

Digital Transformation of Human Resource Management in Higher Education: A Structured Literature Review of Emerging Practices, Technologies and Institutional Challenges

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Abstract: Digital transformation is reshaping Human Resource Management (HRM) from an administrative function based largely on routine transactions into a technology-enabled and increasingly strategic organizational capability. Higher education institutions are particularly relevant to this transformation because their performance depends heavily on academic and administrative human capital, while their operations are becoming increasingly data-driven, digitally connected and internationally competitive. This paper presents a structured literature review of the transformation of HRM in higher education, with particular attention to digital recruitment, digital onboarding, learning and development, digital performance management, HR analytics, artificial intelligence, cloud-based HR systems and employee engagement. The review is conceptually informed by the Technology Acceptance Model, Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behavior and Diffusion of Innovation theory. The analysis indicates that digital HRM should not be understood merely as the automation of conventional HR activities. Rather, it represents a broader transformation involving HR processes, employee experiences, decision-making, organizational capabilities and institutional governance. At the same time, digital transformation creates challenges involving technological readiness, digital literacy, resistance to change, privacy, algorithmic bias, cybersecurity and the risk of weakening human interaction. The paper develops an integrated conceptual framework showing how technological infrastructure, organizational readiness and employee acceptance jointly influence digital HRM transformation and institutional outcomes. The review concludes by identifying research gaps concerning higher education, particularly in developing-country and Tier-II contexts, and proposes a future research agenda focused on human-centred digital transformation, responsible AI, digital inclusion, HR analytics and institutional sustainability.

Keywords: Digital HRM, Human Resource Management, Higher Education, HR Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Transformation, HRIS, Technology Adoption

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has become a fundamental feature of contemporary organizations. The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analytics, automation, digital platforms and integrated information systems has altered how organizations create value, communicate with stakeholders and manage resources. Digitalization is therefore not simply the conversion of paper-based processes into electronic formats; it can involve fundamental changes in organizational structures, capabilities, decision-making and relationships. Within Human Resource Management (HRM), this transformation has resulted in the emergence of digital HRM, which encompasses the use of digital technologies to redesign and support HR activities and the broader strategic management of people. The distinction between digitization, digitalization and digital transformation is particularly important. Digitization generally refers to converting analogue information into digital form. Digitalization involves using digital technologies to improve existing processes, while digital transformation represents a broader organizational change in which digital technologies reshape activities, capabilities and value creation. Strohmeier (2020) argues that these concepts have often been used interchangeably in HRM research, creating conceptual ambiguity. Clarifying this distinction is essential because simply introducing an HR information system does not necessarily constitute digital transformation.

The transformation of HRM has implications for recruitment, onboarding, training, performance management, employee engagement, workforce planning and strategic decision-making. Digital HR systems can enable organizations to centralize employee information, automate routine transactions, provide real-time reporting and support evidence-based decision-making. HR analytics can further shift HRM from descriptive reporting toward predictive and prescriptive decision support. At the same time, AI-enabled HR applications create new possibilities in candidate screening, employee development, performance analysis and workforce forecasting. Higher education provides a particularly important context for examining this transformation. Universities and colleges depend extensively on human capital, including faculty members, researchers, administrators and professional staff. Their HR systems must manage complex employment relationships, academic workloads, professional development, recruitment, appraisal, promotion and institutional compliance. The increasing digitalization of teaching and administration also means that HR functions cannot remain isolated from wider institutional digital transformation.

The uploaded research on the evolution of HRM in the digital age similarly identifies digital HRM as an increasingly important component of educational institutions, highlighting HRIS, artificial intelligence, analytics and cloud-based systems as important technologies supporting recruitment, onboarding, appraisal and training. The research further identifies a research gap concerning digital HRM in Indian higher education, especially in Tier-II cities such as Faridabad, where infrastructure, institutional readiness and digital literacy may differ from those of major metropolitan institutions. Against this background, this paper reviews the literature on digital transformation in HRM, with specific attention to higher education. Rather than conducting a primary empirical investigation, the paper synthesizes existing conceptual and scholarly literature to identify major developments, opportunities, challenges and research gaps.

The paper has four principal objectives:

1. To examine the evolution of HRM from traditional administrative systems toward digital HRM.
2. To identify major digital technologies and their applications across HR functions in higher education.
3. To critically examine the organizational, technological and human challenges associated with digital HR transformation.
4. To develop an integrated conceptual framework and future research agenda for digital HRM in higher education.

2. Review Methodology

This study adopts a structured integrative literature review approach. The objective is not to statistically aggregate empirical findings but to organize and synthesize the conceptual development of digital HRM and its applications in higher education. The review draws on three broad categories of material. First, foundational literature on HRM digitalization and technology adoption was examined. Second, literature concerning specific digital HR practices, including recruitment, performance management, HR analytics, learning and development and employee engagement, was considered. Third, research concerning higher education, institutional digital transformation and the Indian policy environment was incorporated. The conceptual organization of the literature follows four dimensions:

1. technological transformation;
2. HR functional transformation;
3. employee and organizational factors; and
4. institutional outcomes and challenges.

The research used as the basis for this paper similarly identifies the relevance of TAM, TRA, TPB and Diffusion of Innovation theory for understanding technology adoption in educational institutions. These theoretical perspectives are therefore retained as the conceptual foundation of the present review. The review does not claim primary empirical findings. Accordingly, the tables and conceptual framework presented below represent a synthesis of the reviewed literature rather than results obtained from a new survey.

3. Literature Review

3.1 From Traditional HRM to Digital HRM

The evolution of HRM can be understood as a progression from administrative personnel management toward strategic, data-driven and digitally enabled people management.

Table 1. Evolution of HRM in the Digital Era

Stage	Main Characteristics	Representative Technologies	Dominant HR Orientation
Traditional HRM	Paper records, manual administration	Physical files, spreadsheets	Administrative
E-HRM	Electronic transaction processing	HRIS, ERP, intranet	Operational efficiency
Digital HRM	Integrated and connected HR processes	Cloud HRIS, mobile systems, analytics	Strategic
AI-enabled HRM	Automated and predictive decision support	AI, ML, NLP	Predictive
Emerging intelligent HRM	Adaptive and increasingly integrated systems	Generative AI, advanced analytics, digital platforms	Transformational

The transition from traditional HRM to digital HRM does not occur simply because an organization purchases new software. Digital HRM involves the interaction between technological infrastructure, organizational processes and human capabilities. Strohmeier (2020) emphasizes the need for conceptual clarity because terms such as e-HRM, digital HRM, digital transformation and digital disruption describe related but distinct phenomena. Marler and Boudreau (2017) further demonstrate the importance of evidence-based HR analytics, suggesting that data and analytics can strengthen HR's strategic contribution when they are connected to organizational decision-making. Thus, the significance of digital HRM lies not merely in reducing paperwork but in enabling HR professionals to generate and interpret information that can support organizational strategy. The transformation can therefore be represented as a progression:

Administrative HR → Electronic HR → Integrated Digital HR → Data-Driven HR → Intelligent and Strategic HR

3.2 Digital HRM in Higher Education

Higher education institutions increasingly operate as complex knowledge organizations. They manage diverse employee groups, multiple academic departments, research activities, administrative units and increasingly digital

student services. This complexity creates a strong case for integrated digital HRM. The research identifies digitalization in education as a structural transformation affecting teaching, learning and administration. Digital platforms, cloud systems and analytics have expanded the capacity of institutions to coordinate academic and administrative activities. The same transformation extends to HRM. Digital HR systems can support faculty recruitment, attendance, payroll, professional development, performance appraisal and workforce planning. In higher education, therefore, digital HRM can potentially connect individual employee information with broader institutional planning.

Table 2. Major Applications of Digital HRM in Higher Education

HR Function	Digital Application	Potential Contribution
Recruitment	E-recruitment and applicant tracking systems	Faster and broader recruitment
Selection	Algorithmic screening and digital assessments	Structured decision support
Onboarding	Digital employee portals	Faster integration
Training	LMS and e-learning	Continuous professional development
Performance	Digital appraisal systems	Continuous monitoring and feedback
Workforce Planning	HR analytics	Evidence-based forecasting
Employee Engagement	Mobile HR platforms	Faster communication
Records Management	Cloud HRIS	Centralized information
Career Development	Digital learning pathways	Personalized development
Strategic HR	Dashboards and analytics	Data-driven decision-making

However, higher education presents distinctive challenges. Faculty autonomy, academic culture, decentralized decision-making and concerns regarding surveillance can influence the acceptance of digital HR systems. The research identifies resistance among faculty and administrators as potentially associated with concerns regarding privacy, autonomy and changes in academic work practices. Consequently, digital HRM in higher education should be understood as a socio-technical transformation rather than a purely technological intervention.

3.3 Digital Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment represents one of the most visible areas of digital HR transformation. Traditional recruitment involves paper applications, physical interviews and manual screening. Digital recruitment uses institutional websites, online job portals, applicant tracking systems, video interviews, digital assessments and increasingly AI-supported screening. Digital recruitment can expand access to talent beyond geographical boundaries. For universities, this is particularly relevant because institutions may recruit faculty members internationally or from geographically dispersed academic communities. AI can potentially assist in matching candidates with job



requirements, organizing applications and identifying relevant qualifications. However, algorithmic recruitment also creates concerns about fairness and transparency. If algorithms are trained on historical recruitment data containing institutional or societal biases, automated decisions may reproduce those biases rather than eliminate them. Recent research on responsible AI in HRM emphasizes that fairness, transparency, accountability and human oversight are essential when AI is applied to employment decisions. Thus, digital recruitment should not be viewed as a replacement for human judgment. Instead, technology should provide decision support while institutional policies establish accountability mechanisms.

3.4 Digital Onboarding and Employee Lifecycle Management

Digital onboarding extends the digital recruitment process into the early stages of employment. New faculty and staff can complete documentation, access institutional policies, receive credentials and participate in induction programmes through digital platforms. A digitally integrated onboarding system can reduce administrative delays and improve consistency. In higher education, it can also provide new faculty members with access to teaching systems, research databases, HR policies, learning platforms and institutional communication channels.

Digital employee lifecycle management can further integrate information across recruitment, onboarding, performance appraisal, training, promotion and separation. Instead of maintaining isolated databases, institutions can develop integrated employee records that support decision-making throughout the employment relationship. The challenge is to ensure that integration does not become excessive surveillance. Employee data should be collected for legitimate organizational purposes, protected appropriately and accessed only by authorized personnel.

3.5 Digital Learning and Development

Learning and development is another area where digital HRM has created substantial possibilities. Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual classrooms, micro-learning platforms, webinars and digital certification systems enable employees to undertake professional development with greater flexibility. In higher education, this is particularly important because faculty members require continuous development in teaching methods, research skills, technology use, academic administration and emerging disciplinary knowledge. Digital learning also facilitates personalization. HR departments can use employee information to identify skill gaps and recommend learning pathways. However, successful digital learning requires more than platform availability. Employees need digital literacy, motivation, appropriate content and institutional support. The research notes that digital HR tools can support faculty development through online training, virtual coaching and AI-based feedback mechanisms while helping HR departments identify skill gaps and target development interventions.

3.6 Digital Performance Management

Traditional performance appraisal is often characterized by annual reviews and retrospective evaluation. Digital performance management can shift this model toward continuous feedback, real-time performance information and more frequent developmental conversations. Digital systems can integrate teaching performance, research contributions, training participation, administrative responsibilities and other institutional indicators. Dashboards can provide managers with summarized information for workforce planning and performance discussions.

However, higher education requires caution in designing digital performance systems. Academic performance cannot always be reduced to easily measurable indicators. Excessive dependence on quantitative metrics may undervalue mentoring, collegial contributions, interdisciplinary work and long-term research. Therefore, digital performance management should support rather than replace professional judgment.

3.7 HR Analytics and Data-Driven Decision-Making

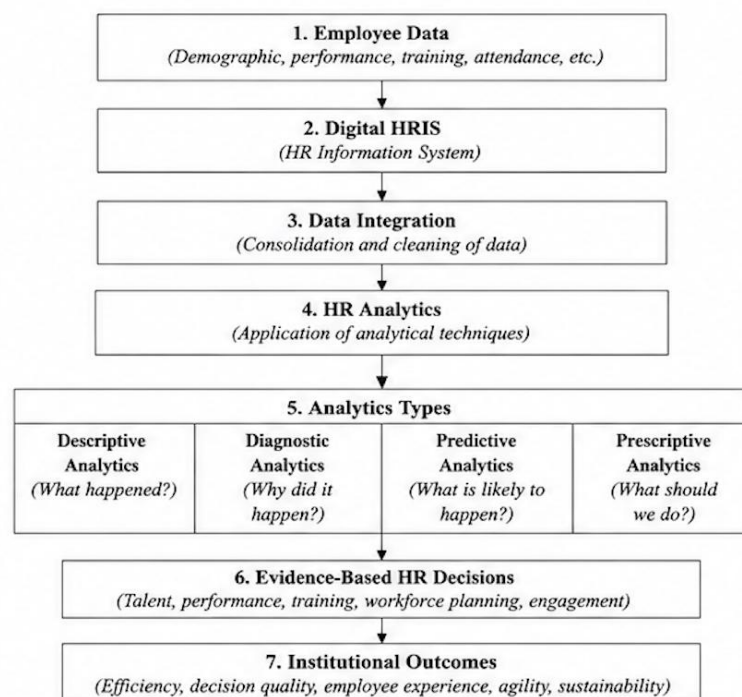
HR analytics represents one of the most strategically important developments in digital HRM. Rather than simply storing employee data, HR analytics involves using workforce information to identify patterns and support decisions.

In higher education, analytics may support:

1. workforce planning;
2. faculty recruitment;
3. employee turnover analysis;
4. training needs identification;
5. workload management;
6. performance monitoring;
7. succession planning; and
8. employee engagement analysis.

The research identifies HR analytics as an evidence-based approach capable of supporting talent forecasting, training evaluation and workforce planning.

Figure 1. From HR Data to Strategic Decision-Making



The strategic value of analytics depends on data quality and analytical capability. A university may possess large amounts of employee data but still derive limited value if information is fragmented, inaccurate or poorly governed. This creates an important capability requirement: HR professionals increasingly need data literacy in addition to traditional HR expertise.

3.8 Artificial Intelligence in Digital HRM

AI represents the next stage of digital HRM development. Machine learning, natural language processing, generative AI and predictive analytics can support several HR activities.

Potential applications include:

1. candidate matching;
2. employee sentiment analysis;
3. automated HR queries;
4. personalized learning recommendations;
5. workforce forecasting;
6. performance analytics;
7. employee engagement monitoring; and
8. HR decision support.

However, AI introduces risks that differ from conventional HR technologies. These include algorithmic bias, lack of explainability, privacy risks and overdependence on automated recommendations.

The literature on responsible AI in HRM emphasizes the importance of governance mechanisms that ensure that AI systems remain transparent, fair and accountable.

Table 3. Opportunities and Risks of AI-enabled HRM

Area	Opportunity	Potential Risk
Recruitment	Faster candidate screening	Algorithmic bias
Performance	Continuous analysis	Surveillance
Training	Personalized learning	Excessive automation
Workforce Planning	Predictive forecasting	Incorrect predictions
Employee Support	AI assistants	Privacy concerns
Decision Support	Evidence-based decisions	Automation bias
Communication	24/7 HR support	Reduced human interaction

AI should therefore be positioned as an augmentation technology. Human HR professionals remain responsible for interpreting organizational context, resolving exceptional cases and ensuring fairness.

3.9 Cloud HRM and Integrated HR Information Systems

Cloud computing has facilitated the development of integrated HR platforms. Cloud-based HRIS can allow employees and administrators to access HR information across locations and devices. For universities with multiple campuses or geographically distributed operations, cloud HR systems can provide a common

technological infrastructure. They can integrate recruitment, payroll, attendance, performance management, leave, training and employee records. The benefits include scalability, accessibility, centralized information and potentially lower dependence on physical infrastructure. However, cloud HRM also increases the importance of cybersecurity and data governance. Higher education institutions hold sensitive information about employees and applicants. Consequently, digital transformation must be accompanied by clear policies regarding data ownership, access, retention, security and responsible use.

3.10 Employee Experience and Digital HRM

Digital transformation increasingly shifts attention from HR process efficiency toward employee experience. Employees interact with HR systems throughout their organizational lifecycle, and poorly designed systems can create frustration even when they are technologically sophisticated.

An effective digital HR system should therefore be:

1. accessible;
2. easy to use;
3. responsive;
4. transparent;
5. inclusive; and
6. aligned with employee needs.

This dimension is especially important in higher education because faculty members may differ considerably in age, technological experience, disciplinary background and digital literacy. Digital transformation should consequently avoid assuming that all employees will adopt technology at the same rate.

3.11 Theoretical Foundations

Several theories can help explain why digital HRM systems are accepted or resisted.

3.11.1 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence technology acceptance (Davis, 1989). In digital HRM, employees are more likely to use HR technologies when they believe that the technology improves their work and is relatively easy to operate.

3.11.2 Theory of Reasoned Action

TRA emphasizes attitude and subjective norms in explaining behavioural intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In higher education, employees may adopt digital HR systems partly because colleagues, supervisors or institutional leadership encourage their use.

3.11.3 Theory of Planned Behavior

TPB extends this logic by incorporating perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Employees may have positive attitudes toward digital HRM but still struggle to use systems if they lack training, infrastructure or technical confidence.

3.11.4 Diffusion of Innovation

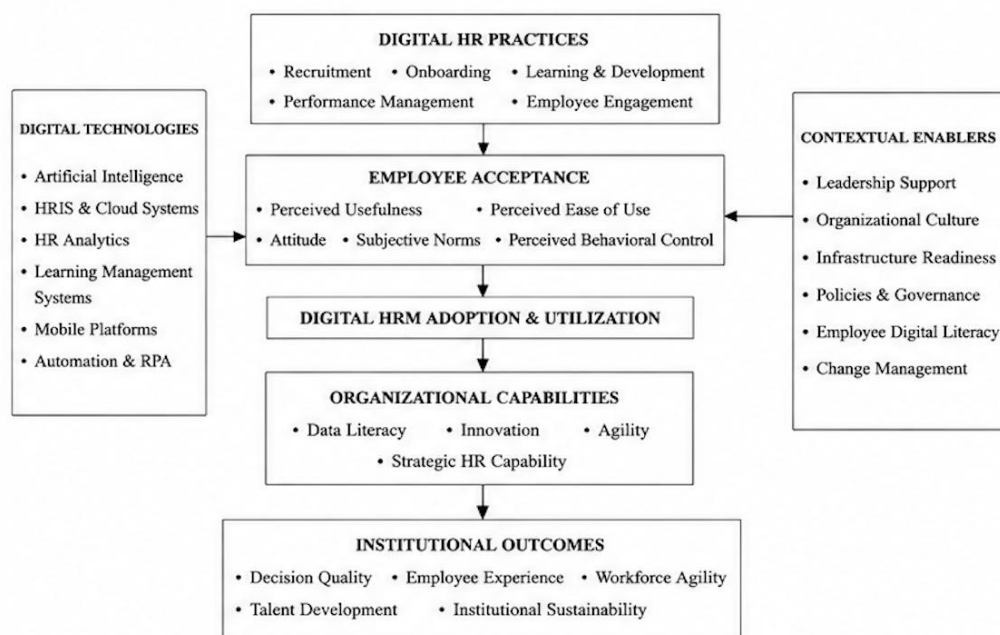
Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory explains how innovations spread through social systems. Relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability influence adoption (Rogers, 2003).

The research similarly argues that combining TAM, TRA, TPB and DOI provides a broader explanation of digital HR adoption at individual and institutional levels.

3.12 Integrated Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature, digital HRM transformation can be conceptualized as an interaction between technology, organizational readiness and employee acceptance.

Figure 2. Integrated Conceptual Framework for Digital HRM Transformation



The framework also recognizes organizational conditions as contextual influences. Leadership support, institutional culture, infrastructure, cybersecurity and employee capabilities can determine whether technology translates into meaningful HR transformation.

3.13 Drivers, Barriers and Challenges of Digital HRM Transformation

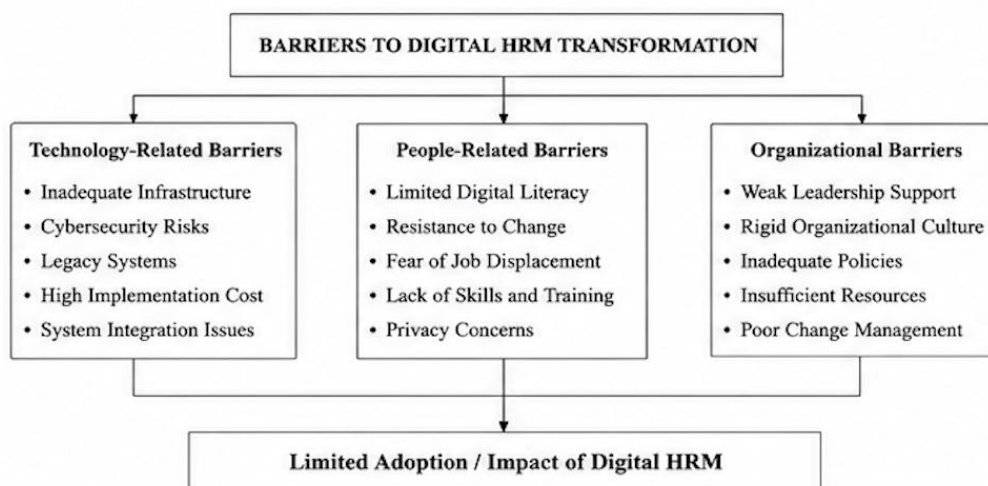
Table 4. Major Drivers of Digital HRM in Higher Education

Driver	Explanation
Operational efficiency	Automation reduces repetitive administrative work
Data availability	HR data supports evidence-based decisions
Employee expectations	Employees increasingly expect digital services
Institutional competition	Universities seek greater organizational agility
Policy environment	National policies encourage educational digitalization
Remote/hybrid work	Digital systems support distributed work
AI development	Intelligent technologies expand HR capabilities
Scalability	Cloud systems can support growing institutions

India's National Education Policy 2020 explicitly emphasizes appropriate integration of technology across education and identifies technology as relevant to administration, planning and management. This policy environment strengthens the relevance of digital transformation for Indian higher education.

Digital HR transformation does not automatically produce positive outcomes.

Figure 3. Barriers to Digital HRM Transformation



The research identifies infrastructure gaps, budget constraints, institutional resistance and limited digital literacy as significant challenges in the context of educational institutions.

1. **Digital Literacy:** Employees need sufficient skills to use digital HR systems. Introducing sophisticated technology without training can create frustration and resistance.
2. **Resistance to Change:** Employees may resist digital HR because they perceive technology as threatening autonomy, increasing monitoring or changing established work practices.
3. **Legacy Systems:** Institutions may operate multiple disconnected systems. Integrating these systems can be technically and financially difficult.
4. **Financial Constraints:** Digital transformation requires investments in infrastructure, software, cybersecurity, training and maintenance.
5. **Privacy and Cybersecurity:** HR systems contain sensitive employee information. Data breaches can create legal, financial and reputational consequences.
6. **Algorithmic Bias:** AI systems may reproduce biases embedded in historical data or design choices.
7. **Loss of Human Interaction:** Excessive automation can weaken interpersonal relationships between employees and HR professionals.

3.14 Higher Education and the Indian Context

The Indian higher education system provides an especially relevant context for studying digital HRM because institutions differ considerably in technological readiness, funding, governance and organizational culture. The research highlights Faridabad as a useful context because it includes a diverse range of educational institutions and represents a setting in which national digitalization priorities interact with local institutional realities. The National Education Policy 2020 provides a broader policy foundation for educational technology in India. It calls for technology integration to improve educational processes, teacher development, access and educational planning and administration. However, policy-level digitalization does not automatically guarantee organizational-level HR transformation. Institutions must develop appropriate infrastructure, leadership support,

digital capabilities and governance mechanisms. This suggests that future research should pay greater attention to institutional diversity rather than treating Indian higher education as a homogeneous sector.

4. Research Gaps

The literature review reveals several important gaps.

Table 5. Major Research Gaps and Future Opportunities

Research Gap	Current Limitation	Future Opportunity
Higher education focus	Much research is organization-wide	Develop education-specific models
Indian context	Limited regional evidence	Study diverse Indian institutions
Tier-II cities	Metropolitan institutions dominate	Examine semi-urban settings
AI governance	Technology often prioritized over ethics	Develop responsible AI frameworks
Employee perspective	Technology adoption often studied structurally	Examine employee experience
Leadership	Institutional leadership insufficiently integrated	Study leadership as an enabling factor
Digital literacy	Skills often treated as secondary	Examine digital capability development
Longitudinal evidence	Many studies are cross-sectional	Examine transformation over time
Human-centred design	Efficiency dominates discussion	Integrate employee well-being and experience
Interdisciplinary research	HR and technology often separated	Combine HRM, IS and organizational theory

The research similarly identifies limited interdisciplinary integration, insufficient qualitative insight and a lack of region-specific evidence concerning digital HRM in Indian higher education. The literature also indicates a need to move beyond technology adoption toward questions concerning institutionalization. An institution may implement a digital HR platform without actually transforming HR decision-making. The distinction between adoption and transformation is therefore an important direction for future research.

5. Future Research Agenda

Future research should investigate digital HRM using more comprehensive and context-sensitive approaches.

First, comparative research should examine public universities, private universities, government colleges and autonomous institutions. Such comparisons can reveal how governance and resources influence digital transformation.

Second, longitudinal research should investigate how digital HR systems evolve over time. This would allow researchers to distinguish between initial technology adoption and genuine institutional transformation.

Third, responsible AI requires greater attention. Future research should examine explainability, fairness, privacy, human oversight and employee trust in AI-supported HR decisions.

Fourth, digital employee experience should become a stronger research theme. Technology should be evaluated not only according to efficiency but also usability, accessibility, autonomy and employee well-being.

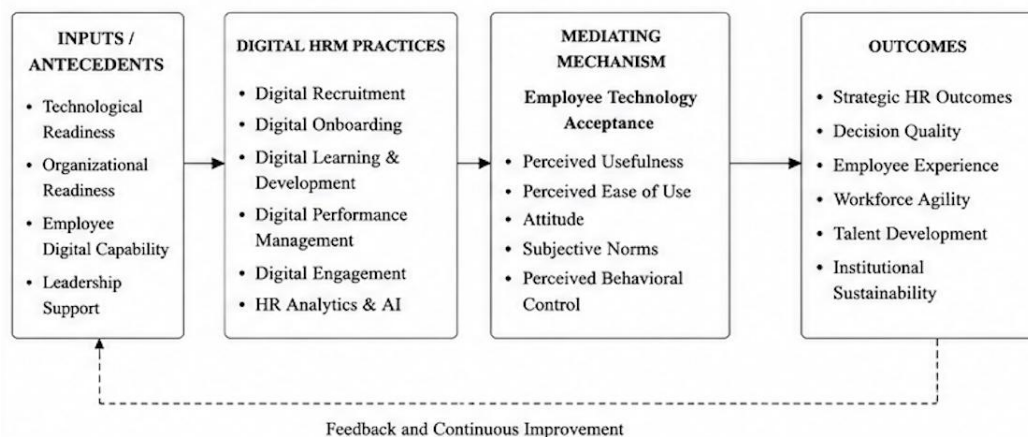
Fifth, future studies should examine the relationship between digital HRM and institutional sustainability. Paperless HR processes, remote working, digital learning and data-enabled resource management may contribute to broader institutional sustainability.

Sixth, digital inclusion requires greater consideration. Differences in age, digital literacy, disability, job category and access to technology may create unequal experiences of digital HRM.

Finally, mixed-method and interdisciplinary research could integrate HRM, information systems, organizational behaviour and higher education management. The research itself identifies the limited use of qualitative and mixed-method approaches in understanding stakeholder experiences of digital HRM.

6. Proposed Research Model for Future Studies

Figure 4. Future Research Model for Digital HRM in Higher Education



This framework emphasizes that technology alone does not determine outcomes. Transformation occurs when technology is aligned with organizational capabilities and human acceptance.

7. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this review contributes by positioning digital HRM as a socio-technical phenomenon rather than a technology implementation issue. TAM explains individual acceptance, TRA and TPB explain behavioural processes, while DOI provides an institutional perspective. Their integration offers a broader conceptual foundation for understanding digital HRM transformation. Practically, university administrators should avoid implementing technology simply because it is available. Digital HR initiatives should begin with clearly identified organizational problems. Institutions should assess digital readiness, train employees, communicate the purpose of transformation and create mechanisms for feedback. HR professionals also need new competencies. Traditional HR expertise should increasingly be complemented by data literacy, digital communication, analytics, AI awareness and technology governance.

Table 6. Practical Recommendations

Stakeholder	Recommended Action
University leadership	Develop institution-wide digital HR strategy
HR departments	Integrate HR systems and analytics
Faculty	Provide continuous digital capability development
IT departments	Strengthen cybersecurity and interoperability
HR professionals	Develop analytics and AI literacy
Policymakers	Support digital infrastructure and digital inclusion
Institutions	Establish responsible AI governance
Employees	Participate in digital training and feedback

8. Conclusion

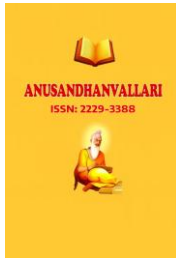
Digital transformation is fundamentally changing the nature of Human Resource Management. The transition from traditional personnel administration to digital HRM involves more than the replacement of paper records with electronic systems. It involves the integration of technology, data, organizational processes and human capabilities to create a more responsive and strategically oriented HR function. In higher education, this transformation is particularly significant because institutions depend heavily on human capital while simultaneously undergoing broader digital changes in teaching, research and administration. Digital recruitment, onboarding, learning, performance management, HR analytics, cloud HRIS and AI can improve efficiency and decision-making, but their success depends on institutional readiness and employee acceptance.

The review demonstrates that technology should be viewed as an enabler rather than an end in itself. Digital HRM creates value when technological systems are aligned with organizational strategy, employee needs, ethical principles and institutional objectives. Conversely, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change, limited digital literacy, cybersecurity risks, privacy concerns and algorithmic bias can restrict the benefits of digital transformation. The conceptual framework proposed in this paper therefore places technological capability, organizational readiness and employee acceptance at the centre of digital HRM transformation. It also highlights the importance of leadership, institutional culture and responsible governance.

For Indian higher education, the challenge is not simply to increase the adoption of digital technologies but to ensure that digital HRM contributes meaningfully to institutional effectiveness, employee experience and sustainable organizational development. Future research should consequently move beyond questions of whether digital HR technologies are adopted and examine how, why and under what institutional conditions they create lasting value.

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