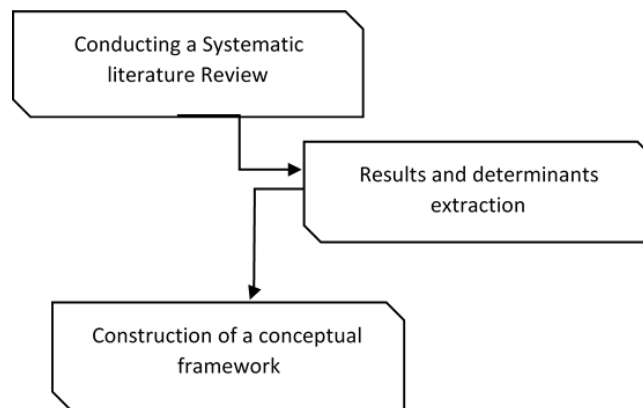

Figure 1 The methodological steps used to develop the study's framework through the SLR process

Data collection for SLR

This study utilized five databases, IEEE, Emerald, Sage, Springer, and Elsevier, as primary data sources. These databases are recognized for their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed, high-impact journals (Paul et al., 2023). The initial search employed advanced search techniques using the Boolean operator "OR" to combine or separate the following keywords: "ERMS adoption," "Electronic Records Management System adoption," and "EMRS." These terms were specifically chosen to identify relevant studies addressing the adoption of Electronic Records Management Systems.

Inclusion criteria

The selected articles for this review were meticulously chosen for their substantial contribution to the field. The increasing need for informed decision-making within organizations primarily drives the growth in research on ERMS adoption. As a result, only articles published since 2014 were included. In addition, to ensure the reliability and significance of the sources, only studies published in journals indexed in Scopus were considered. The review focuses on articles addressing ERMS or related systems, such as electronic

document management adoption. Additionally, the study was limited to original empirical research and conceptual frameworks published in English.

Extraction of data

The SLR commenced with a rigorous screening process to identify relevant articles. Initially, 1320 articles were retrieved from various databases, including IEEE, Sage, Emerald, Elsevier, Springer, and others. Following a series of exclusion steps based on established inclusion criteria, the pool was progressively reduced to 16 articles that fully met the requirements (Figure 2). These articles underwent a detailed review, focusing on the methodology, discussion sections, and definitions of factors influencing ERMS adoption. The alignment of these definitions with the measurement methods was evaluated to ensure comparability across studies. The selected articles examined factors impacting ERMS adoption within organizational contexts similar to the current research, identifying key variables influencing ERMS adoption positively.
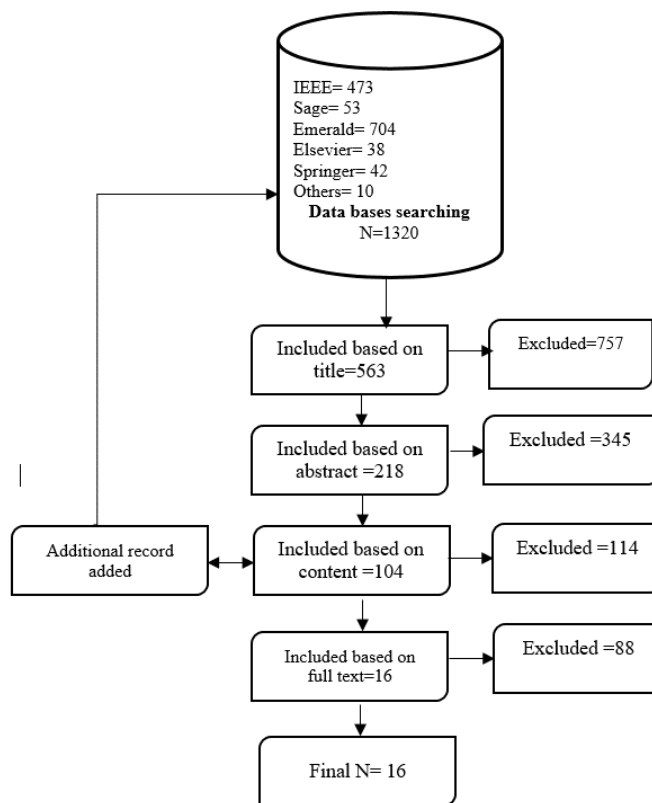

Figure 2 The PRISMA flowchart detailing the selection of the reviewed articles. Adapted and refined from (Moher et al., 2009)

Factors extraction

The analysis of the 16 selected articles identified 12 key factors influencing the adoption of ERMS. These factors include relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, management support, organizational

readiness, organizational size, vendor support, competitive pressure, government policies, interdependence, complexity, and structure tasks.

THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS USED IN ERMS STUDIES

The articles included in this review highlight several theories and frameworks commonly used to study ERMS adoption. Among the most frequently used are the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Technology Organization Environment (TOE) Framework, Task-Technology Fit (TTF) theory and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Hawash et al., 2020; Mukred et al., 2019; Adeshina & Ojo, 2020; Li, 2020; Spies et al., 2020). The study by Prasad Agrawal (2024) employs the TOE framework, combined with institutional theory and IDT, to investigate the factors influencing the adoption of generative AI technology. While TAM and UTAUT primarily address individual-level factors and user behavior, the TOE framework emphasizes organizational and environmental influences (Al-Emran et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study proposes TOE and TTF as the foundation for a conceptual framework suitable for organizational contexts.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK CONSTRUCTION

This section examines the four categorized dimensions and delineates the key components underpinning the conceptual framework's development.

Technology characteristics

A review of IT adoption literature highlights that many studies focus primarily on the technological context of innovation (Kruger & Steyn, 2024). The technological dimension encompasses the characteristics of both external and internal technologies that may impact organizations or individuals (Khayer et al., 2020). Drawing from the SLR, key technological factors from the TOE and TTF frameworks, such as relative advantage (perceived benefits), compatibility, and trialability, were identified (see Table 1-4 for definitions). These characteristics are frequently employed as criteria to assess the level of ERMS adoption.

For instance, Mukred, et al. (2019) applied these attributes by integrating UTAUT and TOE to evaluate a framework for ERMS adoption in higher education institutions. The technological dimension provides guidance on best practices, enabling organizations to manage electronic data and ensure its long-term security. Technological advancements significantly shape system implementation, emphasizing factors like infrastructure and analytics as critical support for information processing. Such integration enhances adoption by aligning with organizational continuity strategies and independent innovation (Mukred, et al., 2019).

Table 1 Descriptions of technological characteristics

Component	Definition	Citation
Relative Advantage	Refers to the degree to which an innovation or technology is perceived as providing superior benefits relative to existing practices or alternative solutions.	Nguyen et al. (2022)
Compatibility	Compatibility refers to how much a technological innovation aligns with its intended user base's pre-existing values, needs, experiences, and practices.	Gangwar et al. (2015)

Trialability	Refers to how an innovation or technology can be piloted, experimented with, or tested on a limited scale before full-scale implementation and adoption.	AlBar and Hoque (2019)

Organizational characteristics

An organization's structure and processes can either facilitate or impede the adoption of innovations (Madaki et al., 2023). In the context of technology adoption, organizational characteristics play a crucial role in shaping adoption decisions (Khan et al., 2016; Soltanizadeh et al., 2016). A comprehensive literature review reveals several key organizational factors that influence the adoption of technological innovations (Abdullah et al., 2020; Li, 2020). This study examines the impact of top management support, organizational readiness (resource availability), and organizational size on innovation adoption (see Table 2 for operational definitions).

Table 2 Descriptions of organizational characteristics

Component	Definition	Citation
Management Support	Refers to the extent to which organizational leaders demonstrate a commitment to actively champion and facilitate the adoption of new technologies or innovations within the organization.	Li (2020)
Organizational Readiness	Organizational readiness refers to the degree to which an organization is prepared to adopt, implement, and integrate new technologies or innovations.	Li (2020)
Organizational Size	Organizational size refers to the magnitude or scale of an organization, typically measured in terms of its workforce size, revenue, physical presence, and operational complexity.	Kabukye et al. (2020)

Environmental characteristics

Environmental factors are widely acknowledged as crucial determinants of innovation adoption, as emphasized in the literature on technological innovation (Fu et al., 2024; Hawash et al., 2020). Environmental characteristics of the TOE framework encompass regulatory policies, vendor support, and competitive pressure (Nguyen et al., 2022; Renukappa et al., 2022). These factors underscore the significant impact of external pressures on organizational decisions to adopt technologies (Hiran & Henten, 2020; Mukred et al., 2016; Triandini et al., 2022). This study focuses on the influence of three environmental factors on ERMS adoption: vendor support, competitive pressure, and government policies, including compliance requirements (see Table 3 for operational definitions).

Table 3 Descriptions of environmental characteristics

Component	Definition	Citation
Vendor Support	Vendor support is the level and quality of external assistance ERMS suppliers provide to facilitate successful implementation and usage.	Nguyen et al. (2022)

Competitive Pressure	Competitive pressure is the extent to which an organization feels compelled to implement an ERMS due to similar initiatives by peer organizations or competitors.	Hiran & Henten (2020)
Government Policies	Government policies are external factors that directly or indirectly mandate or encourage organizations to implement ERMS for improved records management.	Triandini et al. (2022)

Task characteristics

Adopting an ERMS within an organizational context is significantly influenced by task characteristics, encompassing the nature and requirements of organizational tasks (Ayaz & Yanartaş, 2020). According to the TTF theory, the effectiveness of technology adoption is contingent upon the extent to which the system aligns with task demands (Awa et al., 2017; Howard & Hair, 2023; Muchenje & Seppänen, 2023; Spies et al., 2020). In the context of ERMS, this alignment involves supporting document-intensive processes, ensuring efficient storage, retrieval, and sharing of records, and addressing specific organizational needs, such as compliance, workflow automation, and secure information handling (Howard & Rose, 2019; Omotayo & Haliru, 2020). A proper alignment between task requirements and technology capabilities fosters enhanced performance, increased efficiency, and user satisfaction, ultimately facilitating successful ERMS adoption (Giannakos et al., 2022; Goodhue & Thompson, 1995; Hansen & James Baroody, 2020). This study focuses on the following three key factors: interdependence, Complexity, and structure of tasks (see Table 4 for operational definitions).

Table 4 Descriptions of task characteristics

Component	Definition	Citation
Interdependence	The extent to which records creation, storage, retrieval, and management tasks are interconnected and require coordination among individuals, departments, or units. High interdependence necessitates an ERMS that enables seamless collaboration, efficient information sharing, and integrated workflows.	Omotayo & Haliru (2020)
Complexity	Complexity is the difficulty of managing records due to large volumes of information, intricate filing structures, and compliance with regulatory requirements. High task complexity in records management highlights the need for an ERMS that simplifies and automates processes to reduce manual effort and enhance accuracy.	Awa et al. (2017)
Structure of Tasks	The structure of tasks is formalized rules, standardized procedures, and consistent workflows that guide the extent to which records management activities are performed. Highly structured tasks in records management benefit from the automation and efficiency an ERMS provides.	Goodhue & Thompson (1995)

Proposed conceptual framework

A conceptual framework provides a structured approach to identifying and defining key concepts while illustrating their relationships (Al-Emran et al., 2020; Luft et al., 2022; Mukred et al., 2021). This study introduces a methodological framework to advance the adoption of ERMS in an organization (Joshua & King, 2020). The framework emphasizes critical factors influencing adoption across four dimensions:

technological, organizational, environmental, and task-related characteristics. Specifically, it integrates insights from the TOE framework (Mukred et al., 2019) and TTF theory (Howard & Hair, 2023). The technological dimension includes relative advantage and compatibility factors, while the organizational perspective highlights elements like top management support and resource readiness. The environmental dimension focuses on external pressures such as vendor support and government policies, whereas task characteristics address complexity and interdependence.

Figure 3 visually represents this explanatory framework, providing a holistic view of ERMS adoption. Scholars advocate for integrating the TOE framework with complementary models like UTAUT to refine its predictive capability and address the ambiguity of its broad constructs. Others integrate TTF and Technology Continuance Theory TCT in research, exploring extending the TCT by incorporating TTF to examine users' intention to continue utilizing Internet banking services. (Rahi et al., 2021). The integration of TOE and TTF in this study results in a robust, multi-dimensional approach to understanding and predicting ERMS adoption within organizations. By combining these theoretical perspectives, the framework enhances its applicability and effectiveness, offering a comprehensive tool for guiding research and practice in ERMS adoption.
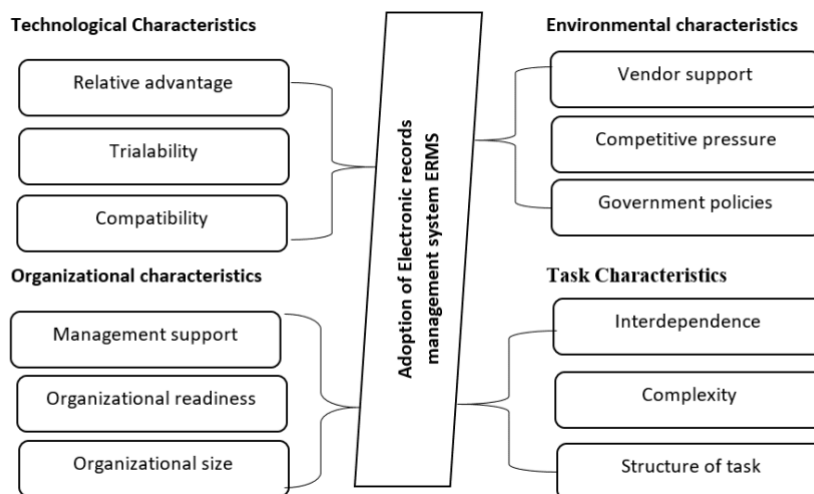

Figure 3 Conceptual framework

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The adoption of ERMS contributes significantly to the theoretical understanding of digital transformation within organizations, particularly in the context of developing countries. By integrating the TOE framework and TTF theory, this research highlights the multi-faceted nature of ERMS adoption, encompassing technological, organizational, and environmental dimensions and task-specific considerations. The TOE framework systematically examines how organizational readiness, technological compatibility, and external pressures influence adoption. Simultaneously, the TTF theory emphasizes the alignment between technology capabilities and task requirements, offering insights into how ERMS can enhance operational efficiency and decision-making.

The integration of these frameworks addresses gaps in existing literature, which often focus on individual-level adoption factors through models such as the TAM or UTAUT. This research advances a holistic theoretical approach by broadening the focus to organizational and task-specific determinants, contributing to a deeper understanding of ERMS adoption dynamics. In addition, the study underscores the importance of contextual factors, such as resource constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and government policies, which are particularly relevant to developing countries.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a practical perspective, adopting ERMS offers substantial benefits for organizations across various sectors, including improved operational efficiency, enhanced decision-making, and greater transparency. Organizations can mitigate inefficiencies such as time delays, errors, and data redundancy by transitioning from manual, paper-based systems to digital records management. ERMS automation supports critical processes, such as record creation, retrieval, and storage, ultimately streamlining workflows and fostering accountability. Furthermore, ERMS enhances data security, privacy, and regulatory compliance, addressing concerns around information management in sensitive sectors such as healthcare, governance, and finance. For policymakers and organizational leaders, this research provides actionable insights into addressing barriers to ERMS adoption, including inadequate funding, limited technical expertise, and infrastructure deficits. Targeted interventions, such as increasing investments in technology infrastructure, providing comprehensive training programs, and establishing supportive government policies, can facilitate a smoother transition to ERMS. Moreover, the study highlights the need for tailored strategies based on adoption trends and global best practices, ensuring that organizations in developing countries, such as Nigeria, can bridge the digital divide and achieve the full potential of ERMS.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study has several limitations that warrant further exploration. Firstly, the research relies primarily on existing literature and secondary data, which may not fully capture the dynamic challenges of ERMS implementation, particularly in developing countries. Future research should incorporate primary data collection methods to validate proposed frameworks and provide context-specific insights empirically. Secondly, the study's focus on developed countries and select African nations restricts its generalizability to other regions. Future studies should expand their geographic and sectoral scope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ERMS adoption dynamics. Thirdly, the study's conceptual framework integrates the TOE framework and TTF theory but overlooks individual-level determinants. Future research should incorporate individual, organizational, and environmental analyses to achieve a multi-dimensional perspective. Additionally, the study highlights the need to address ERMS's long-term sustainability and post-implementation challenges, such as system maintenance, user training, and data migration. Future studies should explore these areas to identify best practices that support sustainability and maximize the long-term benefits of ERMS. Finally, future research should explore innovative, cost-effective solutions, such as cloud-based ERMS and mobile-friendly systems, and assess the role of emerging technologies in enhancing adoption. By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research directions, this study will significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of ERMS adoption and its role in driving digital transformation and operational efficiency.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, adopting ERMS is crucial for facilitating digital transformation, enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making processes, and optimizing workflow. A systematic literature review examined the determinants and theoretical frameworks influencing the adoption and implementation of

ERMS within organizational contexts. Developed countries have made significant strides in ERMS adoption by establishing structured frameworks, whereas developing regions, such as Africa, need more infrastructure, limited funding, and insufficient technical expertise. Integrating theoretical frameworks, including the TOE and TTF models, provides a structured approach to understanding ERMS adoption. Addressing adoption barriers through strategic investments in infrastructure, technical training, and cost-effective solutions, such as cloud-based systems, is essential. Future research should investigate region-specific challenges and emerging technologies to maximize the impact of ERMS on governance, healthcare, and organizational efficiency.

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