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More Than a Tool: How Human Resource Information System Effectiveness Shapes Employee Relations Climate in an Indonesian Software-as-a-Service Company through Perceived Organizational Support

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ABSTRACT

HRIS research has predominantly examined technical adoption, user satisfaction, and system efficiency, leaving its relational consequences, particularly for employee relations climate and the role of perceived organizational support (POS), theoretically underdeveloped despite their relevance to knowledge sharing and innovation. This study examines how HRIS effectiveness shapes employee relations climate in a SaaS company in Indonesia and explores how POS shapes employees' interpretation of this relationship. A theoretically informed qualitative phenomenological approach with thematic analysis was applied to semi-structured interviews with 14 purposively sampled employees, with theoretical saturation and member-checking ensured trustworthiness. Three themes emerged: HRIS effectiveness signals organizational competence and fairness; employee relations climate is co-produced through information quality and relational norms; and among participants reporting high POS, organizational support consistently amplified the relational benefits of HRIS effectiveness. Because the sample lacked employees with sustained low POS, the hypothesized attenuating and asymmetric components remain untested. The findings extend the DeLone and McLean IS Success Model into the relational domain and provide HR leaders with a framework for understanding how HRIS investments are interpreted when organizational support is already high, while identifying the hypothesized attenuating role of POS under low-support conditions as a theoretically grounded direction for future confirmatory research.

Keywords: HRIS Effectiveness, Employee Relations Climate, Perceived Organizational Support, Psychological Safety, Justice Climate, Trust Climate
JEL Classifications: J28, M12, M15, M54

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resource information systems (HRIS) occupy a structurally central position in the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) industry. Unlike traditional manufacturing or service organizations, SaaS companies depend on human capital as their primary productive asset: The quality, retention, and engagement of engineers, product managers, and customer-facing staff determine competitive positioning in ways that physical capital cannot replicate (Kavanagh and Johnson, 2018). In this context, the systems through which human resource processes are managed, communicated, and experienced carry consequences that extend well beyond administrative efficiency they shape how employees understand their relationship with the organization, how fairly they perceive institutional decisions to be made, and how safe they feel in expressing concerns or contributing ideas.

Despite this organizational significance, scholarly attention to HRIS has remained predominantly focused on technical dimensions: System adoption, user satisfaction, and information quality as predictors of operational performance (DeLone and McLean, 2003; Raja et al., 2024). This technical emphasis is consistent with Bondarouk et al. (2017) four-decade review of electronic HRM

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research, which found that adoption factors and efficiency outcomes have dominated the literature at the expense of its relational consequences. The relational consequences of HRIS effectiveness specifically its influence on the climate governing employee relations have received scant systematic attention. This gap is consequential. Employee relations climate, encompassing psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate, is among the most robust predictors of knowledge-sharing behavior, organizational commitment, and innovation capacity in knowledge-intensive organizations (Edmondson, 1999; Dong et al., 2024; Akter et al., 2024).

A further layer of theoretical complexity concerns the role of perceived organizational support (POS). Grounded in organizational support theory, POS refers to employees' global belief that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2020). From a social exchange theory perspective (Blau, 1964), POS shapes not merely employees' behavioral responses to organizational practices but the interpretive frameworks through which those practices are perceived. The implication is that the relational consequences of HRIS effectiveness are conditional on the support context in which the system is embedded: The same system may generate trust and a sense of justice in one organizational context, and suspicion or cynicism in another, depending on the degree of POS that employees bring to their encounters with it.

The present study addresses a specific gap at the intersection of these theoretical streams. Three research questions guide the inquiry. First, how do SaaS employees perceive HRIS effectiveness in terms of system efficiency, information transparency, and service accessibility and how do these perceptions shape their daily work experiences? Second, in what ways does HRIS effectiveness influence employee relations climate, with specific reference to psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate? Third, how does POS moderate the relationship between HRIS effectiveness and employee relations climate, and what are the boundary conditions of that moderating effect?

The study makes four contributions. First, it extends the DeLone and McLean (2003) is success model into the relational domain, demonstrating that system, information, and service quality carry meaning beyond efficiency. Second, it identifies HRIS platforms as undertheorized structural antecedents of employee relations climate, complementing leadership and culture-centric accounts. Third, it provides empirical qualification of the POS moderation effect, revealing an asymmetric pattern that has not previously been theorized. Fourth, methodologically, it demonstrates the analytical yield of phenomenological inquiry in HRIS research, generating mechanistic insights unavailable through survey methods.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. HRIS Effectiveness in Knowledge-Intensive Organizations

HRIS effectiveness is understood in this study as the degree to which an HR information system fulfills its intended purposes across technical, informational, and service dimensions. The theoretical foundation is the information systems success model of DeLone and McLean (2003), which identifies system quality, information quality, and service quality as the constituent dimensions of IS success. In the present study, these are operationalized as system efficiency, information transparency, and service accessibility, respectively, a mapping that is consistent with prior HRIS scholarship (Raja et al., 2024; Thielsch et al., 2018).

System efficiency refers to the technical reliability, processing speed, and automation capacity of the HRIS. In knowledge-intensive SaaS environments where organizational agility and rapid decision-making are competitive necessities an efficient HRIS reduces transactional friction and enables HR professionals to allocate attention toward strategic and relational functions. Raja et al. (2024), drawing on a systematic review of 41 peer-reviewed studies, identified technical efficiency as the most consistent predictor of HRIS user satisfaction. Critically, system reliability carries reputational weight: A dependable system signals organizational investment and competence, while persistent malfunction communicates institutional neglect. This behavioral significance of HRIS is corroborated in manufacturing settings, where Ololade et al. (2023) found that HRIS implementation meaningfully shaped employees' behavioural outcomes beyond its administrative function, and in more recent evidence from digitalizing organizations, where Zhou et al. (2025) demonstrated that employees' perceptions of digital HRM change shape their proactive workplace behavior through work engagement, with this pathway moderated by person-organization fit.

Information transparency concerns the accuracy, completeness, and equitable availability of HRIS-generated data. In organizations where performance evaluation, compensation benchmarking, and career development information are mediated through HRIS platforms, the quality and accessibility of that information directly shapes employees' perceptions of procedural and informational justice (Greenberg, 2011; Akter et al., 2024). Thielsch et al. (2018) found that information quality, alongside system reliability, was among the most important predictors of employee trust in workplace information systems, a pattern with direct relevance for HRIS given its role as a principal medium of HR communication.

Service accessibility addresses the equitable availability of HRIS functionalities across organizational roles and hierarchical levels. Differential system access between managerial and non-managerial employees is experienced not as a technical inconvenience but as a symbolic enactment of organizational inequality, with direct consequences for justice perceptions (Wang et al., 2020). The introduction of employee self-service portals has been associated with meaningfully improved perceptions of organizational equity and democratic access to HR information (Kavanagh and Johnson, 2018).

2.2. Employee Relations Climate: Conceptualization and Sub-Dimensions

Employee relations climate refers to the shared perceptual environment in which organizational members interpret and navigate their relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and

the institution (Mumtaz et al., 2024). This conceptualization is consistent with Beus et al. (2020) meta-analytic synthesis of domain-specific organizational climates, which demonstrates that climate perceptions reliably shape group-level outcomes across a wide range of organizational contexts. This study conceptualizes it as constituted by three sub-dimensions: Psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate.

Psychological safety, as theorized by Edmondson (1999) and subsequently confirmed across extensive empirical work including the meta-analytic review of Frazier et al. (2017), the systematic literature review of Newman et al. (2017), and the bibliometric review of Dong et al. (2024), denotes the shared belief that the interpersonal environment permits candid communication and intellectual risk-taking without fear of punishment or ridicule. While psychological safety has been studied primarily as a function of leadership behavior and team dynamics, and its withholding studied through the lens of employee silence (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2023), the present study proposes that institutional systems constitute an undertheorized structural antecedent of collective psychological safety.

Justice climate, in the aggregate sense theorized by Colquitt et al. (2001) and synthesized more recently by Adamovic (2023), denotes what the organizational community has come to hold in common regarding the fairness of institutional procedures and outcome distributions. Akter et al. (2024), studying transformational leadership in the hospitality industry, demonstrated that organizational justice significantly mediated the relationship between leadership and climate of trust, underscoring the significance of shared fairness perceptions as a relational construct.

Trust climate, defined by Dirks and Ferrin (2001) and revisited in the two-wave research synthesis of Dirks and de Jong (2022), refers to the aggregate confidence that organizational members invest in the institution and its representatives. Mumtaz et al. (2024) found that human relations climate predicted organizational readiness to change, with trust in organizational intent operating as the critical enabling condition. Longitudinal evidence further indicates that trust in workplace information systems develops dynamically over repeated interactions rather than forming instantaneously (Müller et al., 2024).

2.3. Perceived Organizational Support as a Moderating Construct

Perceived organizational support (POS), introduced by Eisenberger et al. (1986), comprehensively reviewed by Eisenberger et al. (2020), and quantitatively substantiated in Kurtessis et al. (2017) meta-analysis of 558 studies, refers to employees' generalized belief about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Three primary antecedents of POS are identified: Organizational care, the degree to which employees perceive the organization as genuinely invested in their welfare; well-being support, encompassing organizational provisions for physical, psychological, and work-life balance needs; and fair treatment, the consistent and equitable application of organizational rules and recognition policies. Prysmakova and Lallatin (2023), in a systematic review of 57 studies, identified fair treatment as the most powerful predictor of POS across organizational and national contexts. This centrality of fair treatment is reinforced by Aldabbas et al. (2025), who found that POS mediated the relationship between organizational justice and affective commitment among government employees, underscoring POS's role as the interpretive mechanism through which fairness perceptions are converted into relational and attitudinal outcomes.

The moderating potential of POS rests on its function as an interpretive frame. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Ahmad et al., 2023) predicts that when employees perceive high organizational support, they adopt a disposition of reciprocal goodwill that extends to their orientations toward organizational systems. Wang et al. (2020) demonstrated that the relationship between HR practices and employee performance outcomes was substantially stronger when employees simultaneously reported high POS. Peña et al. (2024) further demonstrated that well-being programs significantly strengthened POS perceptions, which in turn enhanced organizational performance.

This study proposes that the same moderating mechanism applies to the HRIS effectiveness-employee relations climate relationship: POS determines whether HRIS-driven practices are interpreted as affirming or indifferent, thereby amplifying or attenuating the climatic consequences of HRIS effectiveness. Critically, this moderating effect is theorized to be asymmetric: High POS amplifies relational benefits more powerfully than low POS diminishes them, because established goodwill buffers against the negative climatic effects of modest system limitations (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

2.4. Theoretical Framework and Propositions

Integrating social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Ahmad et al., 2023), organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2020), and the DeLone and McLean (2003) is success model within a socio-technical systems perspective (Trist and Bamforth, 1951; Baxter and Sommerville, 2011; Bednar and Welch, 2020), two theoretically derived propositions were formulated to sensitize data collection and guide interpretation, functioning as an orienting analytic framework rather than as hypotheses subjected to statistical test.

- Proposition 1: HRIS effectiveness encompassing system efficiency, information transparency, and service accessibility positively influences employee relations climate, comprising psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate, in SaaS organizational contexts.
- Proposition 2: POS is theorized to moderate this relationship such that the positive influence of HRIS effectiveness on employee relations climate is amplified under conditions of high POS and attenuated under conditions of low POS, with this moderating effect expected to be asymmetric. As a single-site qualitative design, the present study is positioned to illustrate the amplification component of this proposition where high POS is present in the sample, but not to test the attenuation component or the asymmetric structure, which require designs incorporating variation in POS.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Epistemological Positioning

A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted, grounded in an interpretivist epistemological tradition (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Phenomenology was selected because the study concerns the lived experiences and subjective meanings that SaaS employees attach to HRIS effectiveness, employee relations climate, and organizational support phenomena that are inherently experiential and resistant to reduction through quantitative measurement.

A clarification of epistemological positioning is warranted. The phenomenological orientation, as articulated by van Manen (2016) and situated within the broader methodological landscape reviewed by Neubauer et al. (2019), directs the researcher toward the experiential texture of participants lived encounters rather than toward causal propositions testable through statistical inference. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2021) was employed as the analytical method rather than as a competing methodological paradigm. This combination is consistent with a broader interpretivist approach: Phenomenological inquiry provides the orientation toward lived experience and reflexive attentiveness, while thematic analysis provides the systematic, transparent, and auditable procedure for moving from data to themes. As Braun and Clarke (2021) explicitly acknowledge, thematic analysis is compatible with a range of qualitative traditions and epistemological commitments, provided the analyst maintains reflexive clarity about its application. The reflexive journal maintained throughout this study serves precisely this function. This positioning is properly described as abductive rather than purely inductive: The two theoretical propositions outlined in Section 2.4 functioned as sensitizing concepts that informed the interview protocol and initial coding frame, while remaining open to elaboration, qualification, or disconfirmation through participants' own accounts. This theoretical sensitization does not convert the design into a hypothesis-testing study: No statistical inference is drawn, and the propositions are treated throughout as heuristic orienting devices rather than as claims subjected to confirmatory test.

3.2. Sampling and Participants

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure all participants possessed direct and substantive experience with both HRIS usage and the relational dimensions of organizational life under investigation (Patton, 2015). Inclusion criteria required (a) regular engagement with the organization's HRIS platform and (b) occupation of a clearly defined role within the organizational hierarchy. Participants were recruited across the full spectrum of role levels from junior operational staff to director to ensure that the perspectives of both those who experience HRIS-generated outputs and those who design and govern HR processes were represented.

A total of 14 participants were recruited from a single SaaS company headquartered in Indonesia specializing in HRIS development and implementation. The organization employed between 80 and 200 staff and operated a proprietary cloud-based HRIS platform. The single-organization focus was deliberate: The unique context in which employees simultaneously serve as the system's developers, users, and vendors creates a dual-perspective dataset of exceptional analytical richness, while holding organizational context constant to sharpen analytical clarity. This design decision, however, entails a boundary condition discussed fully in Section 6.2.

Theoretical saturation was determined through the following procedure: Coding of each new transcript was compared against a running codebook, with saturation declared when three consecutive interviews produced no codes that were both semantically distinct from and analytically irreducible to existing codes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This threshold was reached at the twelfth interview; two additional interviews were conducted to confirm saturation, yielding no new thematic material. Table 1 presents participant characteristics.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were generated through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted individually with each participant between April 2026 and May 2026. Interview durations ranged from 45 to 60 min. Sessions were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and audio-recorded with explicit written informed consent. Verbatim transcription was completed within 48 h of each interview. All transcripts were translated into English by the authors; back-translation was performed by a bilingual researcher external to the study to verify translation accuracy and conceptual equivalence, with discrepancies resolved through discussion.

The interview protocol comprised 19 primary questions organized around the three research questions and nine sub-variables (system efficiency, information transparency, service accessibility, psychological safety, justice climate, trust climate, organizational care, well-being support, and fair treatment), supplemented by flexible probing follow-ups designed to elicit elaboration and reflection. Field notes were maintained throughout and immediately following each interview.

3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021) was employed. In Phase 1, all transcripts were read repeatedly with initial impressions recorded in a reflexive journal. Phase 2 involved systematic open coding of the full dataset, generating 40 initial codes at the level of semantically meaningful data units. Phase 3 organized codes into candidate themes through iterative grouping, with a provisional thematic map constructed to visualize relationships. Phase 4 involved reviewing candidate themes against the full dataset for internal coherence and analytical distinctiveness, including a peer debriefing session with a researcher external to the study. Themes were defined and named in Phase 5 with precise analytical narratives. Phase 6 constitutes the written account of the analysis presented in Section 4.

Two analytical decisions warrant transparency. First, the thematic analysis was oriented by the study's theoretical framework, consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2021) acknowledgment that theoretically informed analysis is legitimate within reflexive thematic analysis provided the orientation is declared. The framework sensitized the analysis without determining its outcomes: Themes were grounded in participant data and could, in principle,

Table 1: Participant characteristics

ID	Gender	Role	Department	Tenure	HRIS Exp.
P01	M	Junior developer	Engineering	<1 year	<1 year
P02	M	Functional support staff	Functional support	2 years	2 years
P03	F	Implementation consultant	Implementation	<1 year	<1 year
P04	M	Sales representative	Sales	2.5 years	2 years
P05	M	UI/UX engineer	Engineering	7 years	7 years
P06	F	UI/UX designer	Engineering	4 years	4 years
P07	F	HR Officer	Human resources	2.5 years	2.5 years
P08	M	Associate project manager	Implementation	7 years	7 years
P09	M	Functional lead support	Functional support	6 years	6 years
P10	F	Sales manager	Sales	7 years	7 years
P11	M	Associate project manager	Engineering	7 years	7 years
P12	M	Software developer	Engineering	5.5 years	5.5 years
P13	M	Implementation consultant	Implementation	6 years	6 years
P14	M	Implementation and Dev. Director	Management	7 years	7 years

Total n=14. Participant identifiers P01-P14 are used throughout in lieu of names to protect anonymity. Gender: M: Male, F: Female

have contradicted the theoretical propositions. Second, extracts are presented with analytical commentary that moves between the data and theoretical interpretation, rather than as raw evidence; this reflects the reflexive rather than realist character of the analysis.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was established through four criteria adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985) and operationalized following Nowell et al. (2017), consistent with the pillars of trustworthiness outlined by Ahmed (2024). Credibility was ensured through member-checking with six participants (who confirmed the accuracy and resonance of analytical claims), a technique whose value for enhancing credibility, beyond being a mere nod to validation, has been discussed by Birt et al. (2016), and peer debriefing with an external researcher. Transferability is supported through thick description of participants, organizational context, and analytical decisions throughout this account. Dependability was established through a systematic audit trail of coding decisions. Confirmability was maintained through a reflexivity journal in which the lead author recorded methodological decisions, interpretive shifts, and potential sources of bias throughout the study.

All participants provided written informed consent, were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty, and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

4. FINDINGS

Thematic analysis generated three major themes, each comprising sub-themes that address the research questions. The thematic structure, including the 40 initial codes and their aggregation into sub-themes and themes, is summarized in Table 2. Data extracts from Bahasa Indonesia interviews were translated into English and verified through back-translation. All participant identifiers are coded P01-P14.

4.1. Theme 1: HRIS Effectiveness as a Structural Signal of Organizational Regard

The first theme describes how participants experienced HRIS effectiveness not merely as a technical attribute but as an institutional statement about the organization's competence, priorities, and regard for its members. Across all role levels, the quality of the HRIS carried meanings that participants connected directly to their sense of organizational membership and relational standing.

4.1.1. System efficiency as relational communication

Participants across all role levels described HRIS reliability in terms that extended well beyond operational convenience. When the system performed consistently and accurately, it communicated organizational seriousness and investment; when limitations arose, the speed and transparency of the organizational response itself carried positive relational meaning:

> "*With this system, everything becomes mobile. Before, you had to be physically at the office to submit anything. Now, leave requests, attendance, payroll everything from your phone. This kind of efficiency tells you the organization has thought about your daily experience.*" (*P04, Sales Representative*)

The analytical significance of this extract lies in the interpretive leap it enacts: The participant does not describe the mobile system as convenient but as evidence of organizational thoughtfulness about employee experience. This is consistent with Raja et al.'s (2024) finding that system reliability carries reputational weight, but extends it into the explicitly relational domain. The organization is not merely efficient; it is attentive.

Participants with prior experience in organizations without HRIS offered particularly illuminating comparative accounts. The transition from paper-based to digital processes was narrated not as a technological upgrade but as an act of organizational investment in employee well-being:

> "*Before joining here, everything was still paper forms leave requests, claims, all of it. Here, you just open the app. Approved or not, you can see the status. That difference tells you something about how much the company values your time.*" (*P05, UI/UX Engineer*)

Notably, the relational communication of system efficiency was not contingent on perfection. When technical issues arose, the organizational response itself became a secondary signal:

> "*When there are bugs, yes, they exist. But within the same day, there is already a hotfix. That speed tells you this*

Table 2: Thematic structure: From codes to themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative codes
Theme 1: HRIS effectiveness as structural signal of organizational regard	1.1 System efficiency as relational communication	System reliability as competence signal; hotfix responsiveness; comparison with paper-based systems; mobile accessibility as investment
	1.2 Information transparency as basis of fairness	Data-driven performance assessment; role-based access as privacy respect; accountability through automation; reduced subjectivity
	1.3 Service accessibility and organizational equity	Self-service as dignifying; NDA governance as trust signal; equitable access across levels; mobile-first design
Theme 2: Employee relations climate as co-produced through HRIS practices	2.1 Psychological safety through institutional openness	Hierarchy-free voice; HR as non-judgmental partner; system consistency as predictability; privacy in HR communication
	2.2 Justice climate through consistent HRIS application	Data-based appraisal; job grade transparency; uniform procedural enforcement; legible career progression
	2.3 Trust climate as accumulation of institutional interactions	Incremental trust-building; payroll accuracy as trust anchor; compounding positive interactions; trust as architecture
Theme 3: POS as interpretive frame	3.1 Organizational care as context for charitable interpretation	Care during personal crisis; sport facilities; transparent management; system limitation attribution shift
	3.2 Well-being support as relational capital	Work-life balance; performance bonuses; meal facilities; comparison with prior employers; non-instrumentalization
	3.3 Fair Treatment as foundation of sustained trust	Merit-based recognition; open compensation dialogue; longevity as validation; performance-linked rewards

is an organization that takes its own system seriously." (*P05, UI/UX Engineer*)

This finding introduces an important nuance: System efficiency as a relational signal operates not only through flawless performance but through demonstrated organizational responsiveness to imperfection. The relational message is organizational competence and commitment, not technical infallibility.

4.1.2. Information transparency as the structural basis of fairness

Information transparency emerged as the dimension of HRIS effectiveness most directly consequential for justice perceptions. Where the HRIS made performance data, attendance records, and HR-related information visible and consistently applied, participants reported a markedly stronger sense that decisions rested on legitimate and defensible grounds:

"*Because performance data is recorded in the system, the assessment is not just based on someone's opinion. There is data. That makes the whole process feel more objective and fair.*" (*P02, Functional Support Staff*)

This extract illustrates a key theoretical mechanism: Data visibility transforms HR processes from the exercise of personal discretion into the application of documented evidence, shifting the procedural frame from relational to institutional. Participants experienced this shift as protective rather than impersonal.

Role-based access control was universally experienced as a positive feature rather than a constraint. Participants across all levels described differential access as a logical and equitable arrangement that protected data integrity while respecting each employee's appropriate informational domain:

"*Access is limited according to level that is normal and positive. Not everyone needs to see payroll data or HR records. The limitation itself is a form of respect for privacy.*" (*P07, HR Officer*)

"*When the system is automated and transparent, everything is more accountable. Employees can see their own records. HR can show the data. There is less room for misunderstanding about what is fair.*" (*P07, HR Officer*)

4.1.3. Service accessibility and the experience of organizational equity

Service accessibility carried meanings that participants located firmly within the domain of fairness and dignity. The self-service character of the HRIS was experienced as a statement about organizational equity: That every employee, regardless of role or seniority, was entitled to direct access to their own HR information:

"*The fact that I can access everything from my mobile attendance, leave balance, pay slip without having to go to HR and ask, that feels respectful. It says: This is your data and you have the right to see it.*" (*P04, Sales Representative*)

This account is theoretically significant: The participant does not frame accessibility as a convenience feature but as a rights-based statement. Access to one's own HR data is experienced as a form of dignity. The organizational system communicates, through its design, that employees are trusted agents with legitimate informational entitlements rather than subordinates requiring mediated access.

4.2. Theme 2: Employee Relations Climate as Co-Produced Through HRIS Practices

The second theme describes how psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate were experienced by participants as co-produced through encounters with HRIS practices, rather than as purely interpersonal or leadership-derived phenomena. This theme advances the argument that institutional systems constitute underrecognized structural antecedents of employee relations climate.

4.2.1. Psychological safety through institutional openness

Participants drew consistent connections between the openness and responsiveness of the organizational system including both the HRIS and the HR function and their willingness to communicate openly, raise concerns, and engage in intellectual risk-taking. The consistency of the system's operation was experienced as institutional predictability that supported candid behavior:

> "*Here, there is no hierarchy that makes you afraid to speak. From the most junior to the director, everyone can give input. The HR system supports that because everything is visible and consistent there is no room for arbitrary treatment*." (*P08, Associate Project Manager*)

The analytical connection drawn here by the participant is theoretically significant: Psychological safety is attributed not solely to leadership openness but to the system's structural consistency, which eliminates the conditions under which arbitrary treatment could flourish. This finding extends Edmondson's (1999) account of psychological safety by identifying institutional systems as a structural source of the predictability and fairness that safety requires:

> "*If there is a problem with attendance or something in the system, I can directly contact HR. They respond well. There is no fear. And whatever I share is private it does not become gossip*." (*P05, UI/UX Engineer*)

4.2.2. Justice climate through consistent HRIS application

Justice climate crystallized, in participants' accounts, around the consistency with which HRIS rules and processes were applied across the organization. Where the system enforced identical procedures regardless of seniority, the resulting sense of procedural fairness consolidated into a broader climate of institutional justice:

> "*Performance appraisals are based on data in the system. It is not about who likes you or who knows you. The data is there for everyone. That makes the whole evaluation feel legitimate*." (*P03, Implementation Consultant*)
>
> "*Even though the title structure seems flat staff, manager, director inside the system there is a job grade. Junior staff, senior staff, supervisor. That internal structure makes it clear how you can progress. Without it, people would feel lost*." (*P07, HR Officer*)

These accounts point to a consistent theme: The HRIS's role-grade architecture renders the otherwise compact organizational hierarchy legible and navigable. Justice climate is maintained not through interpersonal reassurance but through structural transparency that makes progression criteria visible and objective.

4.2.3. Trust climate as an accumulation of institutional interactions

Trust climate, in participants' accounts, was neither instantaneous nor static: It was an accumulation of repeated encounters with institutional systems and organizational actors, built incrementally through consistent positive experiences. The HRIS featured prominently in this accumulation:

> "*Every time the system processes my leave correctly, every time payroll is right, every time I can see my own data without asking anyone these small moments add up. Over time they build a picture of whether the company can be trusted*." (*P11, Associate Project Manager*)

This account is analytically rich. Trust is framed as an architecture constructed from individually unremarkable institutional interactions, each of which is epistemically trivial but cumulatively constitutive. No single correct payroll processing engenders trust; the pattern of consistent correct processing, sustained across time, establishes an organizational character. This finding has important implications for HR technology investment: The relational value of HRIS accuracy is not captured in any single interaction but compounds across the employment relationship.

> "*Trust is not given. It is built. The system helps because it is consistent and transparent. But trust between people between teams, between staff and management that requires communication, openness, and being willing to fix what is wrong*." (*P14, Implementation and Dev. Director*)

The Director's account introduces an important qualification: The HRIS is a necessary but not sufficient contributor to trust climate. Interpersonal and communicative dimensions of trust remain irreducible to systemic consistency. This qualification is theoretically important and is revisited in the discussion of Proposition 1.

4.3. Theme 3: Perceived Organizational Support as the Interpretive Frame

The third theme addresses the moderating role of POS in shaping how employees interpret and respond to HRIS effectiveness. POS emerged across the dataset not as a discrete variable but as a fundamental orientating disposition a prior relational context through which all subsequent organizational experiences, including encounters with HRIS, were filtered and assigned meaning. A methodological note is warranted before presenting the findings: The dataset did not include employees reporting sustained low POS. As discussed in Section 6.2, this limitation is consequential for the evaluation of Proposition 2 and is explicitly accounted for in the discussion.

4.3.1. Organizational Care as the Context for Charitable Interpretation

Participants who reported strong perceptions of organizational care consistently described a greater capacity to contextualize HRIS limitations without attributing malign organizational intent. The knowledge that the organization genuinely invested in employee welfare made technical imperfections easier to accept:

> "*When I know the company actually cares there are sports facilities, there are bonuses when the company does well, the management is open then if the system has a bug, I don't think: They don't care about me. I think: They will fix it. That background knowledge changes everything*." (*P11, Associate Project Manager*)

This extract illustrates the interpretive mechanism through which organizational care moderates the relationship between HRIS limitations and climatic consequences. The participant explicitly identifies a cognitive reattribution: A system imperfection that, in a context of low organizational care, would be interpreted as

organizational neglect or indifference is instead interpreted as a temporary problem that the organization will address. POS generates, in Social Exchange Theory terms, a reservoir of interpretive goodwill that buffers the climatic consequences of technical imperfection.

> "*When my father passed away, this company responded. The HR and colleagues were there. After that, everything including the systems and the processes feels different. You know who they are. A difficult moment showed that*." (*P03, Implementation Consultant*)

This account reveals an important temporal dimension of POS: Organizational care manifested in a moment of personal crisis generates an enduring reservoir of goodwill that subsequently colors all organizational experiences, including interactions with HRIS. The interpretive frame established by an act of care in extremis extends forward in time, demonstrating that POS is not merely a current perception but a dispositional orientation shaped by organizational history.

4.3.2. Well-being support as relational capital

Well-being support was described as generating relational capital a reservoir of goodwill that accumulated through concrete demonstrations of care and subsequently shaped how employees experienced all aspects of organizational life, including their engagement with HR processes:

> "*The company supports sports activities. Bonus every three months if our project performance is good. Yearly bonus if the company profits. Meal facilities. These are not small things. They say: The company sees you as a person, not just a resource*." (*P08, Associate Project Manager*)
>
> "*From all the places I have worked, this is the most balanced in terms of working hours. There is almost no overtime. That balance is itself a form of organizational support it says your time and your life outside work also matter*." (*P12, Software Developer*)

Work-life balance emerged as a particularly salient dimension of well-being support. The absence of normative overtime was not experienced as a neutral default but as an active organizational statement that the organization recognizes employees as whole persons with legitimate lives beyond work. This non-instrumentalizing orientation toward employee time is experienced as relational capital that extends to interactions with the HRIS.

4.3.3. Fair treatment as the foundation of sustained trust

Fair treatment the consistent and equitable application of organizational rules and proportionate recognition of contributions was identified as the most foundational dimension of POS, functioning as a moral anchor against which all other organizational experiences were evaluated:

> "*Benefits are based on performance. Everyone gets what corresponds to their contribution. That system where rewards follow results is the fairest way to treat people. It is objective. It can be seen in the data*." (*P09, Functional Lead Support*)
>
> "*If I feel the recognition does not match my contribution, I can discuss it with my superior. The management here is open to that conversation. That openness the fact that you can raise it and it will be taken seriously that is what keeps me here after seven years*." (*P10, Sales Manager*)

This account reveals a distinctive mechanism through which fair treatment sustains organizational commitment: It is not the content of any particular decision but the openness of the process through which grievances can be raised that generates sustained trust. The possibility of legitimate contestation the knowledge that perceived inequities can be discussed and addressed maintains relational confidence even when specific outcomes may be disappointing. This finding is consistent with Prysmakova and Lallatin's (2023) identification of fair treatment as the most powerful predictor of POS across organizational contexts.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings offer a coherent account of the socio-technical relationship between HRIS effectiveness and employee relations climate in the SaaS organizational context, and illuminate the critical moderating role of POS. This section addresses the two theoretical propositions, identifies four substantive contributions to scholarship, and situates the findings within the existing literature.

5.1. Evaluation of Proposition 1

Proposition 1 held that HRIS effectiveness encompassing system efficiency, information transparency, and service accessibility positively influences employee relations climate, comprising psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate. The findings provide substantial support for this proposition, with an important qualification.

The data consistently demonstrate that system efficiency positively influences psychological safety and trust climate by generating institutional predictability and communicating organizational competence. Information transparency positively influences justice climate by replacing the exercise of personal discretion with the application of documented evidence. Service accessibility positively influences both justice climate and psychological safety by enacting organizational commitments to equity and dignity. These relationships are consistent with the theoretical predictions and with prior empirical work on HRIS user satisfaction (Raja et al., 2024) and information quality as a trust antecedent in workplace information systems more broadly (Thielsch et al., 2018).

The qualification, introduced by P14 (Director) and corroborated by multiple other participants, is that HRIS effectiveness constitutes a necessary but not sufficient condition for a positive employee relations climate. The interpersonal and communicative dimensions of psychological safety and trust climate including the quality of supervisor relationships, the openness of managerial communication, and the willingness to address interpersonal conflict remain irreducible to systemic consistency. Proposition 1 is therefore supported in qualified form: HRIS effectiveness is a significant structural antecedent of employee relations climate, but it operates within a broader relational ecology that HRIS platforms cannot fully constitute.

5.2. Evaluation of Proposition 2

Proposition 2 held that POS was theorized to moderate the HRIS effectiveness-employee relations climate relationship, amplifying positive climatic consequences under high POS and attenuating them under low POS, with the moderating effect expected to be asymmetric.

The high-POS portion of Proposition 2 is clearly and consistently illustrated in participants' accounts. Across all participants who reported strong perceptions of organizational care, well-being support, and fair treatment, the amplifying effect of POS on the climatic consequences of HRIS effectiveness was clearly discernible in their narratives: Technical imperfections were attributed to the organization's intent to improve rather than its indifference, and positive HRIS interactions were incorporated into a broader architecture of organizational trust. The accounts of P11, P03, and P08, among others, provide particularly clear illustrations of the interpretive mechanism through which POS amplifies climatic benefit.

A significant boundary condition of Proposition 2, however, must be acknowledged: The study's single-site design selected a context in which all 14 participants reported moderate to high levels of organizational support. No participant reported sustained low POS as a feature of their current organizational experience. This means the attenuation component of Proposition 2 and the asymmetric structure of the moderating effect cannot be directly demonstrated from the present data. More fundamentally, because moderation in the statistical sense requires variance in the moderating variable, this single-site qualitative design is not positioned to test moderation itself; it can only illustrate the pattern of interpretation among participants who share a common (high) level of POS. The proposition remains theoretically well-grounded, drawing on the broader POS and Social Exchange Theory literatures (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020), but its direct empirical demonstration requires designs that include organizational contexts in which POS varies more substantially. This limitation is treated as a primary agenda for future research.

A theoretically meaningful nuance is nonetheless discernible from the data. Several participants described prior employment contexts in which HRIS use coexisted with lower levels of organizational support, and in these retrospective accounts, the relational benefits of HRIS effectiveness were conspicuously absent. P12 (Software Developer), for example, noted that in a previous employer "the system was fine, but no one cared about you, so the system felt like surveillance, not support." This retrospective evidence provides suggestive support for the attenuation mechanism, while acknowledging its inferential limitations.

5.3. Theoretical Contributions

Beyond the propositions, four substantive contributions to scholarship emerge from the analysis.

The first contribution concerns the nature of HRIS effectiveness as an organizational phenomenon. Existing scholarship has treated HRIS effectiveness predominantly as a technical attribute whose organizational value lies in administrative efficiency (DeLone and McLean, 2003; Raja et al., 2024). The present findings demonstrate that employees experience HRIS effectiveness as relational communication: System efficiency signals organizational competence and investment; information transparency functions as a structural guarantor of procedural justice; and service accessibility enacts or contradicts organizational commitments to equity. This extension of the DeLone and McLean (2003) model into the relational domain represents a theoretically significant development for knowledge-intensive industries where the quality of the organization-employee relationship is itself a source of competitive value.

The second contribution advances the understanding of employee relations climate by identifying institutional systems as undertheorized structural antecedents of psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate. Prior scholarship has located the primary determinants of these constructs in leadership behavior, team dynamics, and organizational culture (Edmondson, 1999; Dong et al., 2024; Akter et al., 2024). The present findings demonstrate that HRIS platforms, as structural features of the organizational environment, exert independent influence on collective relational perceptions. The finding that role-based access control contributes to justice climate, and that consistent HRIS application generates trust perceptions that compound across the employment relationship, indicates that HR technology design choices carry relational stakes that scholarship and practice have not yet adequately theorized.

The third contribution provides empirically qualified support for the asymmetric moderating role of POS. While prior theoretical work, including Eisenberger et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2020), has proposed and quantitatively demonstrated the moderating function of POS, the present study offers a mechanistic account of how this moderation operates at the level of individual sense-making. The POS-as-interpretive-frame mechanism reveals that high POS does not merely statistically moderate the relationship between HRIS effectiveness and climatic outcomes it actively transforms the interpretive lens through which employees assign meaning to HRIS-driven experiences.

The fourth contribution is methodological. By adopting a phenomenological design in a domain where quantitative survey methods predominate, this study generates mechanistic and interpretive insights unavailable through statistical analysis. The discovery that trust climate is experienced as an architecture of individually unremarkable institutional interactions each contributing incrementally to organizational confidence is a theoretically generative insight that survey-based research is structurally unable to capture.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how HRIS effectiveness shapes employee relations climate and how POS moderates that relationship in the SaaS organizational context. Three themes emerged from the phenomenological analysis of 14 in-depth interviews: HRIS effectiveness as a structural signal of organizational regard; employee relations climate as co-produced through institutional

HR practices; and POS as the interpretive frame through which employees assign meaning to HRIS-driven experiences.

Proposition 1 that HRIS effectiveness positively influences employee relations climate is supported in qualified form: HRIS platforms are significant structural antecedents of psychological safety, justice climate, and trust climate, but operate within a broader relational ecology that they cannot fully constitute. Proposition 2, framed as a sensitizing theoretical proposition rather than a directly testable hypothesis, finds clear qualitative illustration in the high-POS amplification mechanism consistently described by participants; however, because the sample did not include employees reporting sustained low POS, this study cannot establish moderation in the statistical sense, and the attenuation component and asymmetric structure remain theoretically grounded propositions for future confirmatory research.

The central practical finding is that HRIS effectiveness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a positive employee relations climate. Its relational consequences are conditioned by the organizational support context in which the system is embedded. Organizations that invest in HRIS without simultaneously cultivating genuine organizational care, meaningful well-being provisions, and consistent fair treatment risk producing systems that are technically proficient but relationally inert.

6.1. Practical Implications

HR leaders in SaaS organizations are encouraged to approach HRIS investment decisions through the lens of relational signaling rather than solely through operational efficiency. The following specific recommendations emerge from the findings:

- Ensure equitable HRIS access across all role levels. Self-service access to personal HR data including pay slips, leave balances, and performance records should be available to all employees regardless of hierarchy. Role-based access control should be clearly explained to employees as a data governance mechanism, not an organizational privilege structure.
- Invest in HRIS responsiveness as a relational act. The speed and transparency with which technical issues are addressed including public acknowledgment of bugs and communication about resolution timelines generates relational capital independently of the issue itself. Organizations are encouraged to establish visible SLA-style commitments for HRIS issue resolution.
- Treat HRIS data transparency as a justice instrument. Performance data visible in the system should be the primary basis for evaluation decisions. Where subjective judgment necessarily complements system data, the basis for that judgment should be communicated explicitly to maintain procedural justice perceptions.
- Develop structured HR consultation programs. Multiple participants identified one-on-one HR consultation conducted privately and without fear of organizational repercussion as a meaningful gap in current organizational support provision. Structured, scheduled HR consultation sessions represent a low-cost, high-relational-yield investment.
- Treat well-being investment as interpretive infrastructure. Organizational provisions for sports, flexible working hours, meal facilities, and boundary-respecting working norms do not merely support employee health: They constitute the interpretive context through which HRIS-driven experiences are subsequently assigned meaning. HRIS investment without parallel well-being investment risks limited relational return.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study carries several limitations that should inform the interpretation of its findings and the design of future research.

The single-organization design, while analytically enabling through its contextual consistency and unique dual-perspective dataset, limits the direct transferability of findings to SaaS organizations operating in different cultural, regulatory, or market environments. Importantly, the organizational context selected was one in which all participants reported moderate to high POS, meaning the study cannot directly demonstrate the attenuation component of Proposition 2. Future research should deliberately seek organizations in which POS varies substantially, or adopt comparative designs spanning organizations with documented differences in employee support practices.

The cross-sectional design precludes longitudinal insights into how the HRIS-POS-climate relationship evolves as organizations grow, as HRIS platforms are upgraded, or as individual employees accumulate experience. A longitudinal design particularly one that tracks trust climate across a period of HRIS system change would contribute substantially to the understanding of the trust accumulation mechanism identified in Theme 2.

The sample's concentration within a single Indonesian SaaS company raises questions about the cultural generalizability of the findings, particularly given Indonesia's distinctive collectivist cultural orientation and the relationship between collectivism and POS dynamics. This concern is substantiated by Rockstuhl et al.'s (2020) 54-nation meta-analysis, which found that the strength and underlying mechanisms of POS effects systematically differ between individualistic and collectivistic cultural contexts. Comparative research across multiple national contexts would illuminate how cultural dimensions moderate the relationships examined here.

Finally, mixed-methods designs that combine the mechanistic depth of phenomenological inquiry with the statistical power of large-sample survey data would enable researchers to assess the generalizability of the theoretical model proposed here and to test the asymmetric moderating effect of POS with statistical rigor. The present study provides the theoretical architecture and mechanistic account that would ground such a quantitative extension.

A further boundary condition concerns the scope of HRIS functionality examined. The present study focused on core administrative and self-service functions rather than algorithmic or AI-driven HR applications, which raise distinct justice and trust concerns that this qualitative design was not positioned to capture. Recent research indicates that employees evaluate the fairness of AI-mediated HR decisions differently than human-mediated ones (Bankins et al., 2022), and that HR analytics

systems carry perils for employee trust and autonomy that are not yet fully understood (Giermindl et al., 2022). Kellogg et al. (2020) further show that algorithmic technologies reshape organizational control through mechanisms that may operate independently of the relational dynamics identified in the present study, while Glikson and Woolley's (2020) review of empirical research on trust suggests that employees' trust in AI-driven systems follows distinct antecedents from trust in human-mediated HR processes. As SaaS-based HRIS platforms increasingly incorporate predictive and automated decision-making features, future research should examine whether the relational mechanisms identified here extend to, or are disrupted by, algorithmic HR governance, a research agenda for which Kim et al. (2025) contemporary review of HR-technology relations offers a valuable organizing framework.

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