



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa

MASTER **MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

MASTER'S FINAL WORK **DISSERTATION**

**CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN SAP SUCCESSFACTORS
IMPLEMENTATION – CASE STUDY: BOSCH**

DULCE SIMÃO LIMA

JULY - 2026



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**SUPERVISION:
WINNIE PICOTO**

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*To everyone who supported
me throughout this journey,
and to those who reminded
me that perseverance is built
one step at a time.*

GLOSSARY

AI - Artificial Intelligence

CSF - Critical Success Factors

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning

HCM - Human Capital Management

HR - Human Resources

HRIS - Human Resource Information Systems

HRM - Human Resource Management

IS - Information Systems

MIS - Management Information Systems

SaaS – Software as a Service

TTF - Task-Technology Fit

UX – User Experience

VR/AR - Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality

ABSTRACT, KEYWORDS AND JEL CODES

This dissertation examines the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) influencing the implementation of SAP SuccessFactors, a cloud-based Human Capital Management system increasingly adopted in digital HR transformation. Although prior research extensively addresses ERP implementation success factors, limited attention has been given to HR-specific cloud solutions, whose implementation dynamics differ from traditional on-premises systems. To address this gap, the study investigates the organisational, technological, process-related, user-centric, and external factors shaping SAP SuccessFactors implementation outcomes within a multinational context, using Bosch as a case study.

A qualitative research design was employed, supported by semi-structured interviews conducted across multiple HR functional areas. Interview transcripts were analysed using Taguette, following an inductive–deductive thematic coding approach informed by existing ERP CSF frameworks and adapted to cloud-based HCM. The analysis identified six CSF dimensions and highlighted the relevance of cloud-specific factors such as cloud readiness, data integration, user experience, and regulatory compliance.

The findings demonstrate that traditional ERP CSFs remain essential but must be complemented by cloud-oriented considerations. The study contributes an updated CSF model tailored to SAP SuccessFactors and provides practical recommendations for organisations undertaking digital HR transformation.

KEYWORDS: SAP SuccessFactors; Critical Success Factors; Cloud HCM; Digital HR Transformation; ERP Implementation; Qualitative Case Study.

JEL CODES: M12 (Personnel Management / HRM); M15 (IT Management); O33 (Technological Change); O32 (Innovation Management); C88 (Data Analysis Tools); L86 (Information Services).

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PREFACE

This dissertation represents the conclusion of a journey that has been both academically enriching and personally transformative. My interest in digital transformation and Human Resources Information Systems emerged not only from theoretical study, but also from the professional path I began at **Bosch**, the first multinational company where I had the opportunity to work.

What started as an internship quickly evolved into my first full-time role, and over the years I explored several areas - from HR to automation, OutSystems developments, and other technological domains. Each experience broadened my understanding of organisational processes and strengthened my curiosity about how technology can reshape the way people and companies work.

Working in such a dynamic environment exposed me to the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing global systems such as SAP SuccessFactors. It also allowed me to witness firsthand the importance of collaboration, change management, and technological readiness — themes that later became central to this dissertation. The combination of academic learning and real-world exposure shaped not only the direction of this research, but also my professional identity and long-term aspirations.

This preface is therefore more than an introduction; it is a reflection of the growth, resilience, and curiosity that guided me throughout this process. It acknowledges the people, experiences, and environments that contributed to the development of this work and to the person I became while writing it.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout this dissertation and during my master's journey.

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I am profoundly grateful to the professionals at Bosch who participated in the interviews and shared their insights with openness and generosity. Their contributions enriched the empirical dimension of this study and provided invaluable perspectives on ERP implementation and digital HR transformation in a multinational context.

To my ISEG colleagues, from my year and beyond, thank you for the shared study sessions, the exchanged notes, the spontaneous coffee breaks, the mutual encouragement, and the sense of community that made this journey lighter and more meaningful. Whether we met in classrooms, libraries, group chats, or by chance in the corridors, each of you contributed to making this experience unforgettable.

To my family and friends, thank you for your patience, motivation, and unwavering belief in me. Your support carried me through the most demanding moments and reminded me of the importance of balance, resilience, and perspective.

A special and heartfelt thank you goes to Olivia (my emotional-support bunny), who kept me company during countless hours of writing, coding, and revising. Your quiet presence, soft fur, and calming energy made even the most stressful days feel manageable.

Finally, to everyone who, in one way or another, contributed to my academic and personal growth during this master's programme. This achievement is not mine alone, it is shared with all of you.

Thank you!

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing digitalisation of organisations has significantly transformed Human Resources Management (HRM), leading companies to adopt more advanced technological solutions to improve efficiency, decision-making, and employee experience. In this context, Management Information Systems (MIS) play an important role in supporting and optimising HR processes. Among these technologies, cloud-based HCM systems, such as SAP SuccessFactors, have become increasingly relevant for organisations seeking integrated and scalable HR solutions.

At the same time, organisations are progressively transitioning from traditional on-premises Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems to cloud-based solutions. This shift introduces new organisational and technological challenges. Although extensive research exists regarding Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for ERP implementation, limited attention has been given specifically to SAP SuccessFactors and its implementation process. Most studies focus on ERP systems in general rather than HR-specific cloud solutions, creating a gap in the literature.

Moreover, there is a growing trend towards cloud-based ERP systems, increasing the relevance of solutions such as SAP SuccessFactors (Saes, 2024). Additionally, on-premises and cloud-based ERP systems possess different strengths and benefits (Shukla, Agarwal, & Shukla, 2012), which raises the question of whether they also present different implementation success factors. Since SAP SuccessFactors is an HR-specific system, it is important to understand whether it has distinct CSFs when compared to traditional ERP systems.

Therefore, the main research question guiding this study is:

- Why are Critical Success Factors associated with the successful implementation of SAP SuccessFactors in organisations relevant?

Additionally, this study seeks to answer the following questions: “How does the implementation of SAP SuccessFactors impact HR processes and organisational efficiency?”; “Do these Critical Success Factors differ between companies of different sizes?”; “What are the main challenges organisations face during implementation, and

how can these be mitigated?"; "What role does organisational culture play in successful implementation?"

Existing literature identifies factors such as top management support, training, communication, and change management as essential for ERP implementation success. However, there is still limited research regarding whether these factors fully apply to SAP SuccessFactors. This study also considers the perspective of multinational organisations such as Bosch, whose implementation experiences may provide valuable practical insights.

To address these questions, this research will adopt a qualitative approach based on literature analysis, interviews, and secondary data analysis. The study will also rely on theoretical frameworks such as Change Management Theory and the Task-Technology Fit model.

The main objective of this research is to identify and analyse the Critical Success Factors associated with SAP SuccessFactors implementation and evaluate their influence on HR processes and organisational efficiency. More specifically, the study aims to:

- Identify and analyse Critical Success Factors for SAP SuccessFactors implementation;
- Evaluate the impact of SAP SuccessFactors on HR processes and organisational efficiency;
- Identify implementation challenges and possible mitigation strategies.

This research contributes to existing literature by providing a focused analysis of SAP SuccessFactors implementation, an area that remains underexplored compared to broader ERP research. Furthermore, the findings may provide practical recommendations to support organisations in improving implementation effectiveness and managing digital transformation initiatives.

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Following this introduction, the literature review discusses digital transformation in HR, MIS, ERP systems, and SAP SuccessFactors. The next chapters present the conceptual model, methodology, research findings, and conclusions, including contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing digitalisation of organisations has significantly transformed Human Resources Management (HRM), leading companies to adopt more advanced technological solutions to improve efficiency, decision-making, and employee experience. In this context, Management Information Systems (MIS) play an important role in supporting and optimising HR processes. Among these technologies, cloud-based HCM systems, such as SAP SuccessFactors, have become increasingly relevant for organisations seeking integrated and scalable HR solutions.

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2.1. Digital Transformation of Human Resources Management

Digital Transformation has fundamentally changed how companies operate, engage with customers, and organise themselves (Westerman & Bonnet, 2014). It refers to an organisational shift driven by digital technologies that transform business operations, integrating tools such as analytics, cloud computing, and social platforms to enhance traditional workflows (Bilgeri, Wortmann, & Fleisch, 2017; Kane, Palmer, Phillips, Kiron, & Buckley, 2015).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is often referred to as Digital Human Resources Management which is the use of computer systems, telecommunication networks, and interactive media to perform HR functions (Vardarlier, 2020). This enables more data-driven and automated HR operations (Ketolainen, 2018).

Digital HR tools not only streamline operations but also enhance strategic decision-making, making them indispensable in modern HR practices. In Table 9 (in the Appendix) we can see multiple HR trends identified by different authors.

2.2. Management Information Systems

Management Information Systems (MIS) are automated tools that gather, store, and transfer data with the purpose of supporting organisational operations and decision-making (Laudon & Laudon, 2006; Mishra et al., 2015). These tools integrate information, that should be timely and accurate, enhancing planning and control processes (Adam, Mulye, Deans, & Palihawadana, 2002).

MIS and Information Systems (IS) are interchangeable concepts. However, IS focuses on technology-based communication, whereas MIS encompasses management and coordination functions (Davis, 2003). MIS improves efficiency through better department coordination, faster information access, and reduced labour (Mishra et al., 2015).

MIS has several categories as we can see in Figure 1 (in the Appendix) and one of them is Functional Business Systems, such as Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), which manage workforce data to streamline HR tasks (O'Brien & Marakas, 2007; Laudon & Laudon, 2006).

2.3. Enterprise Resource Planning Systems

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems can be defined as software solutions that automate core business functions, for example, manufacturing, finance, supply chain management and human resources management (HRM) (Gibson, Holland, & Light, 1999). They are also described as modular software packages which were designed to integrate and streamline business processes, facilitating real-time information sharing across the organisation (Robey, Ross, & Boudreau, 2002).

ERP systems leverage information technology to store data in a centralized database, enabling users to interact with it in an interface. The system then processes input data and generates outputs that can support decision-making at different organisational levels. When successfully implemented, ERP systems can speed up decision-making, enhance managerial control, and reduce overall costs (Gibson et al., 1999).

Regarding HRM, ERP systems are way more than just basic payroll and personnel management, incorporating all sorts of functions like planning, recruitment, employee evaluation, and training. Besides that, they also help organisations in competitive environments to optimize human resources, attract top talent, and reduce overall costs (Zhao & Tu, 2021).

In terms of recruitment, ERP systems streamline processes, reduce costs, and improve talent selection. For Payroll it can manage compensation in real time and adjust salaries based on employee performance evaluations. Additionally, ERP systems also integrate job management, scheduling, and attendance tracking. Another benefit is that these systems can enhance employee engagement by fostering motivation, proactivity, and dedication, ultimately improving performance (Radha & Aithal, 2023).

2.3.1. Critical Success Factors in ERP Implementation

Nowadays ERP solutions are considered vital for organisations and can often provide a competitive advantage (Stone & Zhang, 2021). However, several critical factors can influence the success of ERP implementation which companies must pay attention to.

Even though there are multiple models available regarding ERP implementations, the one provided by Somers & Nelson (which was later expanded by Finney & Corbett) keeps being considered as one of the most relevant. This model identifies several CSF that play

a crucial role in the success of ERP implementation projects. The main factors of this model are strong top management support, clear project goals, effective communication, user involvement, and comprehensive training (Somers & Nelson, 2001).

Top management support to ensure resource allocation and clear leadership. Well-defined goals and objectives that align with the organisation's business strategy to guide the implementation. Effective project management, with proper coordination and resource planning, to keep the implementation on track. Managing change and involving users early in the process to reduce resistance to change and promote system adoption. Ensuring data accuracy and integrity for a smooth operation of the system. Vendor support and a robust IT infrastructure to support the ERP system needs (Somers & Nelson, 2001).

Expanding on this, Finney and Corbett (2007) proposed a more detailed set of CSF for ERP implementation. The authors stressed the importance of an organisation's preparation to adopt an ERP system, which includes evaluating its culture, existing IT infrastructure, and alignment with ERP goals. Moreover, they also refer to the need for a clear understanding of the ERP system's scope and complexity, advising that organisations should scale the system to their specific needs to avoid unnecessary complications (Finney & Corbett, 2007).

Later, more detailed models were developed adding more CSFs, resulting in: top management support, clear project management, effective communication, change management, user training and engagement, data management and system fit.

Top Management Support is when we have the active commitment and involvement of top executives, which aids in resource allocation, conflict resolution, and fostering cooperation across the organisation (Finney & Corbett, 2007; Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau, 2003; Somers & Nelson, 2004).

Clear Project Management ensures that ERP implementation is guided by aspects like well-defined goals, resource allocation, and timelines. It aids in tracking progress and making necessary adjustments to keep the project on schedule (Nah et al., 2003).

Effective Communication and Change Management are both crucial because ERP systems often change established workflows, potentially leading to resistance from employees. To solve this, there could be created structured resistance management

programs and ensure effective communication throughout the process (Nah et al., 2003; Zhang, Lee, Zhang, & Banerjee, 2003).

User Training and Engagement are essential to ensure that employees not only understand how to use the system but that they are also committed to its successful implementation and usage (Zhang et al., 2003).

Data Management and System Fit both highlight the importance of aligning the ERP system with the organisation's specific needs and with the industry requirements. Seamless data migration can be considered critical to prevent because otherwise, it would mean data loss during the transition (Zhang et al., 2003).

This model provides a more structured and simplified approach while, at the same time, highlighting some aspects that are not explicitly mentioned in Finney & Corbett's model such as competitive pressure or IT personnel availability. By addressing all these CSFs successfully, organisations can increase the likelihood of a successful ERP implementation. This model will serve as a reference to this study, and it is illustrated in Figure 2. Furthermore, in Figure 3 there is an overview of CSF in ERP implementation with multiple authors (both figures in the Appendix).

More recently it was argued that the integration of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, can enhance the effectiveness of ERP systems, making their implementation even more complex and requiring additional critical success factors such as technological adaptability and continuous learning (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

2.4. SAP SuccessFactors

SAP SuccessFactors is a cloud-based Human Capital Management (HCM) software which supports multiple HR functions, including talent management, payroll, HR analytics, employee experience, and workforce planning. These tools allow personalized employee experiences, enhancing both engagement and productivity (SAP, 2024).

It was launched in 2001 and later acquired by SAP in 2012. Since then, SAP SuccessFactors has grown significantly, serving over 290 million users across more than 200 countries (SAP, 2024). Previously HR were a module in SAP ERP, which supported all traditional HCM practices. At the moment, the main areas of SAP Success Factors are Employee Experience Management (employee surveys, feedback analysis, and action

plans); Core HR and Payroll (HR information systems, payroll software, time/attendance tracking, and self-service HR); Talent Management (recruiting, onboarding, learning, compensation, performance management, and so on); HR Analytics and Workforce Planning (AI-powered people analytics, scenario modelling, strategic workforce planning, and what-if analysis).

SAP SuccessFactors possesses several modules (Recruiting, Onboarding, Employee Central, Performance & Goals, Learning, Compensation, Succession & Development, and Offboarding). Organisations can customize the system to their unique needs and scale its benefits progressively based on the selected modules (SAP, 2024).

SAP SuccessFactors provides multiple benefits for organisations, with the focus to enhance human resources management. One of the main advantages are the integration capabilities that allow organisations to streamline HR processes and improve decision-making by using real-time data analytics (Devarashetty, 2023). Besides that, it also enables businesses to manage talent and workforce performance more effectively by providing tools for career development, recruitment, and performance reviews (Pereira et al., 2020). Since we are referring to a cloud-based nature, it is important to highlight that it also provides scalability, allowing businesses of various sizes to implement the platform according to their company's needs (Bersin, 2018). Furthermore, it contains a user-friendly interface and a mobile option which contributing to greater adoption rates which can improve the overall productivity.

Even though SAP SuccessFactors offers a wide range of advantages, it also presents some challenges that organisations must think through before making any decisions. The first one is the complexity and significant cost of the initial deployment, especially in terms of smaller organisations that might not have the necessary resources to manage the system (Bersin, 2018). Another challenge, is the customisation of SAP SuccessFactors to align with the organisations specific needs because the system can lack flexibility in some of its areas, requiring specialized knowledge (Devarashetty, 2023). Moreover, integration with other existing systems and data migration can also be considered as quite complex and time-consuming (Kommera, 2021). Lastly, employee adoption can be slower due to the system's vast functionalities which might require training for effective use (Bersin, 2018).

In terms of competitors, there are other tools like SAP SuccessFactors and in Figure 4 we can see that in 2024 it was positioned on the leader's quadrant, but it was still behind Workforce and Oracle whether in terms of ability to execute or in terms of completeness of vision (SAP, 2024).

2.5. Theoretical Frameworks

2.5.1. Task-Technology Fit

Task Technology Fit (TTF) is a concept that analyses the alignment between the characteristics of a certain technology and the necessary requirements to perform a specific task. This theory states that technology is more likely to enhance both performance and user satisfaction when there is a good fit between what the technology offers and what the task demands. TTF is based in the idea that the more appropriately a technology matches the needs of a task, the more effective it will be in supporting users to successfully complete that task (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995).

Goodhue and Thompson (1995) created this concept, proposing that the impact of technology on job performance depends on how well it fits in the task that it's being performed. Besides that, the authors have also mentioned that TTF is essential for understanding how technology can improve performance outcomes in different working environments (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995).

According to this, the authors defend that task characteristics such as task complexity, variability, and interdependence (for example) influence the required capabilities of technology. Moreover, it emphasizes that both technology and task dimensions must be assessed to ensure an optimal fit. In case of mismatch, technology might not help in task completion and could even lead to inefficiencies and dissatisfaction (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995).

Regarding SAP SuccessFactors implementations is crucial to make sure to have a high TTF, as it helps to mitigate risks such as user resistance or operational inefficiencies (Bradley, 2008; Al-Mashari et al., 2003). When the system aligns with HR tasks, it can increase user satisfaction, reduce frustration, and promote smoother workflows, which consequently leads to a faster adoption and a more efficient implementation process (Jeyaraj, 2022).

2.5.2. Change Management Theories

Organisational Change Management can be defined as the process of managing people towards change to achieve a specific business outcome (Hiatt, 2006). This concept is often related with others such as resistance to change which is the emotional/behavioral response to the threats that were perceived from the change (Brown, 2011). Furthermore, change communication is also usually related to change management because it is extremely important to make sure that the stakeholders are informed and motivated during the change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

One of the main theories of change management literature is the Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model (Kotter, 1996). This model describes change process into 8 main steps: Create a sense of urgency; form a powerful coalition, create a vision for change, communicate the vision, remove obstacles, create short-term wins, build on the change (continuous improvements), anchor the changes in the culture. By following this steps companies can achieve a smoother and more effective transition avoiding common mistakes such as poor communication or lack of support. These steps can also work as a baseline for SAP SuccessFactors implementation, where factors like clear leadership, employee engagement and effective communication are crucial to overcome resistance and facilitate the systems adoption (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Cawsey et al., 2016).

Another important theory is Lewin's Three-Stage Model (Lewin, 1951) because it can serve as a complement to Kotter's model. The stages of Lewin's model are unfreezing, changing, refreezing. Firstly, the unfreezing stage is when they prepare people for change and overcome resistance. Then, the changing stage is when the changes are implemented and where they support people during the transition. Lastly, the refreeze stage is when they ensure that these new practices will become permanent and make part of the culture. This model can also be applied to SAP SuccessFactors, in the way that first organisations must prepare their employees for change, then implement changes providing the necessary training along the way and then make sure that the new system becomes frequently used in everyday operations. Other studies have added that systematic, well-supported change efforts are considered crucial for the success of large-scale system implementations like SAP SuccessFactors (Burnes, 2004; Oreg, 2003).

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the CSFs ERP implementation models, and on the available literature and that are illustrated on Table 10 (in the Appendix), I have developed a conceptual module for CSFs regarding SAP SuccessFactors implementation. This model integrates organisational, technological, and process-related factors that impact the outcomes of these types of implementations.

I have decided to create this conceptual module because existing CSFs models for ERP implementation (e.g. Finney & Corbett) have some limitations. For example, most of these models were developed for on-premises ERP systems, whereas SAP SuccessFactors is a Cloud-Based Software as a Service (SaaS) platform. This type of solutions implies more challenges regarding clouding adoption such as data security, integration with existing HR systems and compliance matters. Another limitation is that existing ERP models are often too general in terms of content, and this Conceptual Module will be targeted to HR systems in specific which means that some key components will be related to HR practices. Another aspect to mention is that they usually provide too much emphasis on internal organisational factors, for example, leadership, neglecting external matters like competitive pressure or regulatory compliance which are of extreme importance when it comes to multinational implementations. Moreover, most models consider a very simplistic view in terms of implementation (e.g. planning, execution, adoption) and this conceptual model considers reengineering and customisation which are both common practices nowadays.

This Conceptual Model will build upon the regular CSFs Models for ERP implementation adapting them to SAP SuccessFactors implementation and adding specific factors specific to this solution and making the model more up to date.

3.1. Key Components

This conceptual model is structured around 6 dimensions:

- Organisational Factors (Top Management Support; Leadership Commitment; HR and IT Collaboration)
- Technological Factors (Cloud Readiness & Adoption, Software Fit and Complexity; Data Migration and Integration; System Integration; Technology Trends and AI Adoption)

- Process-Related Factors (Change Management and Adoption; User Training and Support; Implementation Approach; Data Quality; Evaluation of Project Progress)
- External Factors (Competitive Pressure; Regulatory Compliance; Partner Ecosystem and Consultants)
- User-Centric Factors (Employee Experience and Engagement; Mobile Accessibility and User Experience (UX) Design; Self-Service and Automation; AI Chatbots for HR Assistance; Role-Based Dashboards and Personalisation.
- Performance Metrics (Performance Tracking and KPIs; Real-Time Reporting and People Analytics; AI-Powered Decision Making)

Organizational factors focus mainly on leadership and team competence that are required for a successful SAP SuccessFactors implementation. Top Management Support (Somers and Nelson, 2001; Nah et al., 2003; Finney and Corbett, 2007) is the level of involvement and commitment from top management there should set clear and strategic objectives as well as ensure an optimal resource allocation. Leadership Commitment (Finney and Corbett, 2007) involves having a leader who has a vision and successfully motivates teams. HR and IT Collaboration (Nah et al., 2003; Somers and Nelson, 2004) encompass the successful integration of both HR and IT teams contributing to a smooth implementation and a better alignment with the company's goals.

Technological Factors are all the aspects that need to be considered in terms of technology/system. Cloud Readiness and Adoption (Shukla et al., 2012; Saes, 2024) is to ensure that the company is ready for cloud adoption and all the matters associated to it such as security, compliance and scalability. Software Fit and Complexity (Finney and Corbett, 2007; Amini and Safavi, 2013) refers to the alignment of SAP SuccessFactors with the organisation business processes and the complexity of the system to acquire a seamless integration and ease of use. Data Migration and Integration (Zhang et al., 2003; Kommera, 2021) encompass the process of transferring and integrating all the HR data into SAP SuccessFactors ensuring data accuracy, compatibility, and consistency. System Integration (Nah et al, 2003); Devarashetty, 2023) to allow integration with other cloud and on-premises solutions (e.g. analytics tools, payroll). Technology Trends and AI

adoption (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Jeyaraj, 2022) are the influence of emerging technologies like AI, automation, and machine learning to enhance the functionalities and benefits of this SAP solution.

Process-Related Factors contains all the factors related to the implementation process itself. Change Management and Adoption (Kotter, 1996; Kurt Lewin, 1951); Hiatt, 2006) to effectively manage resistance to change ensuring that the workforce is open minded and ready to adopt the system by, for example, making sure users are involved on an early stage. User Training and Support (Nah et al., 2003); Zhang et al., 2003) to provide continuous training, manuals, support, and feedback to achieve the maximum systems potential and ensure that the users feel supported. Implementation approach (Finney and Corbett, 2007; Amini and Safavi, 2013) to decide what kind of approach should be adopted and if there is any need to reengine the process or customise it according to the company's needs (for example deciding between agile or waterfall methodologies). Data Quality and Accuracy (Amini and Safavi, 2013; Zhang et al., 2003) reflect the importance of maintaining structured, clean, and reliable HR data to better optimise the system performance. Evaluation of Project Progress (Nah et al., 2003; SAP, 2024) to demonstrate the importance to track the project milestones and address possible issues proactively.

External Factors covers all the aspects that might affect the implementation but are external to the organization. Competitive Pressure (Zhang et al., 2003; Amini and Safavi, 2013) represents the need to adopt SAP SuccessFactors to stay competitive and the influence that market dynamics might have in this decision. Regulatory Compliance (Finney and Corbett, 2007); SAP, 2024) to ensure that SAP SuccessFactors complies with local labour laws and policies. Partner Ecosystem and Consultants (Amini and Safavi, 2013; Nah et al., 2003) demonstrate that having SAP-certified consultants or implementation partners can ease the successful deployment.

User-Centric Factors possesses all the factors related to the user's experience, since they will play a crucial role in its adoption and acceptance. Employee Experience and Engagement (SAP, 2024; Pereira et al., 2020) ensuring that SAP SuccessFactors will enhance productivity, collaboration, and satisfaction. Mobile Accessibility and UX design (SAP, 2024; Bersin, 2018) demonstrate the difference that having a user-friendly interface and being accessible on other devices can make. Self-Service and Automation

(SAP, 2024; Devarashetty, 2023) to enable employees to manage HR processes independently minimizing administrative work. AI Chatbots for HR Assistance (SAP, 2024) will enhance HR services and improve response times. Role-Based Dashboards and Personalization (SAP, 2024; Goodhue and Thompson, 1995) provide a better and personalised user experience.

Performance Metrics are considered essential to evaluate the success of the implementation. Performance Tracking and KPIs (Nah et al., 2003); SAP, 2024) contains the establishment of KPIs to measure the success of the implementation (e.g. turnover, user satisfaction, improved operational efficiency). Real-Time Reporting and People Analytics (SAP, 2024; Pereira et al., 2020) is where the company can use HR data to make data-driven decisions. AI-Powered Decision-Making (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Jeyaraj, 2022) to use predictive analytics to detect talents needs and possibly optimize HR strategies.

This conceptual model is well adjusted to SAP SuccessFactors unique features and nature increasing the chances of a successful implementation, because unlike the previous ERP systems this solution requires some planning and thinking about certain areas such as:

- Cloud Adoption and regular updates;
- AI and automation association with decision making;
- User-centric design and accessibility;
- Implementation Approach;
- People analytics and Real Time reporting.

It is due to this that companies really need to evaluate each CSF and the benefits of this HCM SAP solution before making the decision to implement it. Moreover, it is also important to evaluate the benefits and the costs of its implementation because when not well implemented or accepted by the users won't be beneficial to the company.

4. METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, this research will follow the case study approach described by Robert K. Yin. According to the author case studies can be seen as empirical investigations that explore contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, and it can be especially important when the boundaries between both are unclear (Yin, 2018).

Yin (2018) states that "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed" (p. 2). I believe that it will be suitable for my research since I will explore the CSF of SAP SuccessFactors implementation at BOSCH.

Since this study possesses qualitative data, Taguette will be used as a tool to simplify interview analysis and pattern identification making it easier to get to conclusions. Taguette is an open-source qualitative data analysis tool like N-vivo.

4.1. Case Study

As previously mentioned, this study will rely on a single case study at BOSCH that will allow an in-depth observation of the organisation's experiences as well as empirical evidence of SAP SuccessFactors implementation.

Single case studies are usually used for comprehensive, contextual analysis when exploring unique cases (in-depth analysis) whereas multiple case studies enable comparative analysis and the replication of theories (Yin, 2018).

4.2. Data Collection

Regarding Data collection I will be counting both primary (data collected firsthand for a specific purpose) and secondary data (data that was previously collected and used for a different purpose). Regarding primary data, I will be doing semi-structured interviews at BOSCH to gather insights into the system's implementation. To have a better overview we can see the Interview Guide as Appendix 1 (page.71). In terms of secondary data, I will analyse multiple documents or studies on CSFs in ERP implementation.

Using both primary and secondary data is very important because it can lead to the achievement of data triangulation which will enhance the study's validation (Yin, 2018). All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for qualitative analysis. A total of 14 interviews were conducted, with an average duration of approximately 30 to 40 minutes per participant.

4.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis, a qualitative thematic approach was applied to identify patterns, categories, and recurring themes related to the research questions. In addition, a comparative analysis was conducted to explore potential differences in SAP

SuccessFactors implementation across countries. Taguette, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to support the entire coding and theme-development process.

The analysis followed an inductive–deductive strategy. Deductively, initial codes were informed by the conceptual model and the existing literature on ERP and SAP SuccessFactors implementation. Inductively, new codes emerged directly from the interview data as transcripts were examined. All interviews were fully transcribed and imported into Taguette, where a line-by-line coding process was conducted. Relevant excerpts were assigned to codes, allowing the identification of recurrent ideas, relationships between themes, and the frequency with which each topic appeared across participants.

Taguette facilitated the organisation of codes, the extraction of coded segments, and the generation of frequency counts, which strengthened the transparency and consistency of the analysis. Analytical techniques such as pattern matching (Yin, 2018) were used to compare empirical findings with the theoretical expectations derived from the literature. The final coding outputs were synthesised into the tables presented in Chapter 5, which summarise the main themes and support the interpretation of the empirical results.

4.4. Research Design

This case study will be very detailed including clear and well-defined research questions, propositions, and units of analysis to ensure that is well-planned and replicable. Rather than just aiming for statistical standardisation these findings will hopefully contribute to a broader theoretical knowledge regarding SAP SuccessFactors implementation (Yin, 2018).

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

5.1. Case Study Context: Bosch and SAP SuccessFactors

Bosch is a multinational engineering and technology company founded in 1886 by Robert Bosch. The company operates globally across several sectors including Mobility Solutions, Industrial Technology, Consumer Goods, and Energy and Building Technology. Due to its presence in more than 60 countries, Bosch manages a large and geographically distributed workforce, making Human Resources Management particularly complex and requiring integrated digital solutions.

To support its global HR strategy, Bosch has progressively adopted cloud-based Human Capital Management (HCM) systems. In this context, SAP SuccessFactors was implemented as part of a broader digital transformation initiative aiming to standardise HR processes, improve data availability, and enhance employee experience across the organisation.

The implementation was conducted through multiple modules deployed gradually over time, allowing Bosch to transition from legacy HR systems to a unified cloud-based platform. This phased approach enabled the organisation to manage complexity while ensuring alignment with global HR objectives.

This case study focuses on Bosch's experience with SAP SuccessFactors implementation based on insights from professionals directly involved in the system. Interviewees included HR specialists, IT professionals, and project managers, ensuring that both strategic and operational perspectives were captured.

5.2. SAP SuccessFactors Implementation at Bosch

This section presents the findings from fourteen semi-structured interviews with professionals involved in SAP SuccessFactors implementation and support activities at Bosch. The analysis covers participant characteristics, project planning, implementation strategy, and organisational readiness.

5.2.1. Population Characterization

The interview sample consisted of fourteen professionals representing several SAP SuccessFactors areas including Learning, Compensation, Reporting and HR Analytics, Interface and Platform management, Employee Central, IT Operations, AI and Automation, and Project Management.

Because some participants were responsible for multiple areas simultaneously, the total number of functional responsibilities reached nineteen.

The gender distribution included nine female and five male participants. Participants were based in three countries: India (six participants), Portugal (five participants), and Germany (three participants).

Regarding demographic characteristics, participants were aged between 25 and 45, with the largest group between 31 and 35 years old. Professional tenure at Bosch ranged

from four to more than ten years, with most participants having between four and six years of experience.

The following table provides a consolidated overview of all interview participants, including demographic characteristics, functional areas, interview duration, mode of conduction, and recording status:

<i>Interviewee ID</i>	<i>Functional Area(s)</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Years at Bosch</i>	<i>Interview Duration</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Recorded</i>
<i>INT01</i>	Learning	Portugal	Female	31–35	4–6	38 min	Presential	Yes
<i>INT02</i>	Learning	India	Male	36–40	7–10	42 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT03</i>	Learning	Germany	Female	31–35	4–6	35 min	Presential	Yes
<i>INT04</i>	Compensation	Portugal	Female	25–30	1–3	33 min	Presential	Yes
<i>INT05</i>	Compensation	India	Male	31–35	4–6	40 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT06</i>	Compensation	Germany	Female	36–40	7–10	37 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT07</i>	Reporting & HR Analytics	Portugal	Female	31–35	4–6	32 min	Presential	Yes
<i>INT08</i>	Reporting & HR Analytics	India	Male	41–45	>10	45 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT09</i>	Interface & Platform	India	Female	31–35	4–6	39 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT10</i>	Interface & Platform	Portugal	Female	25–30	1–3	34 min	Presential	Yes
<i>INT11</i>	Employee Central	Germany	Male	36–40	7–10	41 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT12</i>	Employee Central	India	Female	31–35	4–6	36 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT13</i>	IT Operations	India	Male	41–45	>10	44 min	Online	Yes
<i>INT14</i>	AI & Automation / Project Management	Portugal	Female	31–35	4–6	40 min	Presential	Yes

Table 1 - Interviewee Characterisation Summary

Source: Own Authorship

Overall, the sample represents a diverse group of professionals with substantial experience in SAP SuccessFactors implementation and HR technology management.

5.2.2. Project Planning and Initial Assessment

Interview results indicate that project planning and initial assessment are essential stages in SAP SuccessFactors implementations at Bosch. The planning phase involves analysing existing HR processes, evaluating the current system landscape, and identifying organisational requirements before implementation begins.

This initial assessment aims to detect gaps between existing processes and standard SAP SuccessFactors functionalities, define the project scope, and determine priorities and dependencies. Participants noted that planning activities also consider organisational size, module complexity, and regional regulatory requirements.

Although not all interviewees participated directly in the early planning phase, there was broad agreement that careful preparation significantly reduces implementation risks and contributes to smoother system deployment.

5.2.3. Implementation Strategy

Participants consistently described Bosch's implementation strategy as phased and modular. Rather than deploying all SAP SuccessFactors modules simultaneously, modules are introduced incrementally over time.

This approach enables the organisation to manage system complexity, incorporate lessons learned from earlier implementations, and minimise operational disruptions. Implementation decisions are influenced by organisational priorities, system dependencies, and resource availability.

Global standards are centrally defined to maintain consistency across regions, while limited local adjustments are permitted when required by legal or operational conditions. This strategy allows Bosch to balance standardisation with flexibility in a multinational environment.

5.2.4. Cloud Readiness and Organisational Acceptance

SAP SuccessFactors operates within a cloud environment at Bosch. According to the interviewees, cloud readiness was not perceived as a major challenge due to the organisation's extensive experience with cloud technologies.

Although some initial concerns related to data security and regulatory compliance were raised, these issues were addressed through internal governance structures and established security policies. Over time, familiarity with cloud systems contributed to increased trust and acceptance among employees.

Overall, cloud readiness was considered an enabling factor that facilitated system adoption rather than a barrier to implementation.

5.3. Critical Success Factors Identified

The qualitative analysis identified several Critical Success Factors (CSFs) influencing SAP SuccessFactors implementation. These factors were grouped into five main categories: organisational, technological, process-related, user-centric, and external factors. Coding results are summarised in **Tables 1–5**.

The interview data was analysed using a thematic coding approach, following the logic of qualitative data analysis tools such as Taguette. Responses were coded into recurring themes related to organisational conditions influencing implementation outcomes.

5.3.1. Organisational Factors

Organisational factors were strongly related to leadership, collaboration, and communication.

Top management support emerged as an important success factor, particularly in areas related to strategic decision-making, project prioritisation, and resource allocation. However, its visibility varied depending on organisational roles. Participants involved in coordination and leadership positions reported closer interaction with executive management, while operational roles perceived management support indirectly.

Leadership and ownership at the module level were also critical. Clearly defined responsibilities for modules such as Learning, Compensation, Reporting, and Employee

Central improved coordination and decision-making during implementation and post-go-live phases.

Cross-functional collaboration between HR, IT, and platform teams was another essential factor. Since SAP SuccessFactors modules are highly interconnected, effective communication between teams was necessary to manage dependencies and resolve issues efficiently.

Communication and change readiness also played a role in implementation success. Bosch relies on internal communication channels, documentation, and system announcements to inform users about updates and system changes.

The organisational dimension revealed several recurring themes, which are summarised in the following coding table:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Top Management Support</i>	Importance of leadership involvement, prioritisation, and resource allocation.	12	“Without leadership pushing this forward, the project would have stalled.”
<i>Leadership Commitment</i>	Clear vision, strategic alignment, and decision-making support.	9	“Our leadership made it clear that SuccessFactors was a strategic priority.”
<i>HR–IT Collaboration</i>	Collaboration between HR experts and IT technical teams.	14	“We only succeeded because HR and IT worked as one team.”
<i>Cross-Functional Alignment</i>	Coordination with other departments affected by the implementation.	7	“We had to align with Finance and Compliance to avoid conflicts.”
<i>Communication Strategy</i>	Internal communication about goals, timelines, and expectations.	10	“Transparent communication helped reduce resistance.”

Table 2 - Organisational Factors Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.3.2. Technological Factors

Technological factors mainly relate to system architecture, integration, and data governance.

Bosch’s cloud-based infrastructure was generally perceived as stable and scalable. However, interviewees emphasised the importance of maintaining strong governance structures to manage system access, data protection, and regulatory compliance.

System integration was identified as one of the most complex technical challenges. SAP SuccessFactors interacts with several internal and external systems, requiring careful management of interfaces and data flows.

Data migration and data quality were also highlighted as critical factors, particularly due to strict compliance requirements such as GDPR.

Automation technologies were used to support repetitive tasks such as data imports and compensation processes, helping reduce manual workload and improve efficiency.

Technological aspects emerged as a major determinant of implementation success, as shown in the coding results below:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Cloud Readiness</i>	Infrastructure, security, and organisational maturity for cloud adoption.	11	"Moving to the cloud required a full review of our security policies."
<i>System Integration</i>	Ability to integrate SuccessFactors with legacy systems.	15	"Integration with SAP ERP was the most complex part."
<i>Data Migration</i>	Data cleansing, mapping, and transfer accuracy.	13	"We spent months cleaning data before migration."
<i>Software Fit</i>	Alignment between SuccessFactors capabilities and HR needs.	9	"Some processes had to be adapted because the system doesn't allow deep customisation."
<i>Technical Support</i>	Availability of IT specialists and vendor support.	8	"We relied heavily on SAP consultants during configuration."

Table 3 - Technological Factors Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.3.3. Process Related Factors

Process-related factors included change management, training, and system customisation practices.

Change management activities were present within Bosch's implementation process, although not always formally recognised by all participants. Practices such as documentation, communication, and phased rollouts functioned as informal change management mechanisms.

User training was generally considered less critical compared with traditional ERP systems due to the intuitive interface of SAP SuccessFactors and its embedded support features.

Support structures also played an important role in system adoption. Bosch uses multi-level support mechanisms and monitoring during stabilisation phases to address user issues and ensure system stability.

System customisation was limited to maintain standardised processes across the organisation, although minor adjustments were made to align system terminology with internal practices.

Process-related factors, particularly change management and training, were frequently mentioned by participants:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Change Management</i>	Strategies to reduce resistance and support adoption.	14	"People resist change unless you explain the 'why' behind it."
<i>User Training</i>	Training sessions, materials, and ongoing support.	16	"Training was essential because the system is not intuitive for everyone."
<i>Implementation Approach</i>	Phased rollout, agile methods, or big-bang strategy.	10	"We followed a phased approach to avoid overwhelming users."
<i>Process Standardisation</i>	Harmonising HR processes before system configuration.	12	"We had to standardise processes across countries first."
<i>Data Quality Assurance</i>	Ensuring accuracy and consistency of HR data.	11	"Bad data would have compromised the entire implementation."

Table 4 - Process Related Factors Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.3.4. User-Centric Factors

User-centric aspects emerged as particularly important in SAP SuccessFactors implementations.

Participants highlighted the role of user experience (UX), intuitive system design, and self-service functionality in supporting employee adoption. These features allow employees to manage HR-related activities independently, reducing administrative workload for HR teams.

Embedded help features and documentation further support usability, making extensive training programmes less necessary.

Although technologies such as AI chatbots and personalised dashboards were mentioned as potential developments, they are not yet widely implemented within the current system landscape.

User-centric elements were also highly relevant, particularly regarding usability and employee experience:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>User Experience (UX)</i>	Interface usability, navigation, and design.	13	"The interface is clean, but some features are hard to find."
<i>Employee Engagement</i>	Employee involvement and feedback during implementation.	9	"We collected feedback from employees to improve adoption."

<i>Self-Service Features</i>	Empowering employees to manage their own HR tasks.	12	“Self-service reduced HR workload significantly.”
<i>Mobile Accessibility</i>	Use of mobile app and remote access.	8	“Mobile access was a game-changer for field employees.”
<i>Personalisation</i>	Role-based dashboards and customised views.	7	“Managers appreciated having dashboards tailored to their needs.”

Table 5 - User Centric Factors Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.3.5. External Factors

External factors influencing implementation included regulatory compliance and competitive pressure.

Regulatory requirements, particularly GDPR, were considered highly relevant in shaping system configuration and data governance practices.

Competitive pressure and technological trends also influenced Bosch’s decision to invest in advanced HR technologies, encouraging continuous innovation and digital transformation.

External influences such as regulatory requirements and vendor support also emerged in the coding process:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Regulatory Compliance</i>	GDPR, data protection, and legal requirements.	10	“Compliance was a major concern, especially with GDPR.”
<i>Vendor Support</i>	SAP and partner consultancy involvement.	12	“Our implementation partner guided us through the most complex steps.”
<i>Competitive Pressure</i>	Market trends and digital transformation pressure.	6	“Other companies were already using cloud HR systems.”
<i>Global Standards</i>	Need for harmonisation across countries.	8	“We had to ensure the system worked for all regions.”
<i>Industry Best Practices</i>	Benchmarking and external recommendations.	5	“We followed best practices shared by other SAP clients.”

Table 6 - External Factors Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.4. Challenges and Risk Mitigation Strategy

Several implementation challenges were identified during the interviews.

Organisational and cultural changes were often associated with system adoption and required coordination across multiple departments.

Technical challenges were mainly related to system integration and data migration processes. Due to the interconnected nature of SAP SuccessFactors modules, issues in one system component could affect other areas.

Resistance to change among employees was another challenge, particularly during major system updates or module go-lives. Bosch addressed this through communication initiatives, documentation, and support services.

Lessons learned from previous implementations also played an important role in improving future deployments, allowing the organisation to refine processes and reduce risks.

Participants also identified several challenges and corresponding mitigation strategies, summarised below:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	Employee reluctance to adopt new processes.	14	"Some employees preferred the old system and resisted the change."
<i>Data Inconsistencies</i>	Errors or gaps in HR data.	11	"We found duplicate records during migration."
<i>Integration Issues</i>	Technical difficulties connecting systems.	13	"APIs didn't always behave as expected."
<i>Limited Customisation</i>	Restrictions of cloud SaaS model.	9	"We had to adapt our processes because customisation was limited."
<i>Training Gaps</i>	Insufficient or inconsistent training.	12	"Some teams didn't receive enough training before go-live."

Table 7 - Challenges and Risk Mitigation Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

5.5. Performance Measurement and Evaluation

Bosch uses several mechanisms to evaluate SAP SuccessFactors performance and implementation outcomes.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are monitored to track system performance, user adoption, and operational efficiency. These metrics are particularly important during stabilisation phases following major system deployments.

HR analytics tools, including Celonis, are used to support reporting and performance monitoring. While some analytics are automated, others still rely on manual analysis through Excel and reporting dashboards.

AI-supported decision-making currently plays a limited role in performance evaluation. Although AI technologies are being explored at an organisational level, most decisions continue to rely on traditional reporting and expert judgement.

Finally, the codes related to performance measurement and evaluation highlight how Bosch monitors the outcomes of the SAP SuccessFactors implementation:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>
<i>KPIs and Metrics</i>	Use of predefined indicators to track HR and system performance.	11	"We defined clear KPIs to monitor adoption and process efficiency."
<i>People Analytics</i>	Use of reports and dashboards to support HR decision-making.	13	"People analytics helped us identify trends we couldn't see before."
<i>System Usage Monitoring</i>	Tracking logins, module usage, and completion rates.	9	"We regularly check which modules are actually being used."
<i>Continuous Improvement</i>	Using feedback and data to refine processes and configuration.	10	"We adjust workflows based on the insights we get from the system."
<i>Management Reporting</i>	Providing regular reports to leadership on implementation outcomes.	8	"We present SuccessFactors results in our monthly management meetings."

Table 8 - Performance Measurement and Evaluation Coding Results

Source: Own Authorship

6. DISCUSSION

The discussion chapter compares the empirical findings with existing ERP and SAP SuccessFactors literature.

The results largely confirm the relevance of traditional ERP Critical Success Factors identified by researchers such as Somers and Nelson and Finney and Corbett. Key factors such as top management support, data quality, system integration, and project management were also observed in the Bosch case.

However, several differences emerged due to the cloud-based nature of SAP SuccessFactors. For example, user training was perceived as less critical because of the system's intuitive interface and built-in guidance features.

Another distinctive aspect was the importance of user experience and self-service functionality, reflecting the employee-centric nature of modern HR technologies.

Additionally, the findings highlight the strategic importance of phased implementation strategies and integration governance, particularly in multinational organisations where SAP SuccessFactors must coexist with other HR systems.

Cloud architecture also plays a dual role by enabling scalability and accessibility while requiring strong governance structures and regulatory compliance.

Finally, the empirical findings validate the conceptual model proposed in Chapter 3, confirming the relevance of organisational, technological, process-related, user-centric, external, and performance-related dimensions. A visual representation of these relationships is presented in Figure 5 (in the Appendix). It is important to note that Image 5 is only a visual representation of the relationships found by me.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to existing ERP and HCM literature by demonstrating that traditional ERP Critical Success Factors remain relevant in cloud-based HR system implementations.

However, the findings also suggest that these factors must be reinterpreted in the context of modern SaaS platforms such as SAP SuccessFactors. In particular, user experience, system usability, and employee self-service capabilities appear to play a more significant role than previously recognised.

The study also highlights the dynamic nature of Critical Success Factors. Rather than being static determinants, they evolve across different implementation phases and organisational contexts.

By integrating organisational, technological, process-related, external, user-centric, and performance dimensions, this research proposes a more comprehensive framework for analysing cloud-based HR system implementations.

7.2. Managerial and Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings provide several recommendations for organisations implementing SAP SuccessFactors.

First, organisations should establish clear module ownership and ensure strong collaboration between HR, IT, and project management teams.

Second, governance structures must address data protection, compliance, and integration complexity, particularly in regulated environments.

Third, organisations should focus on usability and self-service design to support user adoption rather than relying solely on traditional training programmes.

Additionally, phased implementation strategies and structured stabilisation phases can help reduce risks and improve system stability. Continuous performance monitoring through analytics tools also plays an important role in implementation success.

Finally, while AI technologies present future opportunities, organisations should prioritise data quality, transparency, and user trust before adopting advanced AI-driven decision-making tools.

8. CONCLUSION

This study analysed the Critical Success Factors influencing the implementation of SAP SuccessFactors, using Bosch as a case study. The findings show that many traditional ERP Critical Success Factors remain highly relevant in this context, particularly organisational alignment, leadership support, system integration, and data quality. However, their relative importance appears to shift in cloud-based environments, where implementation dynamics are more iterative and dependent on vendor-driven configurations.

In addition, the results highlight the growing importance of phased implementation approaches, user-centred design, and continuous performance monitoring as key enablers of successful adoption. These factors reflect the need for a more flexible and adaptive implementation strategy when compared to traditional on-premises ERP systems. Overall, the study supports the validity of the conceptual model developed in this research and demonstrates that SAP SuccessFactors implementation requires a multidimensional approach that integrates organisational, technological, process-related, user-focused, external, and performance-related factors.

Despite these contributions, the study presents several limitations. It is based on a single case study, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other organisational contexts. Furthermore, the research relies primarily on qualitative interview data, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions of participants. It is also important to note that the data was collected shortly after the go-live phase of the Employee Central module, meaning that the findings reflect early-stage implementation experiences rather than long-term system outcomes or sustained organisational impacts.

Future research could address these limitations by conducting comparative studies across multiple organisations or industries to enhance the robustness of the findings. Longitudinal research designs would also be particularly valuable in capturing how Critical Success Factors evolve over time as SAP SuccessFactors implementations mature and stabilise. Additionally, further studies could explore the influence of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence-driven analytics and advanced digital HR platforms on the evolution of Human Capital Management systems, potentially reshaping how success is defined in future HR digital transformation initiatives.

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APPENDICES

Key Area	Description	Example(s)	Reference
Recruitment and Selection	AI tools predict ideal candidates, forecast hiring needs and perform sentiment analysis during interviews. Digital platforms streamline global talent searches	AI algorithms, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Zoom, Microsoft Teams (video interviews)	Vardarlier (2020); Yu & Jinajun (2020)
Training and Development	E-learning provides flexibility, while AI-powered adaptive learning personalizes content. VR/AR is used for specialized training in industries like healthcare	E-learning platforms, AI adaptive learning, VR/AR for training	Cheng, B., Wang, M., Mørch, A. I., Chen, N., Kinshuk, & Spector, J. M. (2014); Ketolainen (2018)
Performance Management	Real-time performance tracking using Big Data. Automated reviews and gamified systems enhance engagement by rewarding employees for achievements	SAP SuccessFactors, Workday, gamified performance tracking systems	Yu & Jinajun (2020); Cheng et al. (2014)
Employee Engagement	Communication platforms and sentiment analysis tools enhance feedback and engagement, especially for remote teams	Qualtrics, Microsoft Viva, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Trello	Yu & Jinajun (2020); Cheng et al. (2014)
Reward Management	Digital platforms enable instant, personalized rewards. Blockchain technology ensures transparent tracking of employee benefits and rewards	Digital reward platforms, blockchain solutions	Yu & Jinajun (2020)
HR Planning and Strategy	Predictive analytics forecast staffing needs and identify skill gaps. Cloud-based HCM systems improve integration and decision-making	SAP SuccessFactors, Workday, Oracle HCM	Yu & Jinajun (2020); Cheng et al. (2014)

Table 9 - Digital HR Practices

Source: Own Authorship

Category	Critical Success Factor (CSF)	Author(s)
Organizational Factors	Top Management Support	Somers & Nelson (2001); Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Leadership Commitment	Finney & Corbett (2007)
	Clear Objectives and Goals	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Support, Involvement, and Participation	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Age and Functional Background of the CEO	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	User Engagement	Zhang et al. (2003)
	Communication	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003); Amini & Safavi (2013)
Technological Factors	Software Fit & Complexity	Finney & Corbett (2007); Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Data Migration & Integration	Zhang et al. (2003)
	Ability to Comply with Local Legislation	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Software Development, Testing, and Troubleshooting	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Suitability of Operating Assumptions and Business Rules	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Appropriate Business and IT Legacy Systems	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
Process-Related Factors	Change Management	Kotter (1996); Lewin (1951); Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Change Management Culture and Program	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	User Training & Support	Nah et al. (2003)
	Implementation Approach	Finney & Corbett (2007); Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Business Process Reengineering vs. Software Modification	Amini & Safavi (2013); Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Data Quality and Accuracy	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Monitoring and Evaluation of Performance	SAP (2024); Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Timing of Implementation	Amini & Safavi (2013)

External Factors	Competitive Pressure	Zhang et al. (2003); Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Regulatory Compliance	Finney & Corbett (2007)
	IT Personnel and Business Expert Availability	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Employee Turnover	Amini & Safavi (2013)
Firm-Specific Factors	Size of the Firm	Amini & Safavi (2013)
Implementation Team Factors	ERP Teamwork and Composition	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
	Experienced Consultants	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Implementation Team Responsiveness	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Empowerment of Team	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Project Champion	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003); Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Team Composition	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Project Management	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003)
Environmental & Cultural Factors	Importance of Training and Systems	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Resistance to Change	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Cultural Readiness	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Open and Honest Communication	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Unrealistic Expectations	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Social Commitment	Amini & Safavi (2013)
End-User Factors	Attitudes Toward the ERP System	Amini & Safavi (2013)
	User Involvement	Nah, Zuckweiler, & Lee-Shang Lau (2003); Amini & Safavi (2013)
	Job Tenure and Type	Amini & Safavi (2013)

Table 10 - CSF in ERP Implementation Overview

Source: Own Authorship

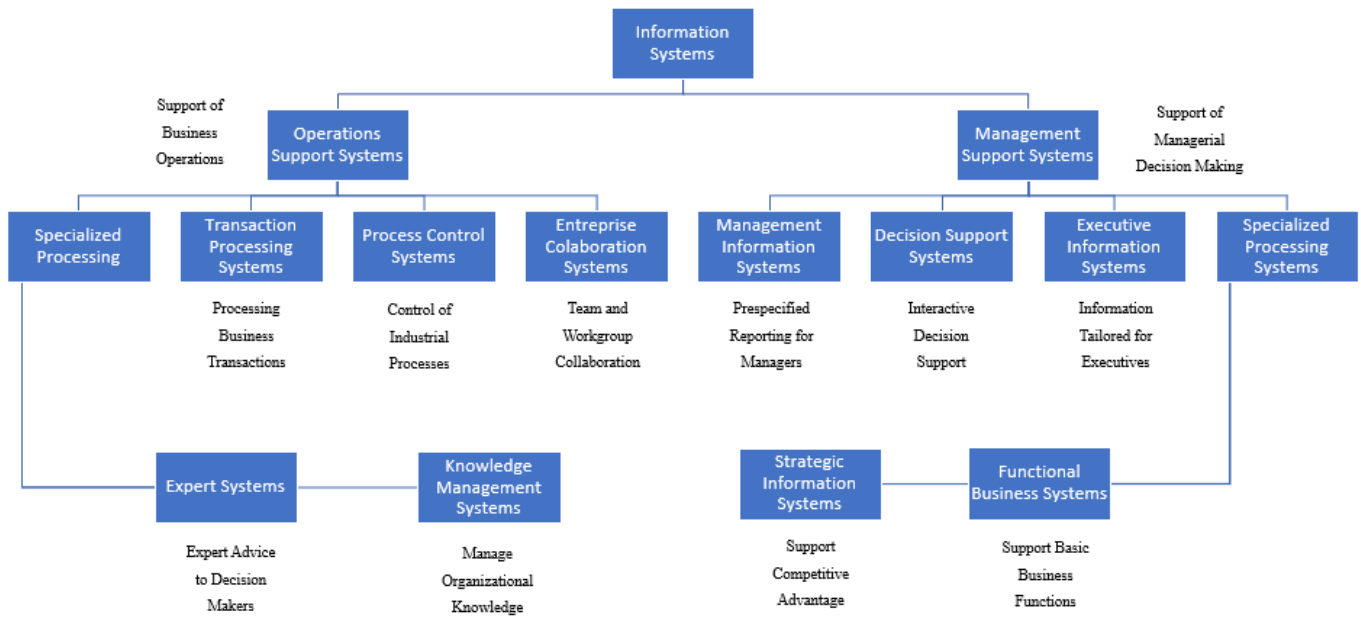


Figure 1 - Information System Types

Source: O'Brien & Marakas (2007)

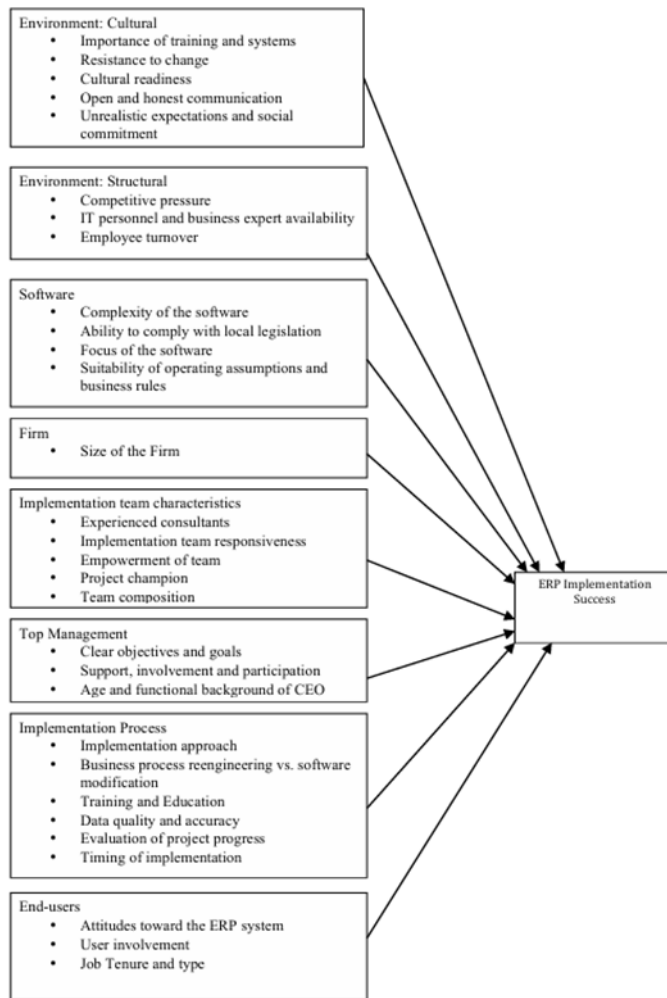


Figure 2 - ERP Critical Success Factors

Source: Amini, M, & Safavi, N.S. (2013)

	ERP Teamwork and Composition	Change Management Culture and Program	Top Management Support	BPR with Minimum Customization	Business Plan and Vision	Project Management	Project Champion	Communication	Monitoring and Evaluation of Performance	Software Development, Testing and Troubleshooting	Appropriate Business and IT Legacy Systems
Bingi, Sharma, and Godla (1999)	x	x	x	x						x	
Buckhout, Frey, and Nemec (1999)	x		x		x						
Falkowski, Pedigo, Smith, and Swanson (1998)	x	x			x	x	x	x	x		
Holland, Light, and Gibson (1999)	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Murray and Coffin (2001)		x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
Roberts and Barrar (1992)		x	x	x	x				x		x
Rosario (2000)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Scheer and Habermann (2000)										x	
Shanks et al. (2000)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Stefanou (1999)	x						x				
Sumner (1999)	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		

Figure 3 - CSF in ERP Implementation

Source: (Nah et al. 2003)

Figure 1: Magic Quadrant for Cloud HCM Suites for 1,000+ Employee Enterprises



Figure 4 - Magic Quadrant for Cloud HCM Suites

Source: (SAP, 2024)

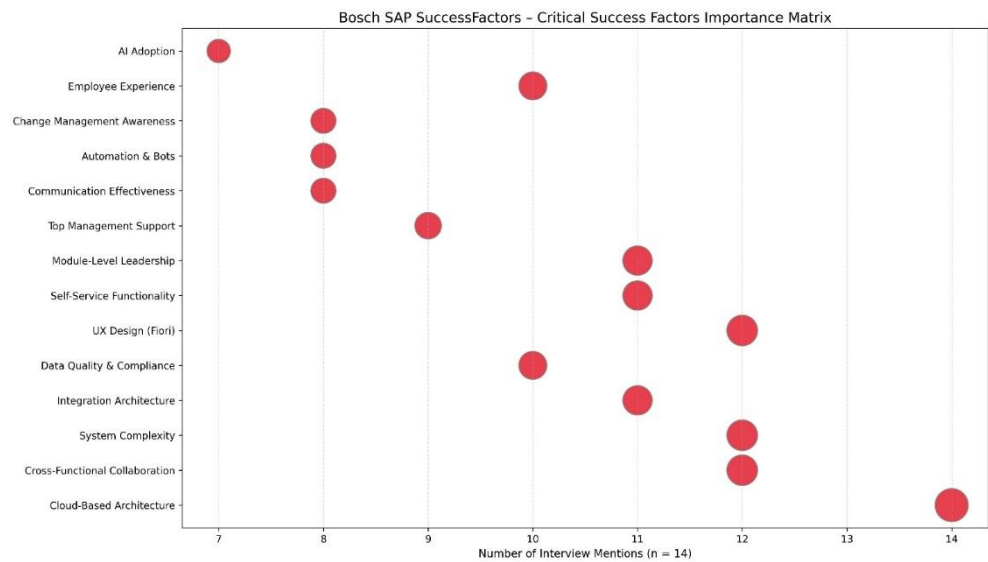


Figure 5 - CSF Importance Matrix

Source: (ChatGPT,2025)

Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Interview Guide: SAP SuccessFactors Implementation

Introduction:

Hello, my name is **Dulce Lima**, and I'm currently a finalist in the **Management Information Systems** program at **ISEG – Lisbon School of Economics & Management**. For my **master's thesis**, I'm conducting research on the **implementation of SAP SuccessFactors**, with a particular focus on the practices and critical success factors observed in real-world project implementations.

This interview aims to gather insights from professionals directly involved in SAP SuccessFactors implementations, and your perspective is especially valuable. The interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes and will cover multiple topics related to SAP SuccessFactors implementation. Your responses will be treated with full confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Objective:

Gather insights into the critical success factors, challenges, and best practices in implementing SAP SuccessFactors.

Note:

When asked to rate an item from 1 to 10, always consider 1 as “Very Low” and 10 as “Very High”.

1. Introduction and Context

1. Could you briefly describe your role at **Bosch** and your experience with SAP SuccessFactors?

2. Project Planning and Implementation Strategy

2. How does Bosch usually conduct the initial assessment before implementing any SAP SuccessFactors module?
3. How does Bosch ensure that SAP SuccessFactors aligns with its HR and business objectives?
4. Were there any issues regarding the use of cloud technology with SAP SuccessFactors at Bosch? Or do you think everyone was ready for it a willing to use it?

3. Critical Success Factors (CSF)

5. From your perspective, what are the most critical success factors for SAP SuccessFactors at Bosch? (The factors that will guarantee successful implementation)
6. How would you rank and comment on the importance of the following factors (from most to least impact)?
 - Top management support
 - HR and IT collaboration
 - System fit and complexity
 - Cloud readiness
7. What practices are used to ensure data quality and accuracy during the projects?
8. What role does change management play in the implementation at Bosch? – Do they provide any support to promote user adoption?
9. How does Bosch approach customization of SAP SuccessFactors?

4. Challenges and Risk Mitigation

10. What are the most common challenges Bosch faces during implementations?
11. How does Bosch address resistance to change among employees?

12. What lessons have Bosch learned from previous implementations that guide current projects?

5. External Influences

13. Do regulatory compliance requirements sometimes affect SAP SuccessFactors implementation at Bosch?

6. User Experience and Adoption

14. How does SAP SuccessFactors improve employee experience and engagement within Bosch?

7. Performance and Evaluation

15. What Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and analytics tools does Bosch use to evaluate implementation success and support HR/business strategies?

8. Future Considerations and Best Practices

16. What technologies or trends do you see shaping the future of SAP SuccessFactors at Bosch?

Closing Note:

Thank you once again for sharing your insights, opinions and experiences. Your input is greatly appreciated and will contribute significantly to the analysis and findings of this research. If you have any additional questions, feel free to ask!

Best Regards,

Dulce Lima