Sustainable Organizations in the Age of Digital Transformation: A Human-Centered Framework Integrating Sustainable HRM, Digital Disruptions, Technostress, and Work–Life Balance

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Abstract

The pursuit of organizational sustainability has expanded significantly in the digital era, encompassing not only environmental and economic dimensions but also the psychological and social sustainability of human capital. Rapid digital disruptions have transformed work processes, intensified performance expectations, and altered work–life boundaries, often resulting in technostress and employee burnout. This paper develops a doctoral-level conceptual analysis of sustainable management practices by integrating Human Resource Management (HRM), digital transformation, technostress, and work–life balance into a unified framework. Drawing upon established theories, empirical findings, and institutional evidence, the study argues that sustainable organizations are those that adopt human-centered digital strategies supported by sustainable HRM practices. The paper contributes to sustainability literature by proposing a multi-level integrative model suitable for future empirical validation.

Keywords: Sustainable Management, Sustainable HRM, Digital Transformation, Technostress, Work–Life Balance, Organizational Sustainability

Introduction

Sustainability has become a dominant paradigm in contemporary management research, driven by increasing environmental constraints, social expectations, and technological complexity (Tripathi & Shrivastava, 2020). While early sustainability discourse emphasized ecological responsibility and long-term profitability, recent scholarship recognizes that sustainable performance is unattainable without sustained human well-being (Pfeffer, 2010).

Concurrently, digital disruptions—including artificial intelligence, algorithmic management, automation, and ubiquitous connectivity—have fundamentally reshaped organizational structures and employee experiences. Although these technologies enhance efficiency and competitiveness, they also intensify work demands, blur temporal boundaries, and heighten psychological strain.

At the intersection of sustainability and digital transformation lies Human Resource Management (HRM), which mediates how technological change affects employees (Jaiswal et al., 2025). This paper examines sustainable management practices as an integrated system in which HRM, digital disruption, technostress, and work–life balance interact to determine long-term organizational viability.

Theoretical Foundations of Sustainable Management

Triple Bottom Line and Beyond

Elkington's (1997) triple bottom line framework conceptualizes sustainability across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. However, in knowledge-intensive and digitally driven organizations, social sustainability—particularly employee mental health and work–life balance—has become the most fragile pillar.

Resource-Based View and Human Capital Sustainability

From the Resource-Based View (RBV), human capital represents a strategic, inimitable resource. Technostress, burnout, and disengagement erode this resource, making sustainable HRM a strategic imperative rather than a moral choice.

Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Sustainable HRM refers to HR practices that ensure long-term employee capability, motivation, and health while supporting organizational objectives (Jackson et al., 2011). At the doctoral level, SHRM is understood as a dynamic system integrating economic performance with ethical and psychological considerations.

Table 1: Traditional HRM vs. Sustainable HRM

DIMENSION	**TRADITIONAL HRM**	**SUSTAINABLE HRM**
Time Orientation	Short-term efficiency	Long-term human capital viability
Employee Role	Cost factor	Strategic asset
Training Focus	Job-specific skills	Continuous learning & digital resilience
Performance Metrics	Output & targets	Well-being, engagement & adaptability
View on Technology	Productivity enhancer	Tool requiring human-centered governance

Digital Disruptions and Organizational Sustainability

Digital disruption refers to transformative technological changes that alter organizational routines, decision- making, and power structures. Empirical evidence from global workforce studies shows that while digitalization improves productivity, it simultaneously increases cognitive load and role ambiguity (WEF, 2022).

Table 2: Digital Disruptions – Sustainability Outcomes

DIGITAL PRACTICE	**POSITIVE OUTCOMES**	**SUSTAINABILITY RISKS**
Automation	Efficiency, cost reduction	Job insecurity, deskilling anxiety
Remote Work	Flexibility, reduced commuting	Boundary blurring, isolation

AI-based Monitoring	Performance accuracy	Surveillance stress
Digital Collaboration Tools	Speed & connectivity	Information overload

These outcomes indicate that digital transformation is sustainability-neutral unless mediated by HRM policies.

Technostress: The Psychological Cost of Digitalization

Conceptualization of Technostress

Technostress is defined as a stress condition resulting from individuals' inability to cope with digital technologies in a healthy manner (Tarafdar et al., 2007). It is increasingly recognized as a critical occupational health issue.

Table 3: Dimensions and Effects of Technostress

DIMENSION	**DESCRIPTION**	**ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT**
Techno-overload	Excessive information & multitasking	Reduced concentration
Techno-complexity	Difficulty in using new systems	Lower self-efficacy
Techno-invasion	Constant connectivity	Work–life conflict
Techno-insecurity	Fear of replacement	Anxiety & resistance

Empirical studies consistently link technostress to burnout, reduced productivity, and higher turnover intentions (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008).

Work–Life Balance as a Sustainability Indicator

Work–life balance represents an individual's ability to meet work and non-work responsibilities without conflict. In sustainability research, work–life balance is increasingly treated as an outcome variable reflecting organizational health.

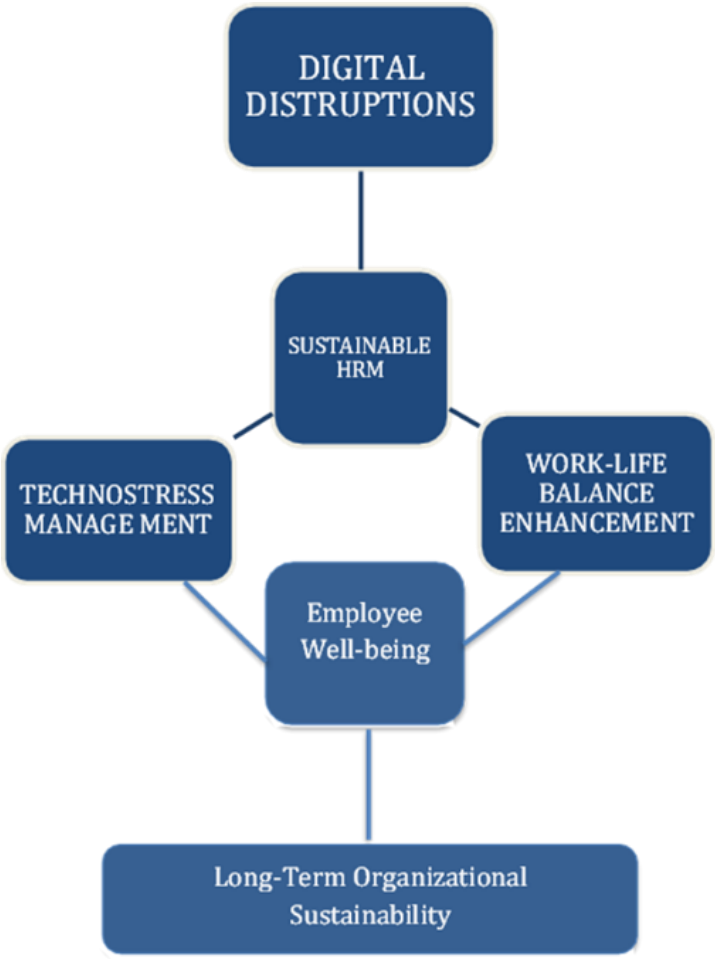
Table 4: Sustainable HR Interventions for Work–Life Balance

HR INTERVENTION	**SUSTAINABILITY CONTRIBUTION**
Flexible scheduling	Reduces burnout
Hybrid work policies	Enhances autonomy
Right-to-disconnect norms	Prevents digital exhaustion
Wellness programs	Sustains long-term productivity |

Organizations promoting work–life balance demonstrate higher engagement and lower attrition, reinforcing sustainability goals (OECD, 2021).

Integrated Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Human-Centered Sustainable Management Framework



Interpretation

The figure illustrates that Sustainable HRM acts as the central mechanism through which digital disruptions are converted into sustainable outcomes by mitigating technostress and supporting work–life balance.

Discussion

Sustainability is not an isolated organizational goal but an emergent property of interconnected systems. Digital disruption, if unmanaged, accelerates resource depletion in the form of human exhaustion.

Sustainable HRM functions as a regulatory system that stabilizes this disruption by protecting employee psychological capital. The framework aligns with contemporary calls for "humane digitalization," emphasizing that sustainability must be evaluated not only by financial indicators but also by employee vitality and adaptability.

Conclusion

This paper advances sustainability scholarship by integrating HRM, digital transformation, technostress, and work–life balance into a single human-centered framework. It concludes that sustainable organizations are not those that merely adopt advanced technologies, but those that govern technology ethically and empathetically through sustainable HR practices.

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