

Digital HRM Transformation and Employee Well-Being: A Thematic Review of Work–Life Balance and Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract: The fast paced spread of digital technologies has transformed Human Resource Management (HRM) making it move from conventional administrative practices to data-driven, automated, digitally enabled and increasingly intelligent HRM. Although scholars have given much attention to the strategic and operational implications of Digital Human Resource Management (DHRM), its employee-centric effects are relatively fragmented, especially regarding work-life balance and emotional intelligence. This study critically reviews and thematically synthesises the literature on Digital HRM transformation and how it affects employee work–life balance and emotional intelligence in the digital workplace. Using a secondary source from academic journals, books, and related academic databases, the study identifies theses, relationships, opportunities, and challenges within the literature through thematic analysis. The findings show that Digital HRM facilitates workers' flexibility, autonomy, communication, access to HR services and coordination with work that could aid in reality goodwill balance. While constant connection, technologically-enabled intensification of work, demands of remote work and permeable boundaries between work and home could result in new forms of strain. A subsequent review further shows emotional intelligence, a human capacity, as essential to internet-mediated communication, remote teams, organizational change, and tech-based workplaces. The study treats emotional intelligence not just as the outcome of digitalisation but as an employee capability that works to possibly influence individuals' responses to opportunities and pressures caused by Digital HRM. With the synthesis, the paper presents an integrated conceptual framework that links the Digital HRM transformation with digitally mediated work characteristics, work–life balance, and emotional intelligence. The research adds to the new HRM literature in digital terms by putting employee well-being and human capability at the centre of digital transformation and identifying avenues for future empirical research.

Keywords: Digital Human Resource Management; Digital HRM Transformation; Employee Well-Being; Work–Life Balance; Emotional Intelligence; Digital Workplace; Human-Centred HRM.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, digital transformation has developed into a considerable organisational phenomenon whereby advances in artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analytics, mobile technologies, digital platforms and interconnected systems are changing how organisations create value and co-ordinate work. Digital transformation isn't just about adopting new technologies. It's also about changing organizational processes, structures, capabilities, and patterns of value creation. Based on a review of 282 works, Vial (2019) conceptualises digital transformation as a process by which digital technologies initiated fundamental and comprehensive changes in organisational properties and value-creation processes. Verhoef and associates distinguish digitisation, digitalisation, and digital transformation and state that digital transformation entails changes in organisation structures, capabilities, and business models. These notions show that digital transformation should be perceived as an organizational and socio-technical process and not merely as technology implementation.

As technologies and work organisations change, organisations will increasingly have to change. Therefore, transformation will impact HRM and how organisations attract, develop, assess, communicate with, and support their employees. The digital technologies are increasingly becoming prevalent in the area of recruitment, selection, performance management, learning and development, personnel and workforce analytics, employee communication, compensation administration, etc. According to Strohmeier (2020), Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) is a new form of evolutionary development of technology-based HRM. This distinguishes digital HRM from other concepts such as digitisation and digitalisation. Digital HRM involves the focused integration of digital technology with HRM and connects the digitalisation of HRM with the digitalisation of organisations in general.

Digital HRM's advancement can likewise be viewed from the emergence of electronic HRM (e-HRM). According to four decades of research review by Bondarouk, Parry and Furtmueller (2017) of e-HRM adoption has critical importance of technology, organisational factors, and people. They additionally indicate a shift from an early focus on operational efficiency to relation and transformation consequences. This change is significant as it indicates that the evaluation of digitally-enabled HRM should not be merely confined to administrative efficiency or cost reduction. Instead, attention has to be shifted towards the overall organisational and employee effects of digital technologies.

The changing digital landscape of HRM creates an increasingly important employee-centered problem. Technologies can foster new opportunities for flexibility, autonomy, connectivity, and access to organisational resources. However, they can also affect job demands, increase communication, raise expectations of availability, and weaken established demarcations between work and non-work spheres. The main challenge is not whether organisations should digitalise HRM – rather, how to implement digital transformation to ensure sustainable employee experiences are not undermined. Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry (2022) author a human-centred HRM perspective that pays greater attention to sustainable working behaviours, employee well-being, and the wider social impacts of HRM. This view is especially relevant in the area of digital transformation whereby technological developments can produce opportunities as well as threats for workers.

The work-life balance or WLB of employees is an important outcome. The changing world of work, digital technology has created more opportunities of time and place for people to work. Since remote and hybrid work, mobile communication, cloud-based systems, and digital collaboration platforms allow employees more flexibility, they may actually support the coordination of work and private life. Simultaneously, the same technologies can also facilitate the entry of work into non-work domains. According to Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007), the use of communication technologies outside normal working hours causes work-to-life conflict. In a recent study by Park, Liu, and Headrick (2020), they found that the after-hours information and communication technology (ICT) demands can serve as a source of weekly strain and that employees' boundary control impact their technology-related work demands.

The consequences of digitalization for work-life balance (WLB) are therefore intrinsically dual and contingent. Flexibility empowered by technology may act as a resource when employees truly possess the power to determine when and where they work. Constant connectivity and after-hours work demands may act as pressures when employees must be always available. According to Park et al. (2020), ICT (information and communications technology) demand after hours, such as mobile phone calls and emails, can cause pressures such as negative rumination, negative affect, and insomnia. Moreover, work-family support as well as employee boundary-control practices are likely to dampen some of these pressures. The findings indicate that it is not only the presence of technology that creates employee consequences of digitalisation but also the organisation's expectations, work design, and the employees' ability to regulate work boundaries.

Another important dimension of employee experience in digitally transformed workplaces is emotional intelligence (EI) alongside work-life balance. According to Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008), emotional intelligence refers to a set of abilities relating to the emotions of oneself and others. The links between EI and meaningful criteria such as social outcomes, performance, and psychological and physical health are revealed by their review. In digitally-mediated work contexts, they may become increasingly relevant as employees increasingly use tech-mediated communication, virtual collaboration and rapidly changing work arrangements.

The broader empirical literature supports the organizational relevance of EI. According to a meta-analysis study on emotional intelligence and job performance by O'Boyle et al. 2011, emotional intelligence studies have a positive relationship with job performance. Their results back up the idea that emotional skills can be meaningfully related to workplace functioning beyond cognitive ability and personality. Likewise the meta-analysis conducted by Sánchez-Álvarez,

Extremera, and Fernández-Berrocal (2016) demonstrated that emotional intelligence was significantly and positively related to subjective well-being with a sample size of 8520 from 25 studies. These findings show that Digital HRM does not cause emotional intelligence. They provide empirically and theoretically a relevant human capability within digitally mediated work environments.

We should think hard about the relevance of emotional intelligence to digital work. Digital human resource management tools will not automatically affect emotional intelligence. Rather, EI buffers employees from the interpersonal and emotional demands of contemporary technology-mediated work. These include digital communication (social media, email), organisational change, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Given this viewpoint, emotional intelligence may be understood, as a complement human ability within Digital HRM and not an automatic outcome of technological change.

An increase in importance of employee wellbeing is a natural development of the human-centred HRM and sustainable work systems. According to Cooke et al. (2022), human-centred HRM must deal with the sustainability of workers, organisation, and society rather than just organisational performance. The literature on human-centred organisations is similarly synthesised by Townsend and Romme (2024) with a focus on human dignity, well-being, participation and positive human experiences. Recent efforts in HRM 5.0 also prioritise human-centredness, human-machine integration, sustainability, personalisation, and quality of work life in shaping the future of HRM Capolupo et al. (2025). These developments point towards the consequences of evaluations of digital HRM that have increasingly called for an explicit human outcome consideration alongside technological and organisational performance.

Although we see an increasing amount of research about the digitalization of HRM, employee wellbeing, work-life balance and also emotional intelligence, these literature strands appear to insufficiently interconnect. In recent years, digitalisation, automation, data analytics, the role of digitalization, the use of artificial intelligence, and strategic transformation (Strohmeier, 2020) have become more popular in HRM research while Technology enabled Boundary making use of after-hours communication and the consequences of digital connection (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Park et al. 2020) has become popular in work-life research.

Simultaneously, studies on emotional intelligence (EI) have found relationships between EI and important employee outcomes such as performance and well-being (Mayer et al., 2008; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2016). There is somewhat a lack of conceptual integration around how Digital HRM reconfigures working conditions, how those may create supportive and disruptive effects for work-life balance, and how emotional intelligence may act as a complementary human capability within the newly transformed settings.

The research holds that Digital HRM can increasingly be understood as going beyond the technology put in place and the efficiency of the technology. It has broader relevance as those technologies affect work, employee agency, connectivity, relationships, and well-being. A human-centred approach to Digital HRM thus requires companies to consider technological capability and human sustainability together, especially as AI and other digital technologies continue to change the nature of work.

1.1 Research Gap

Studies on Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) are growing quickly with the advent of artificial intelligence, automation, analytics, digital platforms, and virtual work processes. But the literature has mainly focused on technological, operational and organisational outcomes. Yet, the integrated employee-centred consequences of Digital HRM are still underexplored.

To begin with the relationship between Digital HRM with work-life balance (WLB) are varied. Digital technologies may enhance flexibility and autonomy, but constant connectivity, information overload, intensified work demands and blurred work-non-work boundaries may be strain-inducing. Consequently, the impact of Digital HRM is dependent on the design of work and inducement, autonomy of employee, and boundary management practices (Park et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023).

On the other hand, emotional intelligence is not fully integrated into digital HRM research. While EI relates to emotional regulation, communication, flexibility, and workplace performance, its conceptual relevance to technology-mediated and digitally intensive work has been given limited attention (Mayer et al., 2008; O'Boyle et al., 2011).

Third, digital HRM, WLB and EI generally have been studied largely as separate research domains without a cohesive picture of how digital transformation alters work conditions, impacts work-life boundaries, and creates emergent demands for human capabilities.

This study fills this gap by thematically analysing existing studies and presenting an integrated, employee-centred framework linking Digital HRM transformation, work-life balance, and emotional intelligence. The research showed that digitalisation shouldn't always be taken as a positive cause or negative cause. Also, it showed that EI is a flexible human capability which is effective in workplaces which are digitally transformed.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the identified research gap and objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How is Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) transformation conceptualised and characterised in the existing literature?

RQ2. What positive and negative implications of Digital HRM transformation for employees' work-life balance are identified in the literature?

RQ3. What role does emotional intelligence play in helping employees navigate digitally mediated work, organisational change, and technology-enabled communication?

RQ4. How can Digital HRM transformation, work-life balance, and emotional intelligence be conceptually integrated within an employee-centred framework of digital workplace well-being?

RQ5. What theoretical and practical research directions emerge from the existing literature for developing more human-centred Digital HRM practices?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overarching objective of this study is to examine how Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) transformation is reshaping employee well-being, with particular emphasis on work-life balance and emotional intelligence in the digital workplace.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. To examine the major dimensions and characteristics of Digital HRM transformation identified in the existing literature.
2. To compile the reported implications of Digital HRM for employee work-life balance, including both enabling factors such as flexibility and autonomy and constraining factors such as work intensification and boundary blurring.
3. To examine the relevance of emotional intelligence in digitally mediated work environments, particularly in relation to communication, adaptability, interpersonal relationships, change management, and employee well-being.
4. To integrate the Digital HRM, work-life balance, and emotional intelligence literature into an employee-centred conceptual framework.
5. To identify theoretical and practical implications and directions for future empirical research concerning human-centred Digital HRM transformation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Digital HRM Transformation

Organizations are taking notice of the significant role of Human Resource Management in following technological advancements in understanding Digital HRM Transformation (Wahdaniah et al., 2023). The world of human resource management (HRM) has changed with the advent of new age technologies like automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms. HR managers will learn new techniques for technology management and data analysis in this way. In order to enhance HR practices and overall performance, organisations must adopt this digital transformation that changes conventional people management (Prokopenko et al., 2023). Seeing the Digital HRM Transformation from the perspective of transitioning from traditional technology-led HR practices to technology-led modern HRM would be useful. According

to Verlinden (2023), two features of this transition are data-driven decision making and automation of operational HR activities. Digital HRM goes beyond digitising/regulating HR functions; it impacts the entire organisations. Vardarlier, (2019) also entails 'digitising' the personnel and the work processes. The level of maturation of an enterprise's HRM capabilities impacts the efficacy of digital HRM practices (Wang & Zheng, 2022). Thus, it influences external social networking and internal consistency of HR processes. HRM is strategic as it aims to incorporate the sustainability in HRM activities. This will ultimately link sustainable HRM techniques to AI and digital HRM (Sova et al., 2023). There are barriers to digital HRM practices within the HR value chain, although not addressing them adequately will prevent maximising digitalisation (Chapano et al., 2023).

The digital transition of human resource management is extremely complex and creates opportunities and challenges for greater efficiency and responsiveness.

To meet the challenges posed by digital transformation, organisations must proactively adapt to these changes through the implementation of digital HRM practices and ensure that HR personnel have the required skills and maturity. Along with technology, alignment of HRM practices with organisational strategy and sustainability goals is important for this change. The effective digitalization of HRM in various sectors depends on tackling the challenges in implementing digital HRM practices.

2.2 Digital HRM and Work-Life Balance

The effect of digital HRM transformation on work-life balance has consequences for both employees and employers. COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted companies and industries, fostering growth in the information technology (IT) sector across nearly all sectors. As a consequence of the pandemic, the digitalization of HR practices has risen. According to Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015), Digital HRM helps employees become more flexible at work. Thus, work-life balance becomes better. Such flexibility can also lead to blurred work and personal boundaries, resulting in longer working days and greater stress (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). It is worthwhile to understand work life balance as many organisations now adapting to digital transformation in HRM. Digital HRM refers to the technical interventions, which include automated workflows, tools for enabling working from home and digital communication. Through the emerging technologies' ability to alter traditional work settings and relations, work-life boundaries may change. According to Juchnowicz and Kinowska, in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic hastens the process of digitizing work, a fact that can no longer be ignored. The pandemic has greatly changed the worldview of people with respect to their quality-of-life perception and their relationship with an employer. As remote working is gaining traction the line between office and personal life is getting blurred. This creates opportunities for flexibility as well as problems in separating work and family life. The resources that workers could access at work are now changing as a result of digitalization, and these changes may significantly impact their well-being. Although remote work is useful, it may generate loneliness and lower the ability to discern one's work from personal life. However, this effect is negative to one's work-life balance (Juchnowicz & Kinowska, 2021). Businesses should proceed with extreme caution as far as possible when implementing these digital work arrangements to ensure well-being and work-life balance.

Digital HRM can positively impact the work-life balance of employees by increasing the effectiveness of HRM and promoting flexible work arrangements. The research work of Mazurchenko & Maršíková (2019) highlights how the role of HR managers in modern organisations has changed owing to digitalisation and how HR processes need to be revised to maintain the happiness and wellbeing of employees. Also, Ficapal-Cusí & Torrent-Sellens, (2014) argue that progressive HRM systems are crucial for work-life balance. It is being noticed that companies adopting digital HRM reforms show higher inventiveness, team working and flexibility. We can conclude from this that the application of digital technology in HRM might affect the work-life balance favourable or unfavourable ways. Therefore, to reduce any likely unfavourable outcomes and boost employee satisfaction, strategic management techniques are needed. The true effect of these digital technologies may depend on the specific organizational environment and how they are used (Puspita S, 2024). To ensure that Digital HRM encourages a healthy work-life balance for employees, HR practitioners must consider the benefits and challenges that accompany digital transformation. The use of digital technologies has been shown to improve the communication and coordination of individuals, which can lead to a better work-life balance and improved work performance (Duan et al., 2023). Despite this, the digital era presents its own set of challenges in maintaining a work-life balance, for which solutions need to evolved (S. & S.N., 2021).

2.3 Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

In the field of human resource management, it is the “emotional Intelligence” which is shown to play an important role in enhancing individual and organisational performance. The topic of incorporation of emotional intelligence (EI) into HRM practices is particularly relevant considering that digitalization of HRM is transforming the way HR practices are performed due to technological innovations like digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) (Ngwenya et al., 2019). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is becoming increasingly important in the workplace, especially with Digital HRM Transformation becoming more of a trend. Digitalization of HR practices has underpinned the need for emotional intelligence (EI), that is, the capacity to recognise, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively within the context of relationships. A leader, with high Emotional Intelligence (EI), can better motivate their team, encourage innovation and lead effective change as organizations go through digital transitions (Gosmand, 2021)

It is quite interesting to note that even with the growing popularity of digital HRM, emphasis on emotional intelligence has declined. In today's digital age, HR managers should have the flexibility and emotional intelligence (EI) that goes with managing technology and datasets, so as to respond to changing employee demands and industry trends. The impact of AI on HRM is altering the nature of work, which will require HR practitioners to take on more strategic roles where using the concept of EI may be helpful (Tewari and Pant, 2020). Emotional intelligence (EI) is required not only for technological capabilities but also soft skills like empathy, motivation, communication skills, adaptability, etc. which are necessary to lead a team in digital change (Malhotra, 2020). In the digital age, organizations were faced with several challenges. The change required designing new skills and the ability to manage technology.

2.4 Human-Centred Digital HRM

The digitalization of human resource management (HRM) is taking HR practices beyond merely automating administrative work to using data for decision-making on HR-related matters, utilizing digital platforms, analytics, AI, and technology-mediated employee services. Strohmeier (2020) differentiates digital HRM from narrower terms such as digitisation by conceptualising digitalisation and digital transformation of HRM as social technical processes that involve changes in both technology and humans. It is a crucial distinction to make because digital HRM is not merely converting paper-based HR processes to electronic formats. Instead, it alters how such HR activities are designed, delivered, experienced and strategically integrated in organisations.

Prior research on electronic human resource management does suggest that technology-enabled human resource management has evolved from a focus on administrative efficiency to one of relational and transformational outcomes. According to Bondarouk, Parry, and Furtmueller (2016), who reviewed e-HRM research for four decades, adoption concerns technology, organisational conditions and people. As for its consequences, e-HRM has implications beyond operational efficiency, which includes relational and transformational ones. The growth of a more employee-oriented measure of digital HRM, which not only assesses the value of technology via the efficiency of the organisation but also via the impact of technology on employees and their work. Human aspect is integral to digital HRM rather than an outcome that is reckoned after technology implementation.

A human-centred HRM concept is an important base for the employee-oriented concept. Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry (2022) argue that human-centred HRM matters for sustainable workforces, organisations and societies. Focus on employee well-being, fairness, employee voice and the unequal distributional impact of digital technology and remote working on groups of workers. Their view of digitalisation is less of a technological revolution and more of social and organisational upgradation, thus not treating technology as a one-off value-neutral intervention. More focus is needed on how digital technology can intersect with inequality, exclusion, power, and employee well-being, they state.

This perspective is further reinforced by fresh literature on human-centred organisations. Townsend and Romme (2024) conducted a literature review and synthesis of human-centred organisations which indicates that humanistic values such as dignity and well-being are the key principles of human-centred organizing. The framework stresses positive human experiences, participation, team-based work structures and people-centred tools and practices. These principles are relevant for a digital transformed HR function context because the introduction of digital systems can affect employees not only through the technical properties of those systems, but also through the level of autonomy, participation, fairness and meaningful human interaction that the systems embody. As a result, this means that technology needs to be designed and managed around human needs and experiences, not simply seeing employees as users of technologies.

The recent evolvement HRM 5.0 makes the human-centred dimension more explicit. Capolupo, Maione and Supino (2025) in a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis mention that important characteristics of HRM 5.0 are increasing human-centredness, sustainability, human-machine integration, personalization of work and quality of work life. The results implied that the future developments of HRM are being increasingly talked about with respect to technological advancement as well as human capabilities and quality of working life. The shift from HRM4.0 to HRM5.0 is relevant for this study as it changes the focus from the adoption of technology to the condition under which technology can foster human development and sustainable work.

In particular, this human-centred approach is important when automation includes AI and algorithms. Digital technologies can initiate quicker decisions, personalisation, automation, analytics and access to HR services, it can also raise issues such as employees' autonomy, privacy, fairness, oversight and wellness. A recent conceptual piece by Huang, Kang, Zur and Liang (2026) directly elaborates on a Humanistic HRM model for digitalisation. The model identifies three dimensions: 'dignity-facilitating HRM', 'well-being-enhancing HRM', and 'common-good-enabling HRM'. It argues that HRM must ensure a proper balance between technological progress and human dignity, privacy, autonomy and fairness, and employee well-being. The challenge of human-centered digital HRM as a governance and people management challenge is particularly relevant today rather than a technology-adoption challenge.

Therefore, employee well-being is increasingly becoming an important factor in digital HRM evaluation. Bhoir and Sinha (2024) a systematic review on employees-well-being-oriented HR practices clearly indicate the growing importance of HR systems focused on employee well-being. According to their review, HR practices cause both positive benefits and negative consequences to employees, with both parties benefitting or causing harm in different scenarios. According to us, this knowledge is useful for digital HRM because technologies designed to enhance efficiency also reshape workloads, expectations, employee autonomy, communicative behaviours and work intensity. Accordingly, a human-centred digital HRM perspective must take on board not only whether technology has improved HR service delivery but also whether the work system produced enabled sustainable employee experiences.

The dimension involving work and life illustrates this tension particularly well. With the aid of digital technology, an employee can access organisational systems, communicate, and perform work across locations and at different times. The digital connectivity may result employees are always reachable outside formal working hours. According to the research by Park, Liu, and Headrick (2020), work-related ICT demands experienced after hours act as a source of weekly strain. Greater boundary control, however, can mitigate the negative consequences of these demands. In the same vein, Reinke, Niederkrömer and Ohly (2023) show that employees use different boundary-work tactics to manage after-hours ICT use and that these tactics impact psychological detachment and recovery. The study findings suggest that offering flexibility is insufficient for digital HRM to be human-centred. The quality of digital works is also influenced by whether employees retain significant control over when and how technology connects them to work.

The matter of disengagement constitutes an additional instance of the organizational responsibility connected to digitally mediated employment. Hopkins (2024) in the preliminary review of right-to-disconnect literature identifies work-life balance, governance, health and well-being as key themes in the ability of workers to disengage from digital work communication. According to the review, constant communication has emerged as a key issue in modern digital workforces and that organizations should have measures that protect non-work time. More recent studies, meanwhile, continue to investigate the impact of digital transformation on the well-being of employees, examining how different technologies and occupational contexts contribute, and the importance of digital boundaries and tech-induced demands to the employee experience.

The digital transformation may negatively influence the employee's well-being via technostress. Wang, Ding and Kong (2022) using a Job Demands-Resources perspective found that technostress relates to poorer work well-being through working exhaustion and workplace knowledge diversity can buffer this relationship. Mansuroğlu and Smith (2026) used more recent evidence to identify techno-overload and techno-invasion among the significant technology-related stressors which contribute to negative well-being impact. All things considered, these studies suggest that it is the change in job demands and resources created by technology, rather than the presence of technology, that determines outcome.

Emotional intelligence is a human attribute that is closely linked to a human-centred view. According to Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008), emotional intelligence refers to the ability to reason about emotions and to use emotions to enhance

thought. In digitally mediated work, such competences are becoming particularly relevant as communication is increasingly being done through electronic media, remote co-working may reduce contextual cues and employees may regularly need to adapt to new and changing technologies and organisational practices. This means that the importance of EI is not to assume that a digital HRM will lead to higher EI but to realise that human emotional abilities can become more necessary as employees operate within technological intensive environments.

As a consequence, a human-centred approach to digital HRM can be defined as an approach which integrates technological capability with employee autonomy, dignity, well-being, participation, healthy management of work and human capabilities. Evaluating Digital HRM merely on how fast, efficient or automated it is, is not right. The wider organizational value depends on whether digital work arrangements facilitate employees attaining sustainable work–life relationships; and developing capabilities required to navigate digitally mediated interactions. This standpoint provides the conceptual basis of digital HRM literature for integration of work–life balance and emotional intelligence.

2.5 Integrative Research Gap

As the previous literature shows, Digital HRM is now a broader socio-technical domain, including the digitalisation of HR processes, analytics, automation, AI, employee platforms, virtual work and evolving forms of work organisation. The definition of Digital HRM as well as its evolution have been quantified by existing reviews. Strohmeier (2020) stresses the importance of clarification in the differentiation of digitisation, digitalisation, digital transformation and digital HRM, extending the previously limited view of technology-based HRM as an efficiency-oriented application. Bondarouk et al. (2016) remark the move towards relational and transformational outcomes supported by technology. Newer systematic reviews show similarly that the scholarship on Digital HRM is growing fast and that they are becoming more theory diverse.

However, three significant gaps remain.

First, the employee-well-being consequences of Digital HRM remain conceptually fragmented. So far, research suggests that digitalisation can create flexibility, autonomy, access, and new ways of working. At the same time, it can trigger technostress, technology overload, permanent availability, work intensification, and weakening work–nonwork boundaries. Evidence contradicts the simplistic assumption that digital HRM is either good or bad for employees. It can have complex outcomes. Instead, the outcome of an employee seems to rely on the features of work which are digitally enabled and the environmental conditions within an organization and in its use of technology. Recent reviews on employee well-being and digital transformation also call for more integrated and context-sensitive accounts of how the technological demands and resources shape employee experiences.

Second, work–life balance and emotional intelligence developed as largely separated streams of inquiry. Technology-enabled connectivity, telework, boundary management, recovery, and the right to disconnect have all become research topics. Research outputs of Park et al. (2020), Reinke et al. (2023) and Hopkins (2024) show that digital connectedness can reshape work–nonwork boundaries and create novel demands for boundary control and organisational governance. Scholarly work on emotional intelligence, in parallel, has focused on emotional information processing and, importantly, on interpersonal functions, social outcomes, and well-being. On the whole, there has been comparatively little direct integration with the Digital HRM transformation literature.

A third issue is that literature fails to integrate technology, work design and human capability into a single employee-centred Digital HRM perspective. The research on human-centred HRM primarily focuses on dignity, fairness, employee voice, well-being, and sustainable work. The emerging literature HRM 5.0 speaks in favour of human–technology integration, personalisation, sustainability, and enhanced quality of work life. Recent humanistic hrM work thrusts dignity and well-being into the spotlight as key concerns in ai-driven transformation. Still, the themes are not yet properly linked to the specific intersection of Digital HRM, work–life balance, and emotional intelligence that is investigated in the present study.

The current investigation thus fixes an integrative in the literature, rather than asserting that separate relationships have never been studied. It connects three bodies of scholarship that are often studied in parallel, namely Digital HRM transformation, employee work–life balance, and emotional intelligence as a human capability in digitally mediated work. This study develops an employee-focused interpretation of Digital HRM by synthesising these streams thematically. Technology changes the work conditions, and those changing conditions have implications for work-life balance. Human capabilities such as emotional intelligence get relevant to employees' adaptation, communication, and boundary management.

Based on this, we propose that Digital HRM should be conceptualised as a socio-technical transformation, the employee consequences of which are contingent upon work design, digital connectivity, organisational support, boundary-management practices, and human capabilities. As a result, work-life balance becomes a crucial index of employee well-being, whereas emotional intelligence is a supportive human capacity that may assist employees in coping with the interpersonal and self-regulatory demands generated by digitalized work. The integrated perspective provides the conceptual basis for the framework developed in the next section and sets up a clear agenda for future empirical research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed study utilizes an inclusive thematic literature review to critique and synthesize evidence related to Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM), employee work-life balance and emotional intelligence in the digital workplace.

Thematic synthesis approach was used to analyse the selected literature. Extracted findings were compared and arranged into meaningful categories. Using an iterative process, thematic analysis led to the identification of recurring themes, and relationships across the literature to identify the conceptual relationships connecting Digital HRM transformation, digitally mediated work characteristics, work-life balance and emotional intelligence.

4. FINDINGS AND THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Based on the thematic synthesis of the literature reviewed, it can be observed that Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) is not merely a technological extension of conventional HRM but a transformation of HR processes, work arrangements, employee interactions, and organisational practices.

As per existing literature, its implications for employee well-being are not necessarily positive or negative. Digital HRM creates simultaneous enabling conditions (flexibility and autonomy) and disruptive conditions (continuous connectivity, technology-induced demands, and weakened work, non-work boundaries). In changing circumstances, emotional intelligence (EI) is an important human capacity associated with emotional perception, regulation, inter-personal functioning and adaptation. The following paragraph will discuss the five themes identified.

Theme 1: Digital HRM Transformation

Digital HRM is an upgraded version of the earlier technology-led HRM practices. Strohmeier (2020) contends that it is essential to understand the difference between digital HRM and mere digitisation. Whereas digital transformation entails integrating digital technologies into HRM strategically, it also enables organisational transformation. According to this perspective, digital HRM does not merely mean performing existing HR activities electronically. It can also involve changes in HR processes, work practices, organisational structures, and the generation and use of HR-related information. The importance of this conceptual distinction is that it grounds digital HRM in a wider organisational transformation as opposed to an isolated technology intervention.

The evolution of electronic HRM research further helps to understand the development of digital HRM. According to Bondarouk et al. (2016), there is a clear relationship among the three interrelated adoption factors, technology, organisation, and people, which have further operational, relational, and transformational consequences. According to their review, organisations are shifting from an initial focus on administrative efficiency towards broader improvements in HR service provision and strategic HRM. The paper highlights how digital HRM impacts beyond the HR department and increasingly deal with the interface of technology, organisational processes, and people.

The digital HRM process of the present day is powered by technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), analytics, automation, digital platforms and technology-mediated communication. With the growing use of digital systems in recruitment, performance management, learning, workforce planning, and employee interaction, the distinctions between HR processes and broader digital work systems are becoming hazy. Strohmeier (2020) thus notes the strategic implementation of digitalisation and the need to rethink digital HRM as a sociotechnical transformation.

Recent research suggests that digital HRM is changing towards a more human-centred model. According to a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis of HRM 5.0 by Capolupo, Maione, and Supino (2025), the emerging HRM paradigm will be characterised by human-centredness, sustainability, human-machine integration, personalisation of work,

and quality of work life. The findings show that technological sophistication won't be enough to characterise the next phase of HRM. Attention is increasingly being paid to how technology interacts with employee capabilities, well-being and sustainable work design.

As a result, the literature indicates Digital HRM transformation as a multidimensional technology, organisational practices and human experience phenomenon. This means it enables researchers not only to capture what digital HR technologies enable organisations to do but also how they change employees' daily working experiences.

Theme 2: Enabling Effects on Work–Life Balance

Digital technologies are regularly cited as having the potential to allow workers greater flexibility in where and when they work. Communication tools and systems, remote-working systems, cloud-based applications and platforms, and virtual collaboration enable employees to work outside conventional organisational boundaries. Such flexibility could help employees manage the competing demands of work and home, and may increase perceived autonomy over work.

The broader research into the world of digital work shows a highly contingent relationship between technological flexibility & work-life balance. According to Park, Liu, and Headrick (2020), information and communication technologies can let work take place at times and places that might not otherwise be. According to their research, employees can experience technology-related work demands in various ways because of organizational support and employee boundary control. The findings imply that technology may not necessarily produce a healthier work–life relationship, yet it can create flexibility.

From the Human-Centred HRM perspective, the flexibility provided by digital enablement can be valuable as it may provide discretion to employees regarding the timing and location of work. Employee well-being and sustainable workforces form the central agenda of human-centred HRM, according to Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry (2022). They assert that HRM is significantly out of step with the contemporary world of work and that we must recognise the changing forms of work, and their implications for individuals, organisations and wider society.

The potential benefits of digital work also include greater access and coordination. Through access to digital platforms, an organization can make its information more available and facilitate communication between employees in different geographical locations. Digitalization can likewise raise the accessibility of HR services and permit employees and managers to engage with HR processes more successfully. According to Bondarouk et al. (2016), the improved efficiency of HR service provision and strategic transformation are important evolutions following technology-supported HRM.

Thus, the synthesis indicates that the Digital HRM would enable effects in the work-life balance domain when the use of digital technologies increases employee flexibility and autonomy without the counterbalancing increase of expectations of availability. Flexibility delivers value, however this depends on the organisational norms, workload, boundary control and the design of digital work arrangements.

Theme 3: Disruptive Effects on Work–Life Balance

The literature reveals that, at the same time, connectivity has a contrary set of results. Digital technologies are allowing work to be carried out almost anywhere and at almost any time, activities which may erode the temporal and spatial boundaries between paid work and personal life that have traditionally prevailed. This happens mainly in after-hour digital communication, remote working, and expectations of employee availability.

According to Park et al. (2020), ICT demands related to work after regular working hours can be a source of weekly strain. In a study of teachers, after-hours ICT demands were found to relate negatively to rumination, affect and insomnia, while technological boundary tactics and work–family support were related to lower ICT demands and greater control over boundaries. The results reveal that the ramifications of digital connectivity are shaped not only by the technology but also by organisational expectations and employees' ability to control the demarcation of work through the technology.

According to Reinke, Niederkrome, and Ohly (2023), boundary management issues can be focused on the boundary-work tactics associated with the use of information and communication technology after hours. The study found that employees use different behaviours to control their digital work boundaries. Further, boundary management has a relation with recovery from work. To maintain a distinction between work and non-work domains it can require employees to regulate themselves more through digital work environments connecting them to work.

The 'right to disconnect' has thus emerged as a key policy and organisational issue. Hopkins (2024) highlights, in a scoping review, the protection of rest periods as well as employees' disconnection from work communication as key aspects of today's digital work. The review shows that worries over digital connectivity are bigger than whether an individual can cope. They involve governance and institutional arrangements.

Use of advanced tools may lead to employee technostress. According to a study done by Wang et al (2022), technostress was linked with employee work well-being through work exhaustion in digital work contexts. The study used JD-R framework to help observe their findings. Moreover, their results showed that the diversity of knowledge in workplace might lessen the impact. The authors suggest that tech-related demands become troublesome when they drain employee resources, and the organization does not provide enough resources to meet those demands.

Recent evidence reinforces the importance of this duality. In a systematic review based on PRISMA used focused on employee well-being in the digital transformation, Moganadas et al. (2026) look at how employee well-being is increasingly becoming an important dimension for study in digital transformation research. They further note that Artificial Intelligence, algorithmic systems, and digital platforms can pose risks and offer opportunities to the employee.

When we look at these findings in totality, it can be seen that in terms of work-life balance, the disruption caused by Digital HRM happens mainly through boundary blurring, connectivity, technology-related workload, work intensification, and failure to psychologically disengage. Digitalisation should not be seen as automatically improving work-life balance simply because it allows people to work remotely or flexibly.

Theme 4: Emotional Intelligence as a Human Capability

Emotional intelligence is a unique yet complementary dimension of the employee experience in digitally transformed workplaces. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to reason about emotions, and of recognising their significance in guiding one's own thought and behaviour. The review identified that emotional intelligence influences social outcomes, performance, and psychological and physical well-being. Due to this base, EI is particularly relevant to workplaces that require employees to manage interpersonal relationships and shifting working conditions.

With work becoming more and more digitally mediated, the importance of EI is growing. Virtual communication does lessen some of the context and non-verbal signals available face-to-face when a group interacts. While remote and hybrid work does require when working, employees need to be able to regulate emotions, read the reactions of others, maintain relationships and alter the pattern of communication. The present literature synthesis thus views EI as a human capacity for managing work that is digitally mediated, not that Digital HRM causes higher emotional intelligence.

Research in wider organizational literature shows that emotional intelligence is relevant for employees' outcomes. O'Boyle et al. (2011) in a meta-analysis found that different streams of emotional intelligence are positively associated with job performance. The writers also discovered that emotional-intelligence measures remained valid when assessed with cognitive ability and personality traits. The key findings give credence to understanding EI as an employee capability with organisational relevance; however, it does not prove that digital HRM increases EI.

Doğru (2022) investigated the relationships between emotional intelligence and employee outcomes, focusing on emotional intelligence's influence on organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, job performance, and job stress. This study adds to the case of how broadly relevant EI is to employee outcomes and serves as a foundation for beginning to think about emotional capabilities in changing work contexts.

The literature also indicates that emotional intelligence has a broader relationship with well-being. According to Sánchez-Álvarez et al., (2015), there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and subjective well-being. This was revealed in a meta-analysis which included 25 studies with a total sample of 8510 people. Although this evidence does not address Digital HRM directly, it nevertheless provides some theoretical justification for placing EI as relevant to employee well-being, and for investigating how such capability may work in digitally-mediated work.

As such, EI could be more useful in Digital HRM for activities including self-regulation, empathy, communication, interpersonal relationships, adaptability to change, and management of emotional demands at work. Most importantly, this study does not suggest that emotional intelligence has a digital HRM will result. Instead, EQ is seen as a human capability that can complement digital systems and potentially help workers cope with the changing social and psychological demands of digital work.

This difference is important in theory. An approach that is centred on technology usually asks how HR technologies enhance processes. Whereas, an approach that is centred on humans further asks what human capacities do employees require to make these technologies sustainable. Thus, emotional intelligence is part of the human capabilities required to support the technological transformation.

Theme 5: Towards Human-Centred Digital HRM

The analysis of previous themes shows that the biggest challenge in Digital HRM is not only the technology but aligning digital transformation with sustainable employee experience. The literature suggests that digitalisation can generate efficiencies and accessibility together with flexibility and new forms of autonomy, while also causing pressures of connectivity, technostress, erosion of boundaries and more demands for emotion regulation. An HR practice must adapt to and make provisions for both sides of this transformation.

According to Cooke et al. (2022), establishing human-centered HRM promotes sustainable workforces and organizations. Furthermore, employee well-being is identified as important in contemporary HRM. Their standpoint disputes methods that estimate HR only through the performance of the organization and encourages more focus over the range of human and social effect of HR.

According to newly published literature on the human-centred organization, human dignity, well-being, participation, and meaningful human experiences are equally important. Townsend and Romme (2024), through a review and synthesis of the literature, identify human-centred organising as an increasingly important organisational perspective and show how the concept has gained prominence in response to changing workplace conditions. Their study indicates that technology and organisational systems must be designed for people, not vice versa. This supports a wider view of organisations that does not see people as just another part of the technical system.

New studies on HRM 5.0 support this. According to Capolupo et al. (2025), human-centredness, sustainability, human-machine integration, personalisation, and quality of work life are important features of HRM 5.0. The research indicated that the future of HRM will involve the digital ability along with human ability, continuous learning and sustainable work.

The latest scholarship on AI-driven transformation brings the human-centred argument into the realm of Humanistic HRM. Huang et al. (2026) highlight three dimensions humans HRM: dignity – facilitating HRM including well-being-enhancing HRM, and common-good-enabling HRM. According to their framework, the growing use of AI raises problems in the domains of privacy, autonomy, fairness, dignity, and employee well-being that are not amenable to purely technological and/or performance-oriented HRM solutions.

The relationship between Digital HRM and work-life balance is impacted by these developments. A human-centred digital HRM strategy should not only grant employees technological flexibility; it should also create conditions under which this flexibility can be sustained. This involves setting expectations on availability, sufficient employee autonomy, available leadership, boundary practices, recovery opportunities, digital skills training and employee well-being. Research findings related to after-hours ICT use and the right to disconnect show that it is important for management to have governance over digital connectivity rather than employees relying on themselves to manage the consequences of being always-on.

Results reveal an additional insight on the findings which indicate that emotional intelligence plays a complementary role in such a model. Digital HRM that centres around humans not only involves systems technology but also focuses on the human capabilities employees need to operate those systems. Organizational policies and work design can ensure employees have sufficient autonomy and resources to apply those capabilities, while EI can foster interpersonal and self-regulatory competencies in digitally mediated work. As such, the technological effectiveness and human capability should be seen as two complementary and not competing dimensions of Digital HRM.

In general, the synthesis of the theme is indicative of a human-centred socio-technical perspective in which Digital HRM alters employee experiences through manipulation of work design, connectivity, autonomy, communication, and organisational expectations. These changes facilitate and disrupt work-life balance at the same time. Emotional intelligence is a powerful human resource to cope with the inter-personal and emotional demands of this change. The resulting viewpoint is that digital transformation in itself is not a good thing, as well as the conditions under which technology helps to make employees sustainably well.

The synthesis can therefore be summarised as follows:

Digital HRM Transformation → Digitally Mediated Work Conditions → Work–Life Balance

while

Emotional Intelligence → Human capability for emotional regulation, communication, adaptation, and interpersonal functioning within digitally mediated work.

The two pathways converge within a broader human-centred Digital HRM perspective, in which technological advancement is balanced with employee autonomy, well-being, healthy work boundaries, dignity, and sustainable work design.

Theme	Main finding from literature	Enabling/Disruptive mechanism	Key sources
Digital HRM transformation	HRM is shifting from technology-supported administration to strategic digital transformation	Automation, analytics, AI, digital platforms	Strohmeier (2020); Bondarouk et al. (2017)
Enabling effects on WLB	Digitalisation can increase flexibility and autonomy	Remote/hybrid work, temporal flexibility	Park et al. (2020); Cooke et al. (2022)
Disruptive effects on WLB	Connectivity can intensify work and blur boundaries	After-hours ICT demands, technostress, boundary erosion	Park et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2023); Hopkins (2024)
EI as human capability	EI is relevant to emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning and employee outcomes	Self-regulation, empathy, adaptation	Mayer et al. (2008); O'Boyle et al. (2011); Doğru (2022)
Human-centred Digital HRM	Technology should be aligned with dignity, well-being and sustainable work	Human-centred design, autonomy, well-being, governance	Cooke et al. (2022); Townsend & Romme (2024); Huang et al. (2026)

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

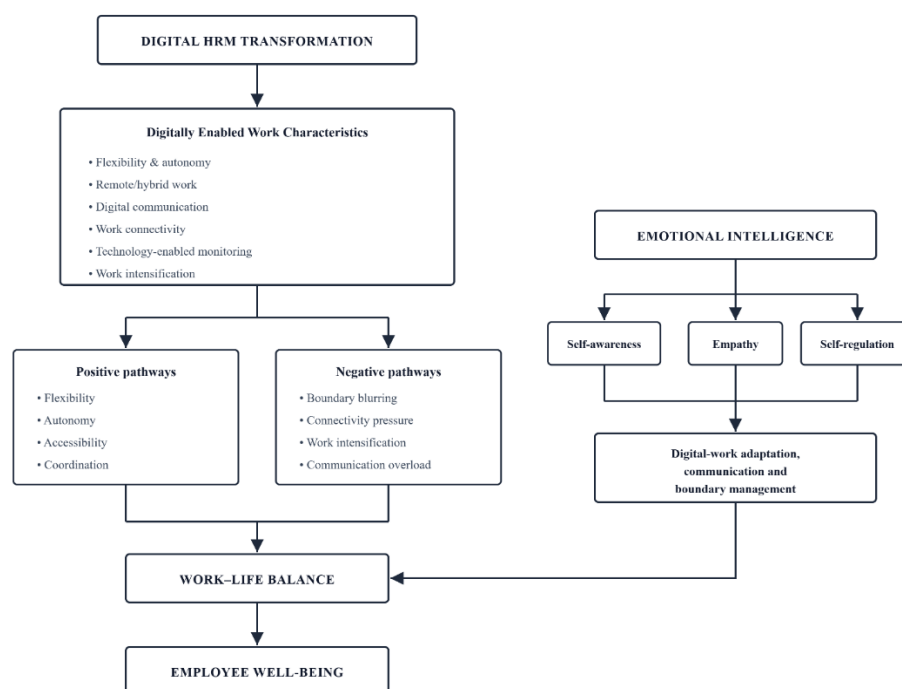


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) transformation is placed within a wider organisational and technical context in which employees' work experiences are becoming more and more shaped. Digital HRM refers to the adaptation and incorporation of digital platforms, automation, artificial intelligence, analytics, virtual collaboration systems and tech-enabled HR processes.

The framework asserts that the impact of Digital HRM on employee well-being may not necessarily be direct. The characteristics of work are changing in terms of flexibility, autonomy, digital communication and connectivity, remote and hybrid work arrangements, monitoring and coordination, work intensification through Digital HRM transformation. The digitally based nature of work may have both positive and negative consequences for work–life balance.

There are many positive aspects of digital technologies. These include greater flexibility for employees, increased autonomy and accessibility along with enhanced coordination and better opportunities to work across borders. These terms might help employees manage work and personal life. On the downside, continuous connectivity, communication overload, extended availability expectations, monitoring via digital devices, and loosening constraints on time and space can drive work intensification and work–life interference.

The concept of work-life balance is a key outcome of employee well-being within this framework because it signifies whether employees are able to manage work and personal life with competing demands in digitally enabled work environments.

Instead of merely resulting from Digital HRM transformation, emotional intelligence is seen as an accompanying human capacity. Workers with greater emotional intelligence and self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills may be better equipped to navigate technology-mediated discourse, remote collaboration, organizational change, workplace stressors, and boundary-management issues. As a result, emotional intelligence may affect how employees deal with changes resulting from digital transformation.

The framework takes a human-focused approach in which technology does not solely determine employee outcomes. Regardless, the interaction of digital-enabled work characteristics, organisational practices and human capabilities produces employee experiences. The usefulness of this framework for future empirical research is established. The framework proposes a set of direct, indirect, moderating, and contextual relationships.

Proposition 1: Digital HRM transformation reshapes employee work conditions by increasing flexibility, connectivity, autonomy, and technology-mediated interaction.

Proposition 2: Digital HRM practices may simultaneously support and undermine work–life balance depending on the extent to which they increase employee autonomy versus work-related connectivity and boundary permeability.

Proposition 3: Emotional intelligence represents an important human capability for adapting to digitally mediated communication, organisational change, and interpersonal demands in the digital workplace.

Proposition 4: Organisational practices that support boundary management may strengthen the positive relationship between digitally enabled flexibility and employee work–life balance.

Proposition 5: A human-centred approach to Digital HRM requires simultaneous attention to technological effectiveness, work design, employee autonomy, boundary management, and human capabilities.

6. DISCUSSION

The current thematic synthesis shows that Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) transformation must be perceived as a socio-technical process that alters not only HR processes but also the conditions that employees experience and perform work. The results conform to the conceptual difference of digitisation, digitalisation, digital transformation and digital HRM as defined by Strohmeier (2020), that is, the activities of HR and the processes of the organisation, rather than just a straightforward conversion of analogue information to digital. Notably, Bondarouk, Parry, and Furtmueller (2017) point out that technology-enabled HRM has shifted from administrative efficiency to relational and transformational outcomes. The present review extends this perspective further by bringing employee well-being and human capabilities more explicitly at the centre of Digital HRM transformation.

A key finding is the ambivalent characteristic of Digital HRM for work-life balance. Workplace flexibility is enhanced by digital technologies that allow employees to access work systems from different locations and exercise a greater discretion over when some work activities are performed.

Such arrangements may help employees manage work commitments in relation to personal and family responsibilities. Nonetheless, the identical technologies permit work to be accomplished beyond traditional times and spaces. In 2020, Park, Liu, and Headrick found out that the ICT demands after hours can become a strive. Meanwhile, in 2024, Reinke, Niederkrome, and Ohly demonstrated that employees utilize different boundary-work tactics in order to regulate the technology-enabled work afterward. Moreover, it supports psychological recovery. Consequently, the results provide backing for an interpretation of digital flexibility that is contingent in nature: while this flexibility may incur benefits when it comes with enough boundary control and organisational support, any expectations for continuous availability may render it problematic.

The Job Demands–Resources perspective can also interpret this duality. According to Wang, Ding and Kong (2023), technostress leads to reduced employee work well-being through work exhaustion which can be buffered by workplace knowledge diversity. The report findings show that technology does not work in isolation. Rather it generates demands, which depend on employees' resources. Digital HRM implies that technological sophistication does not necessarily result in positive employee outcomes. To effectively implement digital systems, organisations also require employee autonomy, an supportive work design, and mechanisms that protect recovery and well-being.

The study found that work–life balance could be used as an important indicator of employee consequences of Digital HRM. According to Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry (2022), an employee-centred perspective is in line with the Human Centric HRM, which is important in creating sustainable workforces and organisations. Moreover, they argue that the impacts of digital technology and remote working will differ across workers and socio-economic contexts.

Special Issue editors are challenging simple instrumental approaches to HRM by asking their authors to consider employee well-being, sustainability, voice and the social consequences of HRM.

The second significant finding relates to emotional intelligence as a human capability in digitally-mediated work. The critics' review does not present any grounds to argue that Digital HRM enhances emotional intelligence. The literature, however, implies that emotional intelligence is a skill that is likely to become more and more relevant as work becomes more digitally mediated. Emotional intelligence has been conceptualized in terms of abilities related to emotional information by Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade (2008). Joseph and Newman (2010) identify meta-analytic cascading relationships between the abilities of emotion perception, understanding, and regulation. Organisational research evidence shows that emotional intelligence relates to employee outcomes. According to O'Boyle et al. (2011), emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with job performance across the literature, while Doğru (2022) finds relationships between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, job performance, organisation commitment, organisation citizenship behaviour and job stress.

In a digitally mediated context, these capabilities could apply to employees' ability to manage technology-mediated interaction, adapt to organisational change, regulate one's own emotions, and maintain relationships with others. This doesn't subordinate EI to the organisations. The findings indicate that worker capabilities and organizational systems should be considered jointly. It would be overly individualized to expect employees to use their personal reserves of emotion to make up for heavy workloads, constant availability or poorly designed digital systems, when the real issue is clearly socio-technical.

Another implication relates to the emerging movement for human centred and humanistic Digital HRM. A synthesis of the human-centred organisation literature focusing on humanistic values such as dignity, well-being, justice, positive human experiences, participation and team-based work. Human centred organisations should intentionally design work systems that allow people to have positive and meaningful work. Capolupo, Maione, and Supino (2025) point out that HRM 5.0 manifests human-centredness, sustainability, human– machine integration, personalisation, and quality of work life.

This perspective is becoming especially relevant as we see more and more artificial intelligence appear. Huang et al. (2026) argue that Humanistic HRM should be a response to AI-driven workplace transformation and it must include employee dignity, well-being and common-good orientation. This finding adds further weight to a developing argument from the

present synthesis that technological characteristics and worker well-being are not mutually exclusive objectives. Digital HRM design and governance should specifically consider how technological systems impact autonomy, privacy, fairness, our ability to connect with others, work boundaries, and quality of work life.

The findings thus support a human-centred socio-technical interpretation of Digital HRM. The framework of work is changing through flexibility, connectivity, communication, autonomy, monitoring and work intensity. Changes of these kinds can create both resources and demands for workers, producing heterogeneous effects on work-life balance. Emotional intelligence is a valuable human ability that could aid workers in their interactions with coworkers and in managing their emotions during digital work. The main implication is that it is not technology itself that determines employee well-being but the way in which technologies, organisational practices, work design and human capabilities are configured together.

The discussion consequently supports the conceptual framework developed in this study:

Digital HRM transformation → digitally mediated work characteristics → enabling and disruptive consequences for work-life balance, with emotional intelligence functioning as a complementary human capability within this system.

This framework provides a more nuanced alternative to technology-deterministic interpretations of digital HRM.

7. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The paper adds to the emerging Digital Human Resource Management (Digital HRM) literature by thinking about digitalisation an intervention in social relations rather than just technology. According to Strohmeier, digital HRM changes the processes, work arrangements, organizational expectations, and experiences of employees. This builds on prior e-HRM studies that identified a move from administrative efficiency to relational and transformational outcomes (Bondarouk et al, 2017).

The research also views work-life balance (WLB) as a significant employee-level outcome of Digital HRM. The literature made known that digital technologies can produce flexibility and autonomy on the one hand, while on the other hand it creates demands related to boundaries through after-hours connectivity and work intensification. Consequently, the link between Digital HRM and employee well-being ought to be seen as conditional that is not always positive or negative (Park et al., 2020; Reinke et al., 2024). Digital technologies can serve as a resource when they enable higher autonomy and flexibility, while they can be viewed as demands when they cause technostress, overload, or continuous availability (Wang et al., 2023).

Another theoretical contribution is the positioning of emotional intelligence (EI) as a complementary human ability in work mediated by digital devices. As per the study, emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills may help employees adapt to the dynamic environment of technology-mediated communication and their workspace rather than Digital HRM develop EI. This research is in line with the literature that links EI with employee performance and well-being (Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Doğru, 2022).

Alongside the aforementioned views, extending a human-centred and humanistic HRM perspective to digital transformation. Human-centered HRM focuses on developing a sustainable workforce and employee well-being (Cooke et al., 2022) while human-centred organisational research focuses on dignity, participation, and positive employee experiences (Townsend & Romme, 2024). Research on HRM 5.0 that is emerging integrate technological advancement with human-centredness and sustainability and quality of work life. As a result, the existing framework combines these views by suggesting that the importance of Digital HRM must be evaluated with reference to both organisational effectiveness as well as sustainable employee experiences.

According to practical point of view, organisations need to assess Digital HRM initiatives related to employee well-being and WLB indicators. Digital technologies should be implemented with clarity about their availability, workload, communication, and recovery. Policies with respect to the organisation that support boundary management, like reasonable after-hours messaging and employee autonomy, may reduce the risk of digital flexibility developing into permanent work connectivity (Park et al., 2020; Reinke et al., 2024).

Companies need to manage technostress via job designing, training, technical support, and employee participation instead of just viewing technology-related strain as an individual resilience issue (Wang et al., 2023). As such, incorporation of EI

development into digital-work and leadership programmes can enhance communication, self-regulation, empathy and adaptability. Such development should, alongside appropriate organisational and technological support, not replace them.

Implementation of AI and other advanced Digital HRM technologies requires additionally a human-centred governance approach. Recent Humanistic HRM studies emphasizes certain concerns about dignity, autonomy, privacy, fairness and well-being of employees in workplaces powered by AI (Huang et al., 2026). Employee participation and feedback in technology deployment can help organisations align digital platforms to employee needs. Policies should also recognize contextual differences in the impacts of digital work across jobs and employee circumstances, thus requiring policy approaches that are not one-size-fits-all (Cooke et al., 2022).

In conclusion, an organization needs to institutionalize Digital HRM by balancing techno-functional capability and human sustainability. When technology undergoes a favourable work design, the establishment of healthy work boundaries, involvement of the employees, and development of relevant human capabilities, the organisations gain enhanced benefits within digital transformation. So, the framework established in this disclosure can therefore serve different theoretical lenses for empirical testing and/or practical guidance for organisations that want to implement Digital HRM in an employee-centred manner.

8. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should study the relationship between Digital HRM transformation and employees' work-life balance. Future research should also empirically study the impact of flexibility, autonomy, technostress, work intensification and boundary management on employee outcomes (Park et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Attribution of direct causation of digitalisation as impacting employees' work life may also distract researchers from studying technological mediation as the cause of dysfunctional events at workplaces. In fact, researchers may also like to focus on employee emotional intelligence (EI).

Further studies should look at how organisational factors, such as leadership, organisational support, digital-work policies, right-to-disconnect practices and employees' participation, moderate the outcomes of digital HRM. It must also pay special attention to AI-enabled HRM, especially autonomy issues, privacy, fairness, surveillance, and human-machine collaboration (Huang et al., 2026).

Future studies should take a tangled approach, mixed method, longitudinal, and cross-cultural doing so it will manage to catch employee's experiences overtime and in various organisation and cultures. Such approaches can provide stronger evidence on how Digital HRM interacts with work-life balance and emotional intelligence within increasingly digital workplaces.

9. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Digital Human Resource Management is changing the way organizations design HR processes, manage employee information, communicate with employees and organize work. According to the present thematic review, such a transformation cannot be interpreted only at the technological or efficiency level. Digital HRM is changing the conditions under which employees work and interact, creating new resources and new demands.

The results especially underscore the double-edged nature of digitalisation for work-life. Flexibility, autonomy, accessibility, and remote or hybrid working options can increase with digital technologies. Constant connectivity, out-of-hours communication, demands from technology, and weakened work-non-work boundaries create strain and hinder recovery. Thus, it is going to damage your health. The existing evidence suggests that Digital HRM can be interpreted contingently and is related with the outcome of employees when digital technologies are embedded significantly in designing work and the organisational practices (Park et al., 2020; Reinke et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024).

The review also highlights the importance of emotional intelligence as a complementary human ability in digital work. Prior research on EI have established links between emotional capabilities and employee outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction and job-related stress (O'Boyle et al., 2011; Doğru, 2022). Nonetheless, the present study does not prove that Digital HRM leads to increased emotional intelligence. Instead, it suggests that EI may assist workers in managing the interpersonal, emotional, and adaptive challenges of technology-mediated labor. This difference offers a more theoretical justification and a basis for further research.

The research further adds to the upward trend of human-centred, sustainable, and humanistic HRM. Human-centred HRM stresses the necessity to think about the policy impact of HR practices on people and society generally (Cooke et al., 2022). Research on human-centred organisations highlights dignity, well-being, positive human experiences, and participation (Townsend & Romme, 2024). Scholarly work of contemporary HRM 5.0 similarly identifies human-centredness and quality of work life as important dimensions of the future of HRM (Capolupo et al., 2025). The emergence of Humanistic HRM has been a major response to AI-driven transformation. These concepts help managers better balance the development of technologies with dignity, autonomy, fairness, and well-being (Huang et al., 2026).

Based on this, the study proposes a human-centred socio-technical understanding of Digital HRM in which Digital HRM transformation reshapes digitally mediated working conditions, these conditions create both enabling and disruptive consequences for work-life balance, and emotional intelligence represents a complementary human capability for navigating digitally transformed work. The framework does not assume that technology determines employee outcomes; rather, outcomes emerge from the interaction between technology and the work design, the organisation's practices and human capabilities.

Thus, the study's message, both theoretical and practical, is that future Digital HRM should go beyond the question of how organisations make ever-more efficient use of technology, and attend to how technology is integrated in ways that support sustainable, meaningful and healthy work. As AI as well as other digital technologies grow, human resource managers must remain conscious of employee well-being, healthy work boundaries, human capabilities, participation as well as dignity so as to create truly human-centred digital workplaces.

The study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and thematic synthesis and does not empirically test the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework. Future empirical research should therefore examine the framework across organisations, occupations, and national contexts using longitudinal, multilevel, and mixed-method approaches. Such work can establish when and how Digital HRM supports employee well-being and how human capabilities such as emotional intelligence interact with digitally transformed work environments.

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