



## **An Exploratory Study on Information Behavior of Human Resources Managers**

**Sevim Oztimurlenk<sup>a</sup>**

**Abstract:** *This is an exploratory study on information behavior of human resources (HR) managers in Turkey which investigates what kind of information sources they consult and review and whom they prefer to communicate with for information sharing. This user study is based on empirical data collected via a questionnaire survey 140 HR managers who are from the members of People Management Association of Turkey (PERYON) and semi-structured interview from 15 HR managers participated in the survey. The results show that HR managers in Turkey usually consult to applicant documents, job descriptions, people, and e-mails but they rarely review social media, e-mails and internal memos when making HR related decisions. Moreover, they prefer to share information with their supervisors more often than with their colleagues and subordinates. This study also concluded that age and industry type are the two factors that make a difference on information behavior of HR managers in terms of information source, use and share.*

**Keywords:** Human Resources Managers, Information Behavior, Information Source, Information Use, Information Share

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### **1. Introduction**

Chandler and Cortada (2003) consider changing nature of recipients of the information flow and analyze the ways in which the recipients used this flow to shape or reshape the U.S. business, society, and culture in their book; *A Nation Transformed by Information*. This book helps to recognize that there is a complex and dynamic interrelationship among information, information infrastructure and interaction. In other words, the “information society” in which people work and live increases the importance of the information need and behavior of today’s workforce.

Information behavior is a broad concept which includes human related information activities such as seeking, using, and sharing information. Information behavior studies are considered vital for understanding user needs and expectations (Hepworth, 2007). They have been illuminated a broad range of information-related phenomena across different disciplines (Koh, Rubenstein & White, 2015). Therefore, user studies on information behavior continue to be a major area of research.

As much important the user research is in terms of evaluating the existing systems and services, they are also important in terms of understanding the relation between human beings and information, inner processes and reasons of behaviors related to information. The findings acquired as a result of these studies are necessary for designing effective services and systems. The importance of these data adds up more and more in today’s communication media where information services are gradually adjusted to electronic

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<sup>a</sup> Adj. Asst. Prof., SUNY College at Old Westbury, Department of Marketing, Management & Finance, NY, USA, Oztimurlenks@oldwestbury.edu (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8945-5989)

media. The relation of user and information is affected by many factors such as the society they live in, their working environment and information systems. Therefore, the necessity to consider the user with their environment requires focus on this research in order for each society to build their own user profile (Ucak, 2008).

Although investigation of the information behavior of managers and other professionals have also been increasing in recent years, and a growing number of scholars have been paying attention to the subject (e.g., Mackenzie, 2003; Jorosi, 2006; Karim & Hussain, 2007; Almutairi, 2011a; Vilar, Juznic & Bartol, 2012), there is a lack of research on information behavior of HR managers. This study focuses on HR managers in Turkey to determine their information behavior in terms of information source, use and share. Therefore, it addresses the following three research questions:

1. What type of information sources do they consult when making HR related decisions?
2. What type of information sources do they value or review when making HR related decisions?
3. Whom do they communicate with the most for information sharing?

In the light of this research questions, the literature pertinent to this study is drawn from the three sections, each with a specific purpose: The first subsection (2.1) concerns itself with the concept of information behavior, both as it is treated by the information science world as well as its place in the world of business. Section 2.2 provides an overview of how HR managers interact information on the job and the last subsection (2.3) contains provides a review of user studies on factors affecting information behavior of managers including demographic, professional, and environmental factors.

## **2. Literature Review**

Mankind has needed and closely interested in information, since the ancient times; has acquired information, which stands vital for survival, either consciously or unconsciously and in different ways from a variety of sources and shared it. This relation of mankind to information sources (seeking, using, sharing) is described as information behavior (Wilson, 2000). Information behavior includes all explicit and implicit processes related to seeking, using, and sharing information, including the need for information. The primary function of information centers and systems is to enable users to access and retrieve information. Therefore, it is of the essence to identify the target audience of the information centers, their information behavior and to determine their service-related satisfaction for the purposes of creating, planning, designing, improving, and evaluating collections. Moreover, research on information behavior may well serve for the improvement of national and local information policies and information access and retrieval methods and techniques. It can also support the development of access methods and techniques. The data obtained may serve for the design of user-friendly services and systems that are consistent with user experience (Ucak, 1997; Najjari, 2010)

### **2.1. The Importance of Information Behavior**

Research on information behavior that developed in close relationship with user experience research, which can be described as research for determining identifying user habits, took start in the 1950s (Ucak & Al, 2000). The paradigm that had been system-oriented has shifted towards a user-oriented one since the 1980s and research on user experiences and expectations have gained importance. Important theories and models have been developed on individuals' information behavior (Yildiz & Ucak, 2014), which revealed that individuals' information behavior is shaped by various factors. To this, information behavior may vary depending on personal characteristics, environmental factors as well as the access to sources of information and information (Ucak, 1997: 321). Information centers that fail to identify their users and to design and develop user friendly resources, systems and services would also fail to fulfill their principal duties properly.

Research on information behavior is especially important for any business to understand the potential role of and manage information. As information is developed by individuals interacting with one

another, information emerges as product of information merge and exchange (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2005). However, individuals not cooperating to share the information they possess (Von Krogh, 1998), and therefore the inability to distribute information easily, make it difficult to create information. The most proper argument to explain this situation may be that of Szulanski (1996: 46): "Having a potentially valuable information in one part of the organization does not mean that this information will be available to the other parts of the organization ..."

Information behavior is an important part of an effective and quality problem-solving process. In this respect, numerous models of information behavior have emerged, most of which defined it as an individual action (Wilson, 1999: 264). Undoubtedly, the development and modernization of the country is not dependent on the diligent work of the scientists, managers, faculty members and employees in every sector of that country only, but also on the practices of those to produce, obtain information, share, and use information.

## **2.2. HR Managers' Interaction with Information on the Job**

Human resources are defined as firm's knowledge, experience, skill, and commitment of the employees to the firm; their relations with each other. They are the most important firm asset, the ones that research, design, project, and differentiate the firm from other firms (Qehaja & Kutllovci, 2015). HR managers are professionals who oversee and manage a company's human resources department. The structure of a typical Human Resources department varies, depending on the company's size. Not every company is large enough to have a separate HR department. For example, most of the organizations with 25 or more employees have only a human resources manager and an administrative assistant while the organization with 10,000 and more employees have a big HR department with several managers for each Human Resource Management (HRM) function, who report to the vice president of the department and an administrative assistant of the vice president (Renckley, 2011).

Regardless of the company's size, Wright, McMahan, McCormick, and Sherman (1998) classified HR activities which require HR managers to interact with information into three groups: transactional, traditional, and transformational. Transactional activities deal mostly with record keeping such as entering payroll information. Traditional activities involve all HRM functions (i.e., training, compensation, performance appraisal, recruiting, selection, employee, and labor relations, benefits). Transformational activities add value to the organization - for example, strategic organizational change (Kavanagh, Thite & Johnson, 2012).

Wright et al. (1998) stated that HR departments spend most of their time on transactional activities and Kavanagh et al. (2012) suggested that Human Resources Information System (HRIS) is implemented to allow HR managers to spend more time on traditional and transformational changes, reducing the amount of time spent on transactional activities.

Since HR activities or HR managers' responsibilities have shifted from operational to strategic due to trends that shape HRM, HR managers play a bigger role in organizations today Their positive impact on organization success depends on the quality of their information use and sharing (Terpstra & Rozell, 1996). Floyd and Woodridge (1992) also have stated that HR managers can influence top management and organizational performance through the synthesis of information and knowledge regarding employee productivity. Briefly, it can be said that the effective management of human resources in a corporation to gain a competitive advantage requires timely and accurate information accumulation, use, and sharing.

## **2.3. Studies on Information Behavior of Managers**

The level and amount of knowledge and information, the managers can access may be an important factor influencing their information seeking behaviors. Choo (2001) stated that higher level managers tended to seek richer information to reduce the impact of environmental uncertainty on them in his study. Furthermore, Daft, Sormunen and Parks (1988) indicated that executives showed more frequent, intense, and deeper information seeking behaviors when they perceived environmental changes or when exterior

uncertainty rose. That is, upper-level managers seemed to scan and seek more information than lower-level managers (Choo, 2001). From another viewpoint, Sligo (1995) reported different results regarding positions and information seeking behaviors. Supervisors who lead a group of subordinates are more likely to perceive deficiencies in information compared to other lower-level managers or non-supervising staff (Sligo, 1995). That is, managers' information seeking behaviors may be influenced primarily by their preferences of information seeking rather than their position levels even though some scholars have found a significant relationship between employees' positions and the information that they get. Lin and Yoo (2013) found that the managers at higher position levels use more 'indirect' and 'static' information seeking methods to obtain information rather than 'direct' and 'interactive' information seeking behaviors. For instance, compared with basic level managers, middle level managers are more likely to observe other colleagues for seeking information. Furthermore, compared with middle and basic level managers, high level managers are more likely to gain information from reading memos, annual reports, or other written documents.

Barnard (1991) examined whether some demographic variables such as experience, age and gender influence the information behavior of managers in service sector and reported that they rely on e-mails more than their counterparts in manufacturing industry; younger managers (under the age of 40) use social activities as information sources more frequently and communicate subordinates and peers more than older managers do; male managers prefer to use subordinates as information sources more often than female managers do. Two years later, Goodman (1993) emphasized that age, experience, and department that managers work are some of the factors which should take into consideration regarding information behavior of managers. She has argued that managers in distinct types of departments and organizations may require different information seeking activities to be effective.

Almutairi (2011a) surveyed Kuwaiti public managers to determine some personal and professional factors affecting their information behavior. The results showed that only age, education, information system use is found to be significant factors on the three information dimensions investigated (i.e., information characteristics, information types, information sources) In addition, the findings of another study done by Almutairi (2011b) indicated that gender and management level have an impact on information behavior of managers.

### **3. Methodology**

This study, as part of a larger research project (Oztimurlenk, 2019), gathered data from multiple perspectives by using both questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview. A plural method design can provide a better understanding of a research problem when either a quantitative or a qualitative approach by itself is inadequate (Cresswell, 2002). While questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations, interview data often gather more in-depth insights on participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Kendall, 2008).

In research on managers' and other professionals' information behavior, questionnaire and interview are the two commonly used methods but often applied separately. They are however frequently used together in social and psychological research (Singleton & Straits, 2009: 105).

In the first stage of the study, a survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey to HR managers who are the members of People Management Association of Turkey (PERYON). HR managers in this study are defined as HR professionals who have at least two or more employees reporting to them.

The questionnaire survey consists of two sections. The first section, comprising 6 questions, is for collecting some demographic information about HR managers and their companies. Demographic questions were asked to determine if there is a correlation between those variables (e.g., gender, age, work experience) and variables of information behavior: information source, use and share. The second section, containing 13 seven-point Likert scale statements and 6 questions, is for gathering data on non-EI factors and information behavior of HR managers. All questions in this section are intended to cover the three aspects of information behavior: information source, use and share.

Information behaviour in this study refers to information source, use, and share. Specifically, information sources include social media, e-mails, performance evaluation forms, internal memos, applicant documents, job descriptions, benchmarking data, candidate evaluation forms, and people that HR managers in Turkey consult when they need information. Information use is measured by the extent that HR managers in Turkey review and value the information sources when making HR related decisions. Information share is measured by the extent that HR managers in Turkey communicate information with colleagues, subordinates, or supervisors in person or electronically.

The survey was distributed to all members of PERYON (4000 HR managers). A total of 143 survey responses were received after the two follow-ups with a response rate of 3.5%. This is a low response rate mainly because the target population was limited to HR managers who have at least two or more employees reporting. Of the 143 surveys completed, three participants did not meet the criteria of two or more reporting employees. Those three surveys were thus excluded from the study, leaving 140 surveys for data analysis.

The interview participants are those who completed the survey and agreed to be interviewed, based on answering the invitation question at the end of the questionnaire. There were 23 volunteers in total initially. In consideration of time and feasibility, 15 of them were selected randomly by using the lottery method to be interviewed.

The 5 semi-structured interview questions are designed to gain rich data regarding information behavior of HR managers. The interviews were conducted face to face with HR managers who are in Istanbul or by telephone if they are outside Istanbul during the last two weeks of August 2018. Before the interviews proceeded, all participants were asked if the interviews could be recorded and all agreed. The interviews on average lasted approximately 20 minutes each. Data collection instruments for this study are available upon request.

All the interviews were transcribed after they were done. Content analysis of words, phrases, and passages were used to analyze interview data. Data coding was performed by examining interview transcripts for identifying relevant texts and repeating ideas. A coding schema was established by the researcher via open coding. In order to ensure validity and reliability, the researcher used the split-half technique. More specifically, after the first half of the interview data was analyzed, the researcher took a break of one week and then continued to analyze the second half of the interview data. The results of two interview transcripts, each randomly chosen from the first and second half of the data were compared for consistency. The consistency rate between the two transcripts was 95%, exceeding the acceptable-to-all rate of 90% (Neuendorf, 2002: 143). This consistency rate also indicates the reliability of both the coding schema and coding process.

The questionnaire survey data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS to calculate descriptive statistics and find out the factors that make a difference on information behaviour of HR managers. After the normality test were ran, the factors (e.g., gender) that have two levels and normally distributed were analyzed through independent sample t-test; the factors (e.g., work experience and company size) that have more than two levels and not normally distributed were analyzed through Kruskal Wallis; and those (e.g., age industry type, and number of employees reporting) that have more than two levels and normally distributed were analyzed through ANOVA. Also, the differences obtained through ANOVA among the means are further compared through Tukey Post-hoc test.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. The Profile of Study Participants**

This section presents the demographics of the survey and interview participants as shown in Table 1 and Table 2. The demographic profile of study participants, to a certain degree reflects the characteristics of the HR manager population in PERYON. The majority (62.1%) of the HR managers who participated in the survey are females while 37.9% of them are males. Over 75% of HR managers are under the age of 41 and only 2.9% of them are over the age of 51. The age group of 31-41 is the largest, representing 51.4% of

respondents, followed by 24.3% of respondents who belonged to the age group of 21-30. On the other hand, 21.4% of respondents fall in the age group of 41-50.

Among all the HR managers surveyed in this study, 30% had 3 years or less work experience, 42.9% had 4 to 10 years and 27.1% had 10 years or more (See Table 1). The majority of the research participants (72.9%) have less than 10 years of experience in HR, which can be explained that HR managers in Turkey are relatively young and have not been in the workforce for a long time. These findings support that HRM practices in Turkey are usually done by young women in organizations (Ayca, 2001). The reasons why women in Turkey prefer human resources as a career field might be their management, organization, problem solving and communication skills. When we look at the social structure of Turkish families, we can see that women oversee coordinating and organizing roles.

**Table 1.** The Demographics of Survey Participants

Demographic Factors		Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	87 (62.1)
	Male	53 (37.9)
Age	21-30	34 (24.3)
	31-40	72 (51.4)
	41-50	30 (21.4)
	50+	4 (2.9)
Years of Experience	3 years and below	42 (30)
	4 to 9	60 (42.9)
	10 years and more	38 (27.1)

Moreover, among all the HR managers interviewed, the majority (53.4%) are female and have more than 10 years of experience. 33.3% of them are over the age of 41 while 20% are over the age of 31 and 26.7% are over the age of 50 (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** The Demographics of Interview Participants

Demographic Factors		Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	8 (53.4)
	Male	7 (46.6)
Age	21-30	3 (20)
	31-40	3 (20)
	41-50	5 (33.3)
	50+	4 (26.7)
Years of Experience	3 years and below	3 (20)
	4 to 9	4 (26.7)
	10 years and more	8 (53.4)

#### 4.2. Overview of HR Managers' Information Behavior

Information behavior refers to information source, use and share in this study. Data gathered from the check-all-that-apply question for information source shows that HR managers participated in this study use all kinds of information sources included in the survey quite often. As shown in Table 3 applicant documents, job descriptions, people, candidate evaluation forms, and e-mails are all used over 90% of the participants. Social media has the lowest percentage of usage (80.7%) in comparison.

HR managers plan, direct, and coordinate different functions of an organization such as talent acquisition, compensation, benefits, and employee relations. They oversee the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of new staff; consult with top executives on strategic planning; and serve as a link between an organization's management and its employees. According to the interview data, they believe that more

information is better to make good decisions. Therefore, they prefer to use as much information sources as they can reach. They also indicate that employee selection and dismissal decisions are the most difficult decisions that require them to use applicant documents, job descriptions, people, candidate, and performance evaluation forms more often compare to other information sources. Interviewee#1, HR manager of a demo-cosmetic company and interviewee#5, HR manager of a pharmaceutical company expressed their feelings in the same way:

“I believe that if I have more information, I can make better decisions although I know that it is not always the case.” (Interviewee#1)

“To make a good decision, I need to collect more information using different type of sources.” (Interviewee#5)

**Table 3.** Information Sources Consulted by HR Managers

Information Sources	Frequency (%)
Applicant Documents (resume, I9 Forms etc.)	137 (97.9)
Job Descriptions	134 (95.7)
People	132 (94.3)
Candidate Evaluation Forms	130 (92.9)
E-mails	128 (91.4)
Internal Memos	125 (89.3)
Benchmarking Data	125 (89.3)
Performance Evaluation Forms	122 (87.1)
Social Media	113 (80.7)

Table 4 displays the normalized ranking scores in descending order for the information sources used. The top three information sources used by HR managers are applicant documents, people, and e-mails. This is expected because of the following possible reasons the interviewees offered.

**Table 4.** Top Ranked Information Sources Consulted by HR Managers

Information Sources	Normalized Ranking Score
Applicant Documents	81.3
People	69.5
E-mails	29.1
Candidate Evaluation Forms	23.2
Performance Evaluation Forms	19.5
Job Descriptions	18.2
Benchmarking Data	17.5
Internal Memos	11.9
Social Media	8.3

Among all the responsibilities that HR professionals have, recruiting is a vital function of HRM. In fact, it is better to say “Talent Acquisition” instead of recruiting because recruitment and selection are two different things. Talent Acquisition consist of both. Recruiting is about attracting people, bringing them into the door while selection refers to picking or choosing the right candidate, who is most suitable for a vacant job position in an organization. Employee selection processes cannot start without applicant documents (resumes, cover letters, application forms, etc.) that give HR managers basic information about the candidate, and help them select the right ones for interview and therefore they are concrete, reliable, and easily accessible sources used and reviewed the most by HR managers for making employee selection decisions.

Since HRM plays a strategic role in managing people, dealing with people is an integral part of it. According to the interview data, HR managers indicate that they prefer to use people as the second information source to make sure that the information is factual before making any kind of decisions based on what they read, hear, or see. It is important to find out that the information HR managers receive and share with others is coming from a reliable source. Using people as an information source enable them to know whether the documented sources are reliable or not as well as to receive more detailed information since they have a chance to ask questions and analyze body language. Interviewee#7, HR director of a big hotel chain says that:

“Sometimes, we may encounter people who give wrong information purposely or accidentally on applicant documents. In such cases, we use people as another important source to confirm the information on applicant documents.” (Interviewee#7)

Interviewee#11 commented that people are useful information sources to receive feedback about job patterns, subordinates, or superiors, therefore they have formal or informal conversations with their employees regularly. Interviewee#15 also thinks that it is important to be in touch with the people for all managers.

“What Paul says about Peter tells us more about Paul than about Peter.” (Interviewee#11)

“It is more accurate and effective to meet people face to face and get information from them.” (Interviewee#15)

Electronic mail (e-mail) is a good example of information and communication technologies (ICTs) widely used as an effective communication tool for transmitting information in organizations. Nowadays, it is common for people and organizations to work in different geographic locations, communicating via e-mails for managing projects. The interview data demonstrates that speed, low cost, simplicity, convenience, usability, and ability to attach information and share it with different people are the main reasons for e-mail usage by HR managers. Most HR managers interviewed indicates that e-mail allows information flow and sharing in large quantities and simultaneously to multiple recipients, regardless of where they are, almost instantaneously reduces costs, and is quite easy to use. However, a few of them, mentioned about some drawbacks of e-mail.

“It can cause misunderstandings and information overload. Recipients may misinterpret the sender’s message.” (Interviewee#8)

“It requires timely responses and lacks a personal touch.” (Interviewee#13)

According to the questionnaire data about information use of HR managers (see Table 5), social media, e-mails and internal memos are less often reviewed or valued compared to other information sources. Job descriptions are reviewed as often as applicant documents and people (M=5.6).

**Table 5.** Frequency of Information Sources Reviewed or Valued

<b>When making HR related decisions:</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I prefer to consult and review applicant documents.	5.6
I prefer to consult and review job descriptions.	5.6
I prefer to consult and review people.	5.6
I prefer to consult and review candidate evaluation forms.	5.5
I prefer to consult and review benchmarking data.	5.4
I prefer to consult and review performance evaluation forms.	5.3
I prefer to consult and review other information sources.	5.0
I prefer to consult and review internal memos.	4.8
I prefer to consult and review e-mails.	4.6
I prefer to consult and review social media.	3.9

The interview participants state that applicant documents, job descriptions and people are the information sources they should use and review closely for their employee selection decisions. They also mention the importance of job analysis practices in Turkey to create right job descriptions. Job analysis is a systematic process of collecting information about all the parameters of a given job such as its basic responsibilities, tasks, duties, skills, physical and mental requirements of job applicants. As a result of job analysis, job descriptions are formed. They allow companies to identify candidates that are a good fit for the job and, also to hold candidates accountable if they are not performing essential duties required. They can also be used to determine training needs when expectations or requirements are not met. In addition, job descriptions can be helpful for developing interview questions.

As shown in Table 5, performance evaluation forms, candidate evaluation forms and benchmarking data are also highly reviewed. Most interview participants indicate that they use and review candidate evaluation forms as an information source for selection decisions; benchmarking data usually for compensation decisions; performance evaluation forms for pay, promotion, retention, and training decisions. They explain that they know about employees' strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan for correcting any deficiencies or reinforcing the strengths through performance evaluation forms.

“Performance evaluation forms are a fundamental source of information we frequently use and review to determine employees' strengths and weaknesses and meet their training needs. We also make our wage work and motivational activity plans by looking at them” (Interviewee#9)

As it is stated above, the findings show that e-mail, social media, and internal memo are important types of information sources that HR managers consulted in Turkey (see Table 3 and 4). However, they are not reviewed or valued as much because of the credibility issues (see Table 5).

Social media (e.g., Facebook, Wikipedia, LinkedIn) whose content is contributed by end users has become increasingly popular as information sources, while the trustworthiness of information from such sources is often questionable and difficult to assess. When interview participants asked about their social media usage, most of them described social media as an effective communication tool for the company overview and a new trend that gives you a fast access to information. Most of them believe that reviewing social media when making HR related decisions about candidates or employees is not right and ethical since it is a risky platform and not a reliable information source. Mr. Steve, one of the interviewees who works as a Talent Manager in a large manufacturing company especially emphasized that he used social media a lot for recruiting purposes but never reviewed it for making any decisions.

“Social media is just an effective communication tool to reach out to candidates for me.” (Interviewee#9)

On the other side, the majority of interviewees mention about the same reasons for not reviewing e-mails and internal memos often for making HR decisions. They describe internal memos as instructions, announcements, or procedures to inform people. Since they have a limited scope, detail information which for making decisions cannot be provided by a memo. In addition, they talk about the disadvantages of written communication. In written communication, the interpretation is fully left to the receiver which cause misunderstandings. Therefore, all written communication tools such as e-mails, and internal memos must be supported by other information sources. For example, Interviewee#2 stated that:

“I use e-mails to confirm something and sometimes to review disciplinary actions, but they must be always supported with other information sources such as people or candidate evaluation forms.” (Interviewee#2)

The most important form of sharing information is by communication, where people make their thoughts and wishes known to one another. HR managers communicate in many ways such as talking, writing letters, making telephone calls, and using the internet and social media in organizations. Without communication, they would not know what their employers and employees need and could not perform their responsibilities efficiently.

Table 6 shows the frequency of people communicated by HR managers to share or exchange information. Most HR managers surveyed tends to share or exchange information with their supervisors more than their colleagues and subordinates (M=5.9) but the difference among the mean values is not large.

**Table 6.** Frequency of People Communicated

To share or exchange information:	Mean
I tend to communicate with my supervisors.	5.9
I tend to communicate with my colleagues.	5.8
I tend to communicate with my subordinates.	5.7

When the 15 interviewees were asked about the reasons for their ranking, they pointed out the importance of effective communication for HR people in an organization. Effective communication in both verbal and written form is key to any organization's success regardless of the company size. Sharing information via communication is also critical for HR managers because they are the first representative of the company. They must be in sync with the organization's leadership and its workforce to support internal and external customers, manage change within the organization, and build the integrity of the HR department. They are like a bridge between top management and employees. They are supposed to filter and organize the information received from employees before conveying it to the top management, and vice versa.

HR managers regularly interact with top management because they form partnerships with top leaders to develop the company's strategic direction. They consult with top executives regarding the organization's strategic planning and talent management issues. Moreover, based on the documents created by the HR department all around the year such as performance evaluation forms and job descriptions, specific business decisions are taken to meet the goals of the company.

HR managers need to demonstrate a desire to share information with their colleagues in order to get different opinions and views, make criticism, obtain benchmarking data as well as discuss about laws and current events related to HR. What is presented in Table 6 is based on the survey results from all the 140 participants. According to interview data, the rank order is different. Seven out of 15 HR managers interviewed indicate that they share or exchange more information with their colleagues than with their supervisor or subordinates since communicating colleagues is easier, more comfortable, enjoyable, and blissful for them.

"I learn a lot from my colleagues, so I prefer to exchange information more often with them." (Interviewee#4)

"Communicating colleagues provides us with benchmarking opportunities." (Interviewee#7)

"I constantly discuss about the laws, current issues and exchange information with my colleagues delightfully." (Interviewee#10)

In contrast, six of them indicate that they tend to communicate with their subordinates more often than with their colleagues and supervisors. Communicating with subordinates is as important as communicating with supervisors and colleagues for HR leaders because subordinates are the people with whom they share responsibilities while performing the job. As HR professionals, they should create trust. The way they talk, inform, or give feedback to their team has a huge effect on them and on the way they work.

"I believe that when the sense of trust is strong between HR managers and their subordinates, it adds efficiency to other elements of workplace productivity such as loyalty and change management." (Interviewee#4)

One interviewee speaks off that before she says anything to her team, she tries and looks at the situation from every angle because sometimes it seems the team is at fault, where in fact workplace policy

or another department entirely has caused the problem. Another interviewee who ranked subordinates as the first people for information sharing explains that:

“The employee-manager relationship is one of the primary components to a strong organizational culture. Subordinates rely on their managers for career development and guidance on how to improve their skills.” (Interviewee#6)

This section reports the study findings on HR managers’ information behavior. In summary, applicant documents, job descriptions and people are the most frequently used information sources while social media, e-mails and internal memos are the least frequently reviewed or valued information sources among this study’s participants. Moreover, HR managers participated in this study prefer to communicate with their supervisors more often than they communicate their colleagues and subordinates.

#### 4.3. Manager Related Factors versus Information Behavior

Using t-test, ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis, this study tried to identify manager related factors (i.e., age, gender, work experience and number of employees reporting) that make a difference on information behaviour of HR managers. After the normality test were ran, the factors (e.g., gender) that have two levels and normally distributed were analyzed through independent sample t-test; the factors (e.g., work experience) that have more than two levels and not normally distributed were analyzed through Kruskal Wallis; and those (e.g., age and number of employees reporting) that have more than two levels and normally distributed were analyzed through ANOVA. Also, the differences obtained through ANOVA among the means are further compared through Tukey Post-hoc test.

According to the study findings, gender, work experience and number of employees reporting are not found as a significant factor for any of the three information behavior dimensions: information source, information use, and information share since the significance (p) value for all dimensions came out to be more than 0.05. Age is the only manager related factor which makes a difference on information source ( $F=3.536$ ,  $p=0.021$ ), information use ( $F=2.576$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) and information share ( $F=2.178$ ,  $p=0.009$ ) in this study. Therefore, it should not be ignored in information behavior studies because there might be age differences regarding information behavior dimensions (i.e., information source, use and share) this study explores. The type of information sources that HR managers use, and value, and the people whom they communicate with might change due to age differences.

**Table 7.** The Relationship between Manager Related Factors and Information Behavior: p-values

Manager Related Factors	Information Source	Information Use	Information Share
Gender	0.590	0.240	0.455
Age	0.021*	0.001*	0.009*
Work Experience	0.994	0.739	0.715
Number of Employees Reporting	0.677	0.589	0.990

This study finds that younger HR managers use people, job descriptions and social media as information sources more often or frequently than older HR managers. They also use and share more information than their older colleagues as well. Findings of previous studies revealed that regardless of the profession, age does affect the information behavior of professionals (Barnard, 1991; Goodman, 1993; Almutairi, 2011a). Likewise, this study found the same results in the context of HR managers.

With the advance of technology, the nature of work has changed from handwork to knowledge work which requires people to use and share more information. Younger HR managers need improve their communication skills to get a high skilled job or to be more productive. As a result, they use non- documented information sources such as people (e.g., conversation with colleagues, employees, candidates, visitors,

managers) more than older HR managers. People as non-documented sources provide information instantly and it is also quite easy to handle since they are live sources.

Since HR activities or HR managers' responsibilities has shifted from operational to strategic due to trends that shape HRM, young HR managers usually focus on guiding and communicating the vision and mission of the company, leading big projects and finding new ways to develop their staff to be successful. Today, most of the operational and traditional HR activities are done through HRIS, therefore HR managers are getting involved in strategic planning and decision-making processes more often.

#### 4.4. Company Related Factors versus Information Behavior

Using ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis , this study also tried to find out company related factors (i.e., company size and industry type) that have an impact on information behaviour of HR managers. The factors (e.g., company size) that have more than two levels and not normally distributed were analyzed through Kruskal Wallis; and those (e.g., industry type) that have more than two levels and normally distributed were analyzed through ANOVA. Also, the differences obtained through ANOVA among the means are further compared through Tukey Post-hoc test.

The study findings indicated that only industry type is found to be a significant factor on all of the information behavior dimensions: Information source ( $F=2.989$ ,  $p=0.000$ ); information use ( $F=3,756$ ,  $p=0.001$ ); information share ( $F= 4,226$ ,  $p=0.008$ ) and company size is not found to be a significant factor on any dimensions of information behavior in this study ( $p>0.05$ ) (see Table 8). A possible explanation for this result is the context where this study was conducted, that is, the companies where Turkish HR managers work. Researchers have argued that a difference in context may lead to differences in results (e.g., Straub et al., 1997; Rose & Straub, 1998). Since there are generally small and mid-sized companies in Turkey, the number of employees in three categories (small, medium, and large) are remarkably close to each other.

**Table 8.** The Relationship between Manager Related Factors and Information Behavior: p-values

Company Related Factors	Information Source	Information Use	Information Share
Company size	0.590	0.240	0.455
Industry Type	0.000*	0.001*	0.008*

The results of this study show that HR managers in service industries tend to share more information than HR managers in manufacturing industries and prefer to use and value benchmarking data and people more than other information sources examined in this study (i.e., applicant documents, e-mails, candidate evaluation forms, performance evaluation forms, job descriptions, benchmarking data, internal memos, social media). A possible reason for this may be that offering services require less natural capital and more human capital than producing goods.

Industry is an integral part of any economy. Since the industrialization, industry has experienced the different shifts because of the technological changes and innovations. Most economies have come to depend on service industries in which companies' main product is an asset of actions performed for a client by the business's employees due to changing nature of work. As a result, the role of HR managers in organizations has changed from responsibilities of hiring and training workers, managing a company's payroll, and dealing with labor issues to a broader, more conceptual, and strategic set of responsibilities (e.g., involving in strategic planning and decision making) Today, HR managers in service industries concentrate on the human factor more and try to make it central to the technological world in which we now live. Therefore, the information sources they use, and value would change accordingly.

## 5. Conclusions

As we get deeper and deeper into the information age, the organizations need to keep up with the changes that information society brought. The transformation of business from production era to relationship-based era increases the importance of how HR managers use and share information at the workplace. HR Managers constitute a unique information user group and research focused on their information behavior can be used to explain how this group may deal with the relevant or irrelevant information while making HR related decisions.

Today HR managers are the true assets and vital tools for competitive advantage because they have the responsibility to deal with the human. To cope with the changes that technology brought, HR managers should use different ways to add value to the HR services they provide.

Three major conclusions can be drawn to describe the differences in information behavior of HR managers in this study. First, HR managers tend to choose multiple information sources. Second, they often consult to applicant documents, job descriptions, people, and e-mails but they rarely review or value social media, e-mails and internal memos when making HR related decisions. Third, they prefer to communicate with their supervisors more often than with their colleagues and subordinates.

HR managers need accurate, reliable, concrete, and easily accessible information sources to develop, deliver and assess the effectiveness of its policies, programs, and services, to make informed decisions. Nowadays, there is more information accessible more conveniently than in the past. However, due to the proliferation of information available, reliability and accuracy has become a major concern. To overcome these concerns, HR managers choose multiple sources that complement each other. Thus, organizational leaders should think of that deficiencies and try to find ways such as offering effective written communication trainings to or developing HR managers' search strategies on social media to decrease disadvantages of some types of information sources (i.e., e-mails, social media, and internal memos).

Information behavior plays a role over an organization's information management processes and policies since it is one of the important components of information environment. Organizations should analyze social, economic, political-legal, and technological information environment opportunities to redesign their information management processes and practices. Therefore, understanding what kind of sources HR managers use and value and whom they communicate with for information sharing is essential for leadership to manage information in a better way. For instance, if HR managers favor some types of sources (e.g., applicant documents, e-mails, job descriptions), the organization should make sure those sources are readily available to them.

Thus, organizations need to recognize that creating effective and efficient HR managers does not come by chance; rather, an incredibly careful planning is needed, which should focus on the key issues and consider all important variables (e.g., information behavior of HR managers). This research gives organizations a chance to broaden their view on how HR managers in Turkey use, value and share information and as a practical implication, they may consider different ways to enhance their HR Managers' information behavior to have well-organized information flow.

Due to a number of constraints such as time, this study has the following limitations that can be addressed in future research. First, this study focused on only three information behavior dimensions (i.e., information source, use and share). Different dimensions such as information characteristics can be considered in future research. Secondly, the study findings are obtained from HR managers in Turkey who are the members of PERYON. To enhance the generalizability of them, future research should be conducted in other countries (e.g., USA, Canada, and Australia) which have more large companies and analyze all HR managers in those countries rather than only members of a specific HRM association.

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