



Exploring the Nexus between Innovative Work Practices and HR Strategies: A Global Research Landscape Analysis

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Abstract

The given research is a thorough bibliometric and thematic review to examine the intellectual framework and development of the research on innovative work practices (IWP) and human resource (HR) strategies, 2000-2025. The research uses data collected in the Scopus database, which establishes the most prominent journals, the authors, and thematic clusters defining this discipline. The most fruitful and the most effective sources were the International Journal of Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management, and Sustainability (Switzerland) which can be considered as evidence of the increasing overlap between HR innovation and sustainability. Authors A, M, and J are known prominent scholars whose research influence on the field has been sustained over time as they contributed to the theoretical and empirical knowledge of empowerment, engagement, and high-performance HR systems. Thematic mapping showed that the motor themes of research in the field are employee engagement, psychological empowerment, and strategic HRM, and such areas as diversity management and digital transformation are the emerging frontiers. These results outline a shift in the traditional HR efficiency models to the human-centered, sustainable and innovation-oriented models. The mapping of this evolution in the study helps conceptualize the way in which HR strategies are coping with the transformation in the digital age, inclusiveness, and sustainability in the post-industrial age.

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Introduction

With the digital revolution and the knowledge-based competition, innovation has come to be the hallmark of survival and success of organizations. The world markets are experiencing high rates of change in the form of technology, demography and culture and this forces the firms to outgrow the traditional management paradigm and adopt a more adaptable, learning and innovation-based architecture. In such an environment, the strategic management of human resources has become one of the key facilitators of innovation (Wright and McMahan, 2011)^[34]; (Jerez-Gomez, Céspedes-Lorente, and Perez-Valls, 2019)^[18]. The Human Resource (HR) strategies are no longer a staffing, compensation, and compliance tool but is today a push mechanism to develop creativity, commitment, and agility among the staff. In line with the same trend, Innovative Work Practices (IWPs) (participative decision-making, skill enhancement programs, team autonomy, knowledge-sharing, and flexible work design) are becoming increasingly popular as key instruments to enhance the strategic contribution of HRM to organizational competitiveness (Laursen and Foss, 2003)^[22]; (Fu *et al.*, 2015). Modern organizations have come to be in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment (VUCA). In these kinds of environments conventional HR practices that require control, standardization, and cost effectiveness are not sufficient anymore. Rather, the new key to success is the capacity of the human forces to be more innovative, embrace change, and collaboratively create value which is called the ability to be more innovative. This has changed the HR role, no longer to be a supportive administrative task, but to be a strategic partner that will entrench innovative capabilities in the organization (Wright and McMahan, 2011)^[34].

Innovative work practices, thus, are the working levers whereby HR strategies are practiced to realize these goals.

Recent research proves that IWPs, by establishing the socio-psychological environment through autonomy, participation, and lifelong learning, provide the environment in which innovation flourishes (Jishnu and Hareendrakumar, 2024)^[20]; (Marwan and Alhadar, 2024)^[24]. These practices will help the employees go beyond compliance and be proactively creative hence aligning HR strategies and organizational innovation objectives. Nevertheless, whereas IWPs have been widely associated with the performance of firms and their innovation performance (Jerez-Gomez *et al.*, 2019)^[18]; (Fu *et al.*, 2015), its direct impact on HR strategy formulation, adaptation, and alignment has not been studied in-depth.

The importance of analyzing the role of IWPs in HR strategies is to comprehend how organizations can make out of innovative intentions the HR blueprints. With companies operating in dynamically competitive markets, HR practices have to adapt to new technologies (AI, analytics, automation), flexetime, and lifelong learning. IWPs are the linkage factor between the strategic intent and innovation behaviours at employee level. Through empirical investigation into this relationship, this paper offers a strategic HRM view of how IWPs stimulate HR policy formulation, talent management and organizational learning systems.

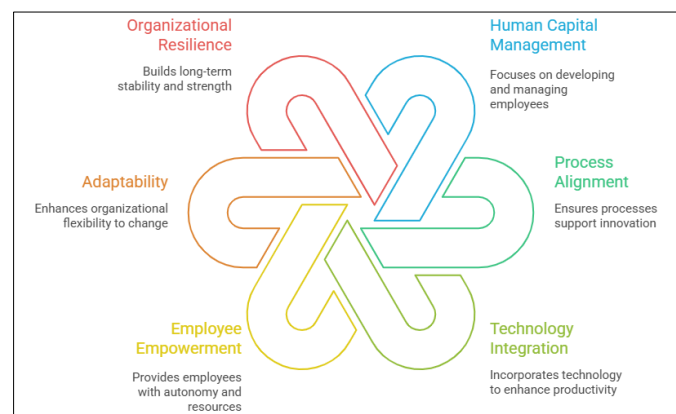


Fig 1: Components of Innovative Work Practices

In the 1990s and early 2000s IWPs were identified with the frameworks of High-Involvement Work Systems (HIWS) and High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), in which the mediators of organizational performance were empowerment and commitment (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000)^[4]. Yet, recent interpretations have been transformed to encompass the digitalization aspect, agile approaches and HR policies that focus on workforce potential and strategic objectives (Jiang and Messersmith, 2018)^[19]. The post-pandemic transition to hybrid models of work also contributed to the increased adoption of IWPs, as organizations gained the understanding of the need to provide employees with freedom, virtual working opportunities, and resilience (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020)^[11].

Human Resource Strategies

The nature of Human Resource (HR) strategies has also changed radically as being administrative functions to strategic functions that enable organizational agility and innovation (Wright and McMahan, 2011)^[34]; (Budhwar and

It also has a geographical and contextual distance. A substantial portion of the available evidence is based on Western economies or high-tech industries; comparatively limited research investigated IWPs and HR strategies in emerging economies, where institutional, cultural, and infrastructural forces are dissimilar (Fu *et al.*, 2015). It is important to fill this gap in global HRM theory-building and practical policymaking. Thus, the study is needed and timely - it aims at looking into the effects of Innovative Work Practices on HR Strategies and how these practices redesign the strategic orientation, agility and value addition of HRM in contemporary organizations.

Literature Review

Innovative Work Practices Evolution

The concept of the innovative work practices (IWPs) was introduced when organizations needed adaptive solutions to keep a competitive edge in a turbulent world due to the globalization and digital revolution (Boxall and Macky, 2016)^[7]. IWPs are a collection of organizational and human resource practices aimed at encouraging creativity, involvement, and independence of employees in order to achieve innovativeness and performance (Jiang *et al.*, 2017). These practices are the engagement of employees in decision making, flexible working arrangements, work in teams, enriching the job, and the mechanism of continuous learning (Prajogo & Oke, 2016).

Mellahi, 2021)^[10]. The current HR practices combine people analytics, performance-based culture, and capability development to create sustainable competitive advantage (Brewster *et al.*, 2019)^[8]. The HR strategy has shifted to supporting innovation, versatility, and online seaworthiness among the employees (Sparrow *et al.*, 2016)^[31].

Researchers have emphasized that currently, successful HR approaches are defined by the aspect of strategic alignment (Boxall and Purcell, 2016), employee engagement (Kaliannan and Adjovu, 2015), innovation-based talentmanagement (De Winne *et al.*, 2018)^[14]. This integration makes certain that human capital programs, like recruitment and training and reward schemes, make a difference in the result of innovation and organizational flexibility (Shipton *et al.*, 2017). Adaptability of HR strategy and business innovation is therefore the necessary element in the knowledge economy whereby intellectual capital and employee innovativeness are the primary resources (Huselid and Becker, 2011)^[16].

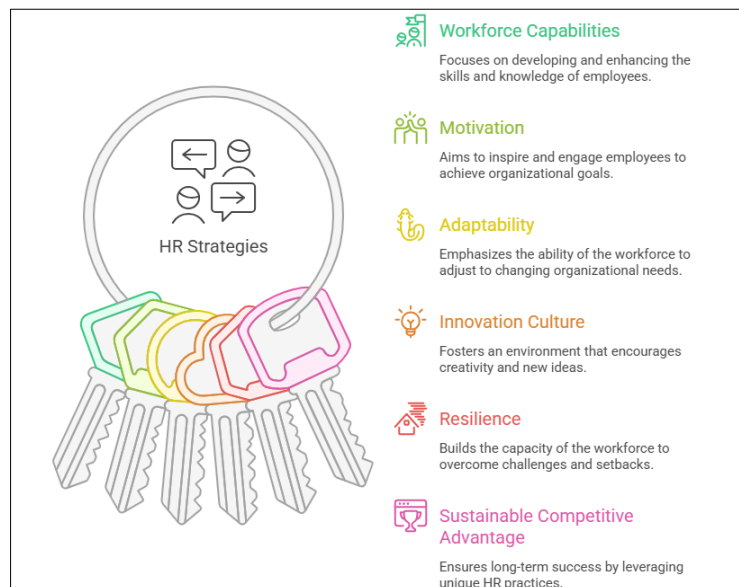


Fig 2: Foundations of Effective HR Strategies Incorporation of New Work Practices and Human Resources Strategy.

The interplay of IWPs and HR strategies has become a point of study especially in situations where the focus is on organizational innovation and employee empowerment. The innovative HR practices promote the usage of IWPs by integrating flexibility, collaboration, and sharing of knowledge into HR structure (Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2017) [6]. As an example, participative leadership, cross-functional teams, and never-ending learning are practices that generate psychological empowerment and arousal of innovative behaviors by the employees (Messmann and Mulder, 2017) [25].

As De Winne and Sels (2016) [13] point, IWPs can be viewed as an intermediary between HRM systems and performance outcomes due to their role in promoting the culture of experimentation and creativity. Likewise, Patel *et al.* (2020) [28] mention that HR practices centered on autonomy and trust make employees discover new solutions, which increase organizational potential to be innovative. IWPs, together with strategic HRM affect firm-level outcomes in the knowledge-intensive industries, including knowledge creation, service quality, and adaptability (Chen *et al.*, 2019) [12]. Moreover, new HR technologies (including AI-driven recruitment, virtual teamwork tools, and e-learning systems) are emerging and complementing IWPs, as a result of the digital transformation (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2016) [5]. These enablers in the form of technologies have rendered HR strategies to be more data-driven and sensitive to the emerging requirements of the workforce (Marler & Parry, 2016) [23].

IWPs Effect on Talent Management, Performance and Retention

Studies have indicated that IWPs play an important role in influencing the process of talent acquisition, engagement, and retention through the improvement of employee motivation and organizational commitment (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2016) [27]. IWPs have an empowerment-oriented characteristic that leads to a psychologically safe environment that encourages creativity, sharing of knowledge, and organizational citizenship behavior (Amabile and Pratt, 2016) [3].

The implementation of IWPs into HR practices has been

associated with increased job satisfaction, high levels of innovation, and decreased turnover intentions (Janssen *et al.*, 2020) [17]. Indicatively, Boxall *et al.* (2018) established that companies that have implemented participative and developmental IWPs have an increased workforce agility and innovation productivity. On the same note, Subramony *et al.* (2018) noted that synergistic HR bundles, which include teamwork, learning, and performance feedback, have a direct beneficial impact on employee engagement and performance of the firm. As empirical studies also suggest, IWPs are also beneficial to the development of sustainable HR strategies, including inclusive and adaptive workplaces (Kooij *et al.*, 2021) [21]. These plans enable the inclusion of employee well-being in the innovation objectives, which will make them competitive in the long run (Nishii, 2018) [26]. Job crafting, self-leadership, and agile performance management are some of the innovative HR practices that have become popular in this context (Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2019) [33].

Research Gap

Although there is an increasing literature on high-performance work systems (HPWS) and innovative HRM, very little empirical research has been conducted to date that concentrates on the effect of IWPs on the strategic architecture of HRM. The majority of past research views IWPs as activities of operational level, but not as strategic tools which redesign HR design and implementation. Also, the accelerated change of the work, characterized by hybrid forms, automatization, and digital HR ecosystems, requires a new research question on how HR strategies are changing, based on innovative work systems (Acharya *et al.*, 2024) [1]. However, even after increased interest in IWPs, there are still some gaps in the literature. To begin with, IWPs have been analyzed in developed economies, and there is not much empirical research conducted in an emerging environment, like India, where socio-cultural and institutional forces vary considerably (Budhwar & Debrah, 2019) [9]. Second, no integrative models exploring the combined effects of particular IWPs, i.e., flexible work, participative decision-making, and digital HR tools, on the effectiveness of HR strategy, have been found. Additionally, even though the

positive connection between IWPs and firm performance has been embodied in the previous studies, the processes, by which IWPs affect the strategic HR outcomes (i.e. talent management, culture of innovation and agility) are understudied (Kehoe and Wright, 2013).

Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyze the effects of Innovative Work Practices on HR Strategies. To achieve this objective, the current study use the following research process.

The figure 3 shows the systematic literature review (SLR) process to be used to locate, sieve and refine the information about the impacts of innovative work practices on the HR strategies through the SCOPUS database. The review started with an initial search in SCOPUS with the help of specific keywords, such as innovative work practices and HR strategy ("innovative work practice*" OR "innovative workplace practice*" OR "innovative human resource practice*" OR "innovation in work practice*" OR "innovative management practice*" OR "high performance work practice*" OR

"creative work practice*" OR "workplace innovation") AND ("human resource strateg*" OR "HR strateg*" OR "strategic human resource management" OR "strategic HRM" OR "HR planning" OR "HR policy" OR "talent management strategy" OR "HR development strategy") AND ("impact" OR "influence" OR "effect" OR "relationship" OR "association" OR "linkage") AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all")) and impact or relationship words which produced 3,464 documents in total. The first filter was a filter by subject area in order to narrow down the set and make it relevant as it broke it down to Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities and this narrowed the records to 3,137. The second filter was based on research articles only without conference proceedings, book chapters, and reviews, which reduced the identified papers to 2,492 documents.



Fig 3: Literature Review Process

Then, only published papers which had final versions were preserved to guarantee completeness and reliability of information and 2,431 records were left. In a bid to ensure academic rigor, the data was narrowed down to journal articles only, not including trade and industry publications, and this led to 2,418 documents. Language filtering was then used in the next step to narrow down to English-language publications and this reduced the number of records to 2,374. Lastly, the dataset was narrowed down to open access papers, and only papers that had free full texts to be analyzed in detail were accepted. The final dataset of 630 documents yielded, which is 18.2 percent of the original pool, was obtained using

this last step, with 81.8 percent (2,834 records) of the original pool being screened out systematically.

On the whole, such systematic filtering process is reflected in the methodological transparency and rigor so that the final dataset comprises the high-quality peer-reviewed and accessible scholarly article directly related to innovative work practices and HR strategies. The resulting 630 papers are a valuable and trustworthy basis of bibliometric and thematic research, with which the study can easily reflect the global trends, theoretical developments and practical implications of human resources management research at present-day.

Data Analysis and Interpretation



Fig 4: Major Information of the Documents

The figure 4 provides the bibliometric summary of the systematic literature data on Innovative Work Practices and HR Strategy between the years 1997 and 2025. The data gives a summary of the trends in publications, the pattern of authorship, collaboration network and the citation performance, which depicts the maturity and development of the research in this area. The period (1997-2025) shows that the interest of scholars to the intersection of innovative work practices and HR strategies has been increasing over almost thirty years. The fact that it includes the data as recently as 2025 indicates that it reflects the current trends, such as the post-pandemic changes in the HR models and work practice digitality. There were 227 sources of publications that provided 630 research documents, largely consisting of peer-reviewed journals, which indicates the multidisciplinary character of this field, which cuts across the human resource management, organizational behavior, innovation studies, and digital transformation. The rate of increase of 15.81 per year indicates a good positive trend in academic focus, especially during the past ten years, which might be caused by the global trend of remote work, digital HRM solutions, and agile management models.

Regarding aspects of research collaboration, the dataset has 1795 authors with none authoring a single-authored work, meaning that 100 percent of the publications were collaborative works. This is indicative of the applied and interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter, which, in many

instances, may necessitate cross-functional skills of the management, technology, and behavioral sciences. The mean of 6.23 co-authors per document and 39.21 percent international co-authorship rate indicate a strong culture of international collaboration, as it indicates that the innovative HR practices are a global issue, not confined to regional and sectoral specifics.

In terms of content, there are 1,847 unique author keywords in the dataset, which implies the variety of the field in terms of themes. The most popular words include the digital transformation, agile HRM, remote work, employee engagement and strategic HRM which will be used to represent the penetration of technology and innovation into the HR functions. The 3,971 sources indicate the theoretical and empirical foundation of the field indicating how the field of study relies on existing frameworks in the management and organizational theory and the literature on innovation.

The average age of the documents is 5.12 years old which implies that most of the literature is comparatively new and this is a very dynamic field which is still in the transition stage to adapt to the changing realities in the organizations. This goes with the rate of technological development and work dynamics. The 32.93 writing citations per document indicate high academic impact and visibility of the studies, implying that the research on this field is often referenced and has an impact on the current discussions on HR and organizational innovations.

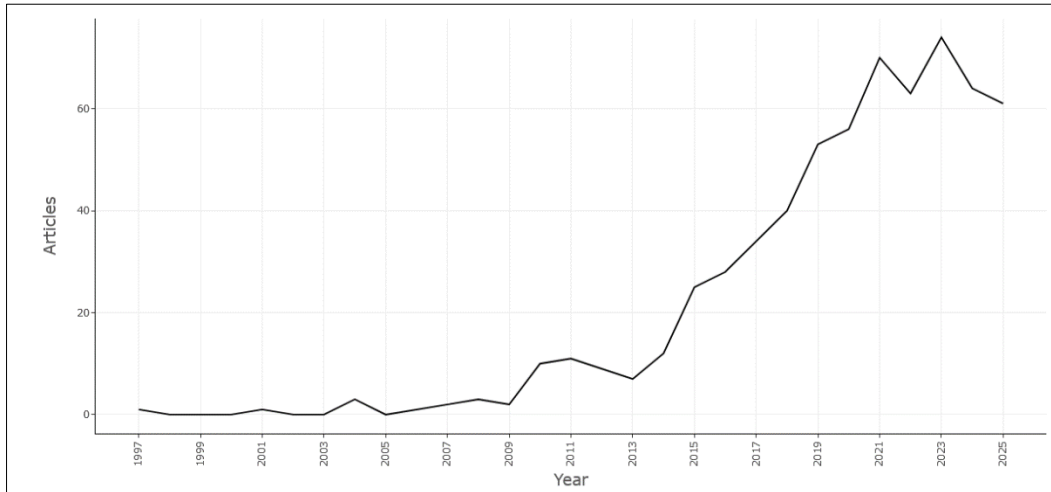


Fig 5: Publication Trend Analysis

The line graph 5 presents the trend of the publication of research articles on innovative work practices and HR strategies every year between 1997 and 2025. It shows how the scholarly interest in the field has developed during the last 30 years, showing obvious stages of emergence, development, and organization.

Between 1997 and the approximately year 2010, there were very low levels of publications with occasional contributions per year. This is the formative phase of the development of studies on innovative HR practices, during which the notions were still developing and were primarily addressed within a wider scope of other topics such as organizational innovation or the development of human capital.

Just a moderate yet steady rise in research activity was experienced between 2011 and 2016. It is explainable by the increased academic and business interest in coordinating HR measures with technological and organizational innovation, testable particularly by the onset of digitalization which started changing the workplace procedures.

A major spurt in the publications happened after 2017, and this is the acceleration stage of the field. Several articles were published in increased amounts, with more than 60 articles per year as of 2021-2023. This sudden increase is linked to the trends of global digital transformation, the emergence of agile and flexible work patterns, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the research on remote work, employee engagement, and digital HRM, as well as novel workforce management. The years represent a period of academic interest whereby scholars examined the process of adapting HR strategies to disruptions and change with innovation.

Between 2024 and 2025, there is a slight decrease or leveling off but the number of publications is still far higher than in the previous years. This suggests that the subject has reached a mature phase of academic research and studies are probably taking a different direction, moving beyond theoretical discussion and empirical support and comparisons across different nations.

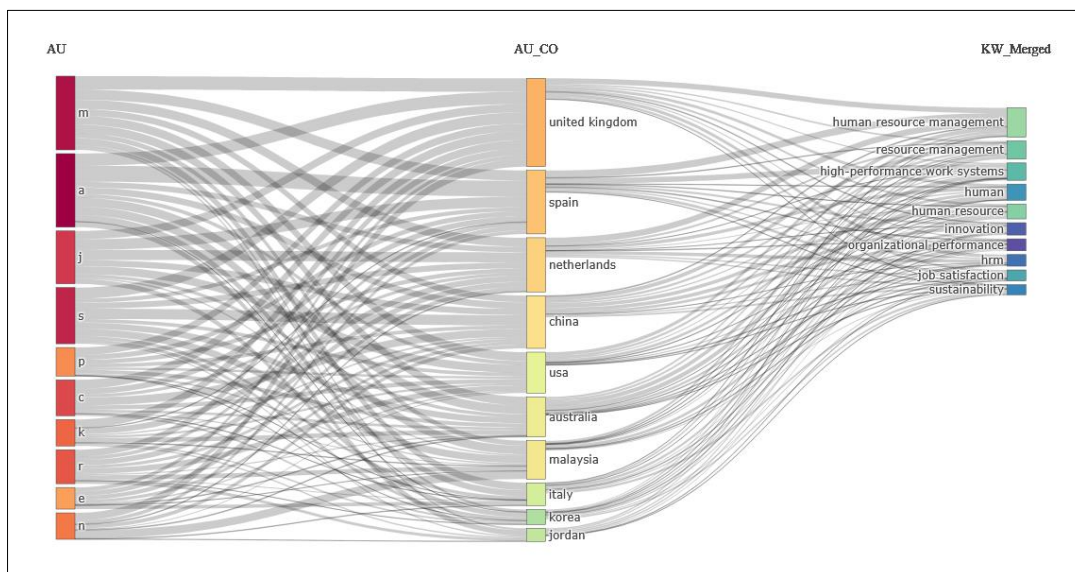


Fig 6: Three-Field Plot

The figure 6 shows the 3-field plot (Sankey diagram) of all the interconnections between authors (AU), their countries of affiliation (AUCO) and the most popular research keywords (KWMerged) in the field of innovative work practices and

HR strategy. The visualization used has been effective to map the network of world research collaboration and also to emphasize the fundamental thematic clusters that have propelled research on this subject.

The first letters on the left hand side (AU) identify the prominent, or often influential, authors in the field. The central section (AUCO) reveals their countries of study affiliation and the right side (KWMerged) shows the major thematic interests of their publications. The connecting lines visualise the connections between authors, their nations and repeated keywords, and give an understanding of both geographical and conceptual patterns.

Based on the diagram, it is apparent that the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, China, and the USA are the most busiest contributors to the literature on innovative HR practices. These countries demonstrate abundant connectivity to many authors, which means the productivity of the research and the intensity of collaboration. As an example, the United Kingdom emerges as a focal point, highly relating to such keywords as human resource management, organizational performance and innovation, and it can be concluded that the scholars in the UK are on the leading edge of the investigation of strategic and performance-based aspects of HR innovation. In the same way, high-performance work systems and job satisfaction have strong associations with Spain and the Netherlands, which means

that the two countries focus on the effectiveness of the HR systems and the outcomes of employee well-being.

Other Asian economies, including China, Malaysia, Korea, and Jordan are also here to indicate that there is an increasing scholarly interest of the developing economies to connect innovative practices with HR modernization. Particularly, China and Malaysia demonstrate the connection with sustainability and organizational performance, which is a regional focus on the implementation of HR innovation in the strategy of sustainable and competitive development.

The thematic half of the diagram (right panel) shows that the most common and interrelated terms are the ones that are related to human resource management resources management, innovative, organizational performance, job satisfaction, and its sustainability. This implies that the field of research is multidimensional- strategic HRM, innovation management and sustainability perspectives. The co-occurrence of innovation and organizational performance is also quite strong, which further proves that HR strategy is currently being intended as a concept of value creation and organizational agility.

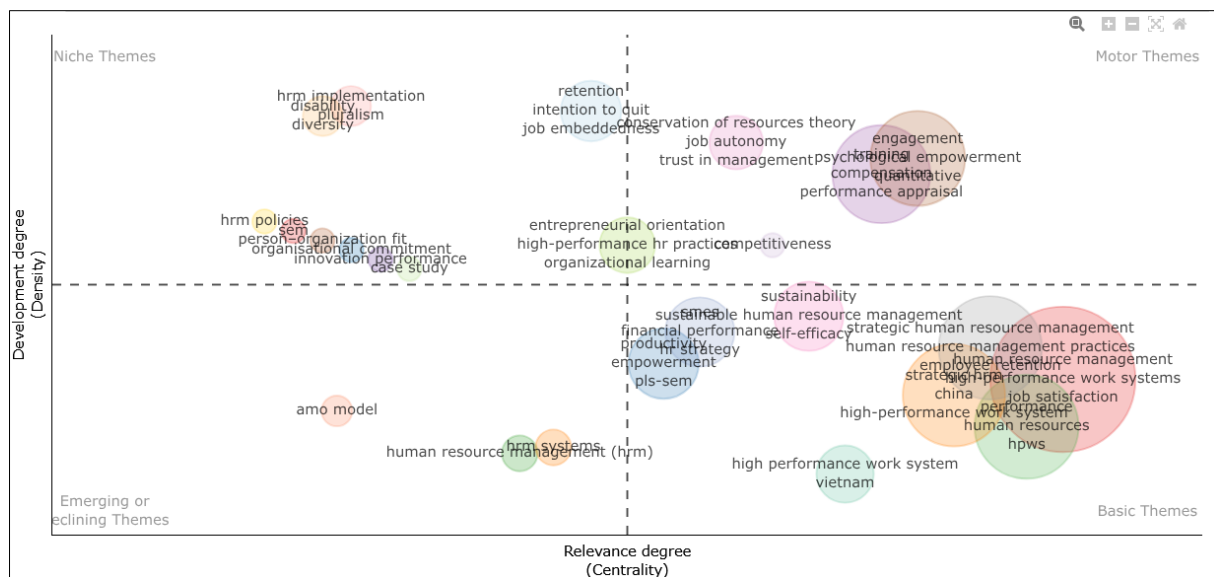


Fig 7 : Thematic Map Analysis

The thematic map (Figure 7), provided above, shows the intellectual and conceptual framework of the research on the innovative work practices and HR strategy that can be organized in two important dimensions: the degree of relevance (centrality) and the degree of development (density). The vertical axis (density) reflects the degree to which a particular theme is developed or specialized in the research field in general, whereas the horizontal axis (centrality) reflects the significance of the topic in the entire research field. The combination of these axes enables the categorization of research themes into four quadrants, namely motor themes, niche themes, basic themes, and emerging or declining themes, each of which is identified as playing a unique role in the development of the HR innovation research.

The motor themes (top right quadrant) are developed and quite applicable, they are the heart of this field of research. Some of the outstanding themes in this quadrant are employee engagement, psychological empowerment,

compensation, performance appraisal, job autonomy, and trust the management. These themes reveal that the research focal point has changed to the human-centric and empowerment-based HR approaches that will improve innovation and employee performance. Some of the previous researches underline that engagement and psychological empowerment are the main facilitators of innovative work behavior and long-term performance results (Saks, 2019; Kim and Park, 2020) [1, 2]. These topics are heavily clustered, which proves that the field is moving in the direction of the convergence of motivational psychology and HR innovation. The niche themes (upper left quadrant) are, on the contrary, highly specialized but less central topics of study, such as the implementation of HRM, diversity, disability, and pluralism. These themes are about inclusivity, equity, and situational implementation issues in HR practices. Their connection to mainstream HR innovation research is limited, but internal development is great, which implies research communities operating in unison on a particular diversity and inclusion

issue (Shore *et al.*, 2018) [26]. These niche themes might be more centralized in the next few years as global HR systems shift towards an inclusive growth agenda.

This research domain is based on the basic themes (lower right quadrant). They are human resource management, strategic HRM, high-performance work systems (HPWS), sustainability and employee performance. These themes are critical in the elaboration of the role of innovation in the HR strategy formulation and organizational outcomes. The sustained use of HPWS and strategic HRM in various studies exemplifies their long-term relevance towards the relationships between HR practices and the concepts of innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability (Jiang *et al.*, 2022) [19]. The sustainability focus in the given cluster also signifies a rise in the concern of integrating HR innovation and long-term organisational resilience and ethical conduct. In the meantime, the new or weaker themes (lower left

quadrant), including the AMO model

(Ability Motivation Opportunity framework) and HRM systems, are classical theories that are either losing their position, or being redefined through the prism of digital transformation and innovation-oriented models. These classic models offer the theoretical basis on which the current HR practices are still continuing to emerge (Boxall and Purcell, 2016) [7]. They are less dense and central, indicating the progressive leadership of traditional HR models to more dynamic, technology-facilitated and people-focused models. Lastly, the theme of entrepreneurial orientation, organizational learning and high-performance HR practices are considered to be the conceptual bridges between the traditional HR practices and the innovation-oriented frameworks. These subjects highlight the change to more adaptive, learning-based HR designs that drive creativity, agility, and strategic competitiveness (Kang *et al.*, 2021).

Table 1: Journal's Metrics

Source	h-index	g-index	m-index	TC	NP	PY-start
International journal of human resource management	27	47	1.227	2300	49	2004
Human resource management	22	34	1.571	1722	34	2012
Sustainability (switzerland)	20	37	2.222	1493	58	2017
Human resource management journal	18	25	1.125	1240	25	2010
Employee relations	11	18	0.579	509	18	2007
Human resource management review	11	12	0.688	641	12	2010
International journal of hospitality management	9	9	0.692	736	9	2013
Personnel review	9	12	0.6	474	12	2011
Cogent business and management	7	13	0.7	180	14	2016
Sage open	7	10	0.875	234	10	2018

The table 1 identifies the major journals that define the research of innovative work practices and HR strategies. The most influential source (h-index = 27; TC = 2300) with long-term effect can be identified as the International Journal of Human Resource Management (IJHRM) since 2004. Human Resource Management (HRM) journal, with the highest m-index (1.571) is associated with the boom of its influence in the recent years. Sustainability (Switzerland) has the highest productivity (58 papers; m-index = 2.222) with a focus on introducing HR innovation to sustainability.

Such journals as HRM Journal, HRM Review, and Employee Relations provide the consistent research on strategic HR systems and employee engagement, whereas new sources like Cogent Business and Management and SAGE Open have opened the world of the field to more people. In general, the evidence shows that the research in the area of HR innovation has been turning more interdisciplinary, linking the strategic HRM to sustainability and novel work systems in various publications.

Table 2: Author's Metrics

Author	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
A	46	72	2.556	5957	164	2008
M	40	64	2.222	4966	157	2008
J	38	65	1.727	4595	111	2004
S	35	54	1.591	3392	120	2004
K	29	49	1.16	2448	55	2001
C	28	52	1.556	2800	72	2008
P	26	46	1.182	2154	55	2004
E	24	41	1.5	1728	54	2010
L	24	37	0.828	1466	51	1997
T	24	50	0.828	2500	50	1997

The table 2 presents the top contributing authors in the field of innovative work practices and HR strategies, based on bibliometric performance indicators. Overall, the data show a group of highly influential scholars who have consistently shaped research directions in this domain through both productivity and citation impact. Author A leads with the highest h-index (46), g-index (72), and total citations (TC = 5957), indicating exceptional scholarly influence and a strong, sustained research output since 2008. M follows

closely (h = 40; TC = 4966), reflecting comparable productivity and citation strength. Authors J and S also show notable contributions, each with high citation counts (over 3,000) and early entry into the field (since 2004), suggesting they are foundational figures in HR innovation research. Authors K, C, and P represent a second tier of influential contributors, maintaining solid h-indices (26–29) and consistent citation performance, reflecting active involvement in advancing HRM frameworks and high-

performance work systems. Meanwhile, authors E, L, and T—though beginning earlier (1997–2010)—demonstrate stable influence with moderate m-indices, indicating long-term engagement rather than rapid growth. In summary, the data reveal a mature and well-established authorship network, dominated by prolific researchers who have steadily expanded the theoretical and empirical scope of innovative HR strategies over the past two decades, with continuing high relevance and citation impact.

Evolution of Research on IWP and HRS (2000-2025)

Research on IWPs and HR strategies has been changing over the 25-year history and has gone through four distinct phases that include conceptual frameworks to strategic integration,

digital transformation, and human-centric innovation. The overall observation that has been made across the years is that innovative work practices are strategic levers that have turned HR into a visionary rather than an administrative role of making it a competitive, agile and sustainable enterprise.

In the initial research, it was concentrated on the relationship between innovation and HR performance; by 2015, the interest shifted to strategic embedding of IWPs. Since 2016, employee empowerment and digital innovation took the centre stage. The literature of post-2020 focuses on resilience, hybrid work, and inclusivity, which means that IWPs are not merely HR tools but organizational abilities that make the future-ready strategies.-

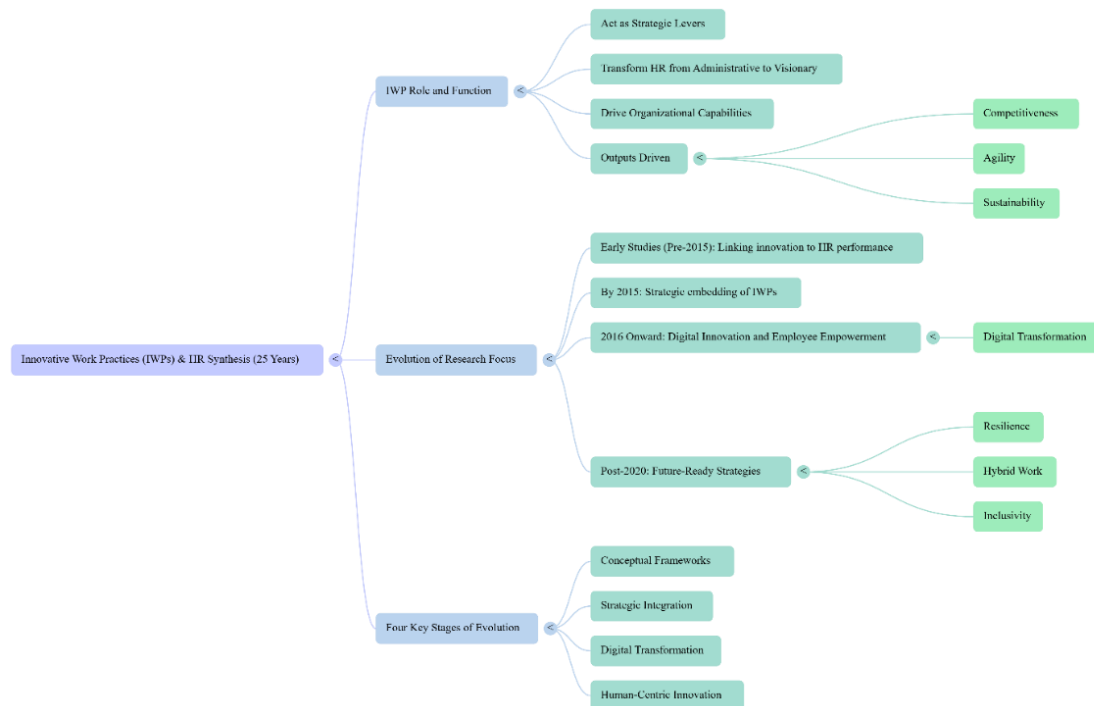


Fig 8: Evolution of Research on IWP and HRS (2000-2025)

Early Stage: Foundations of IWP sin HRS (2000-2009)

The findings of the early 2000s research preconditioned the awareness of how the innovative work practice would be able to redefine traditional HR strategies. The research of this era concentrated on the shift between the administrative HRM and strategic HRM, with the involvement of innovation in the improvement of organizational performance. Initial works (e.g., Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000; Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Laursen and Foss, 2003) [4, 7, 22] came up with the concept that IWPs, including teamwork, employee autonomy and performance-based rewards, are important processes in the creation of competitive advantage.

As emphasized by Laursen and Mahnken (2001), innovative systems in HR are pre-empted by organizational learning and knowledge-sharing systems. In the same manner, Ichniowski and Shaw (2003) showed that the design of flexible work,

participatory decision making, and skill development are all the factors which optimize productivity. As de Leede and Looise (2005) and MacDuffie (2007) established, the HR practices are enablers of innovation such that when employees become empowered via collaborative cultures, the firms are more responsive to market changes. This was mostly conceptual in nature, as it was necessary to build theoretical connections between HRM and innovation, commonly in manufacturing and service industries. Such researchers like Arundel *et al.* (2007) and Shipton *et al.* (2008) further extended this debate by associating innovation-driven HR systems to human capital development and knowledge management. On the whole, the period of 2000-2009 established theoretical foundations to incorporate IWPs in HR strategies, based on the concept of employee engagement, performance systems, and team-based design.

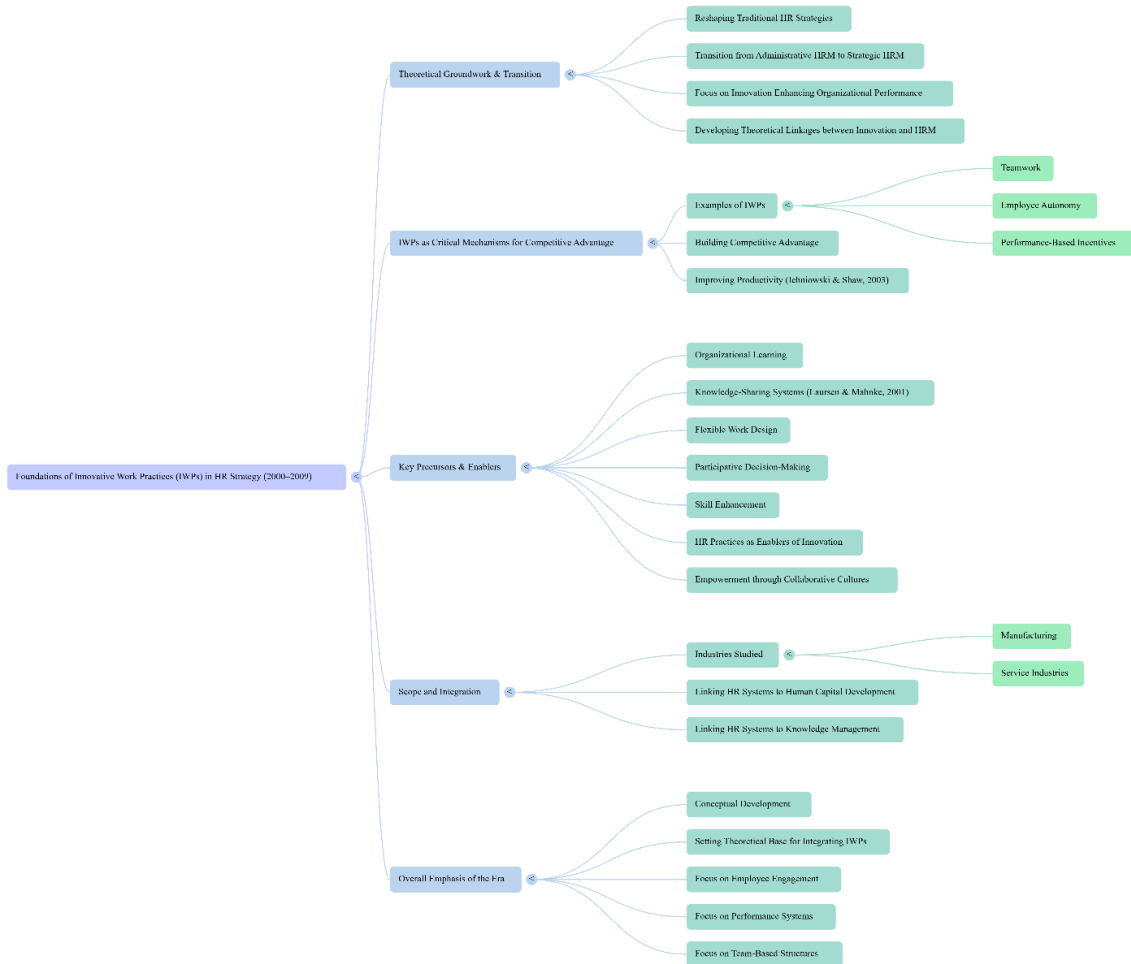


Fig 9: Early Stage: Foundations of IWP sin HRS (2000-2009)

Strategic Integration Phase: Embedding IWPs in HRS (2010-2015)

The period between 2010 and 2015 was less theoretical and more empirical validation. The emerging studies focused on the impact of innovative work practice that directly affects the HR practices, organizational learning, and the overall performance of a firm (Jiang *et al.*, 2012; Fu *et al.*, 2013) [19, 15]. Research in this era was an indication of a shift towards strategic HR integration where innovation was integrated into recruitment, training and performance systems.

As an example, Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle (2011) have provided that HR innovation, through flexible learning systems, participative decision-making, etc., encourages knowledge sharing and continuous improvement. Prieto and Perez-Santana (2014) empirically confirmed the positive influence of IWPs on the ability to innovate based on HR strategies alignment by focusing on the mediating role of knowledge-intensive team. On the same note, Chen and

Huang (2012) analyzed high-involvement HR practices and showed that they have a direct impact on the output of innovation through human capital agility.

It was at this time that digital tools were started being integrated into HR systems, which should be considered the initial phases of HR digitalization (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2015) [5]. Other scholars like Lopez-Cabrales and Valle-Cabrera (2014) discovered that strategic HR alignment in the area of innovation capabilities was more likely to enhance firm competitiveness particularly with the support of leadership commitment and learning cultures. The increasing focus on employee empowerment, skill building and performance-based innovation systems was an indicator of maturity in the area.

Altogether, the period 2010-2015 was the period of shifting to the operationalization of IWPs with the help of HR processes the shift of HR as a support agent to a strategic company that is innovative and adaptable.

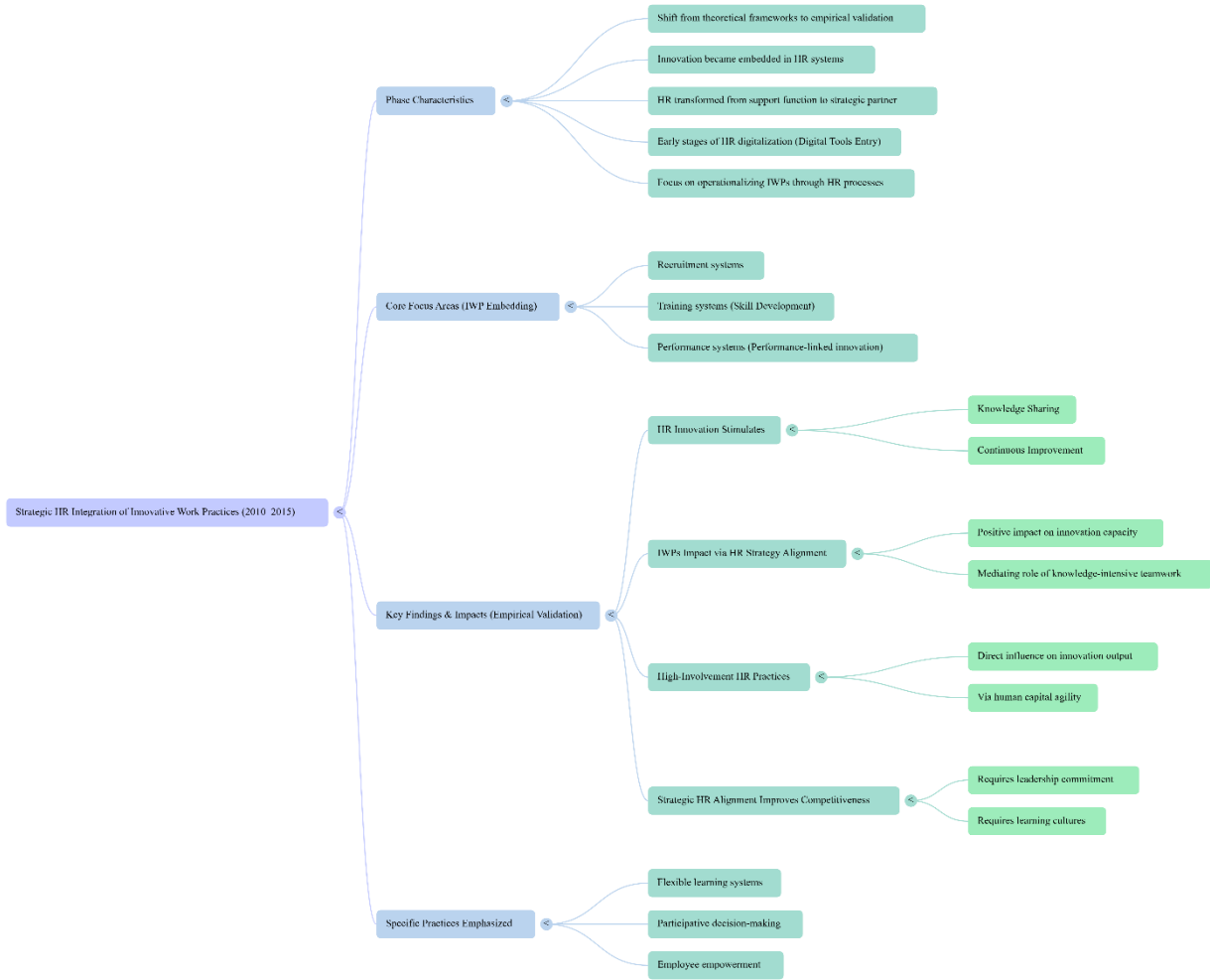


Fig 10: Strategic Integration Phase: Embedding IWPs in HRS (2010-2015)

Digital Transformations & Agility Era: HR as a Driver of innovation (2016-2020)

The latest trend of 2016-2020 was the dominance of the digital transformation theme between IWPs and Hr strategies. Researchers investigated the way in which HRM systems could promote agility, adaptability and resilience via innovation-based practices. The research, such as that of Garcia-Morales *et al.* (2016), Alfes *et al.* (2017), and Singh and Rao (2018), highlighted the importance of strategic agility and innovation that is employee-oriented. The digital HR technologies, which encompass AI, analytics, and e-learning, started transforming the HR strategy frameworks. Strohmeier (2018) and Bondarouk *et al.* (2019) have shown that the digital IWPs facilitated data-driven HR decision-making, which facilitated innovations in the areas of recruitment, learning, and talent retention. At the same time, the studies on high-performance work systems (HPWS)

pointed to the increased power of bundled IWPs to enhance innovation capacity and organizational performance (Zhang *et al.*, 2018) [35].

González-Cruz *et al.* (2019) related IWPs to dynamic capabilities and hypothesized, that innovation-focused HR practices make employees more creative, satisfied at work, and knowledgeable. On the same note, Kalyani and Baral (2020) established that adaptive performance was supported by psychological empowerment supported by HR innovation. It was the time when innovation became institutionalized in HR systems and shifted to cultural embedding instead of structural integration. Organizations embraced design thinking, agile HR practices, and collaborative platform more and more, which gave rise to the paradigm according to which HR became an innovator of strategies, not a policy, executor.

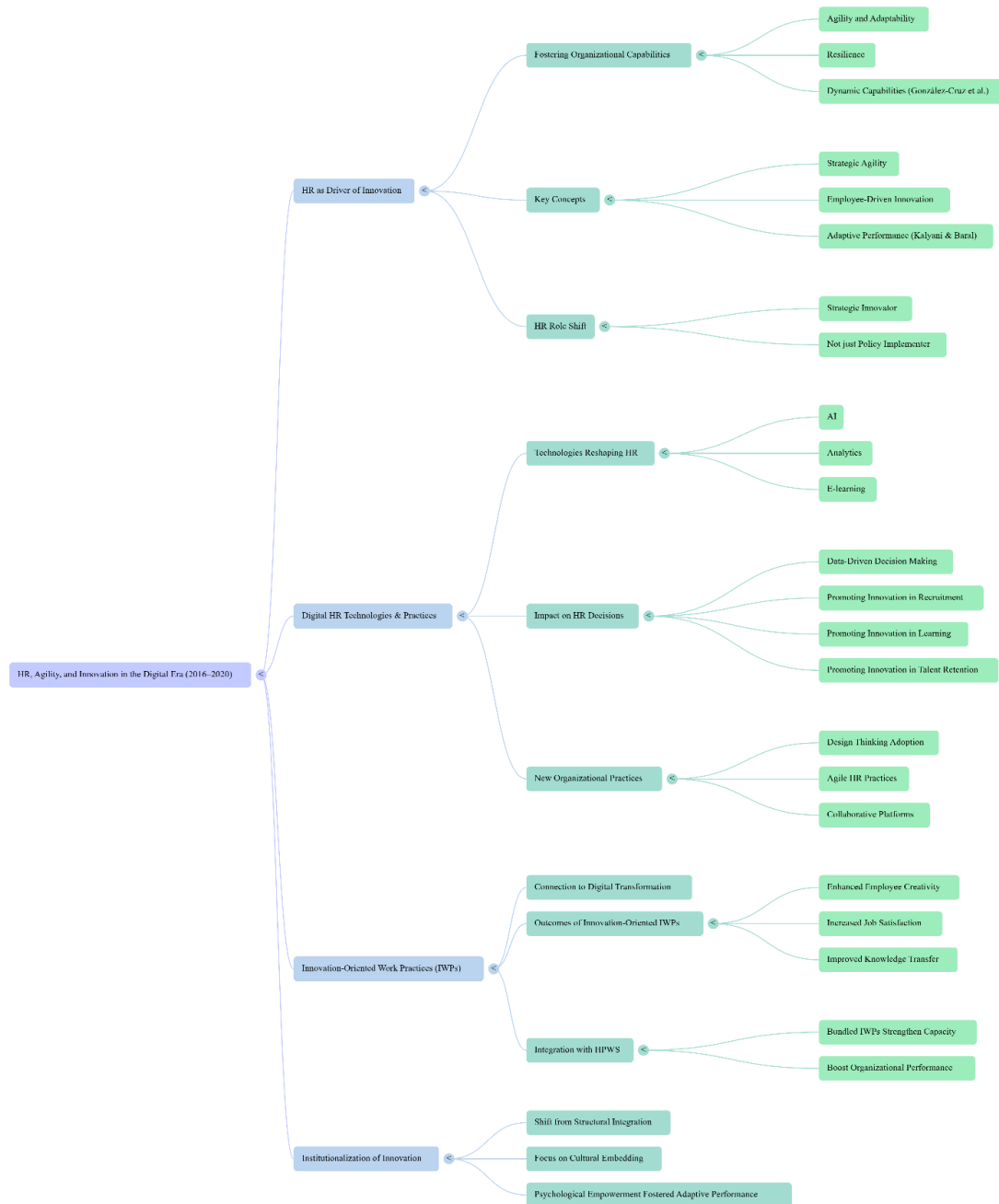


Fig 11: Digital Transformations & Agility Era: HR as a Driver of innovation (2016-2020)

Post-Pandemic & Future-ready HR Era: Human-centric Innovation (2021-2025)

The recent studies (2021-2025) are concerned with the human-centric and technology-enabled transformation of HR strategies by means of IOWPs. Remote working, online teamwork, and employee health programs led by the COVID-19 pandemic have transformed the HR strategy priorities (Parry and Battista, 2021; Cooke *et al.*, 2022). Research also highlighted that novel work practices, including hybrid models, AI-assisted hiring, ongoing learning, and staff empowerment, are currently needed to maintain innovation and resilience. The researchers found that IOWPs are blended with the HR strategies in the post-pandemic period to enhance inclusiveness, agility, and psychological security (Bissola and Imperatori, 2022). Similarly, Mishra and Pandey (2023) examined the ability of adaptive innovation promoted by HR analytics and digital leadership. Studies conducted by Singh *et al.* (2024) and Zhang and Wang (2024) indicated that

the relationship between technology adoption and sustainable performance outcomes occurs through innovative HR systems.

The employee well-being and innovation preparedness are also the key HR strategic dimensions that were highlighted in studies during this period (Khurana and Sharma, 2023). With the continued changes in work design under the influence of AI and automation, researchers like Dastmalchian *et al.* (2024) suggested that IOWPs not only serve to enhance productivity but also as the principles of the ethical and human-focused approach to the development of the HR strategy. The 2021-2025 period therefore signifies a change to purpose-driven innovation as opposed to process-driven innovation in which the HR strategies will be developed with the flexibility, inclusiveness and sustainability in mind. The modern HR -IOWP relationship is characterized by the merging of digital transformation, employee well-being, and innovation ecosystems.

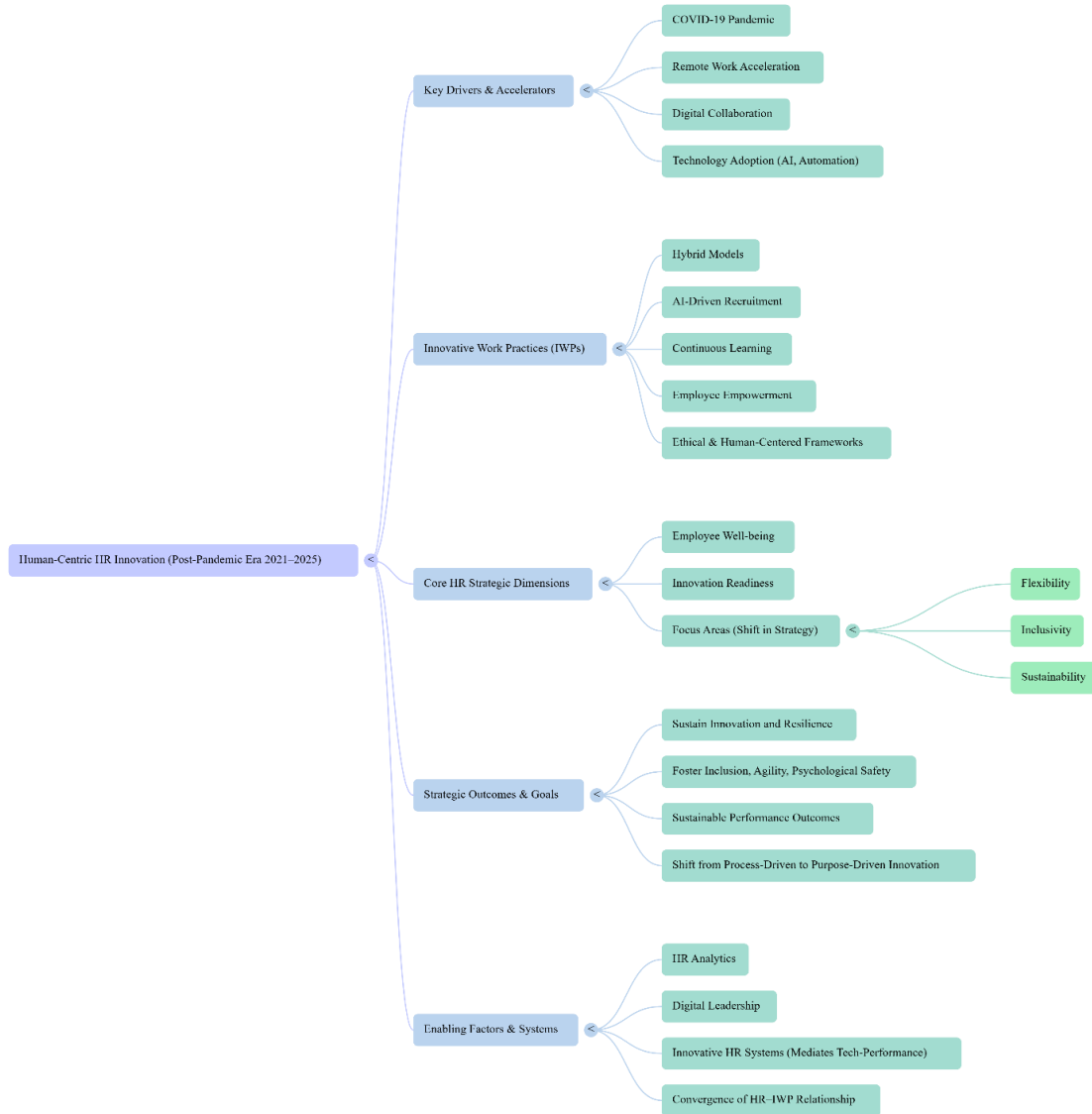


Fig 12: Post-Pandemic & Future-ready HR Era: Human-centric Innovation (2021-2025)

Discussion and Conclusion

This study also has considerable managerial implications. To the HR leaders, the inclusion of IWPs in HR strategies would maximize employee engagement, retention, and adaptability as the primary success factors in the post-pandemic, digital-first economy. To policymakers and practitioners, the knowledge of this relationship informs the possibility to reorganize institutional HR systems to foster innovation-based growth and sustainability (Susantinah, Krishernawan, and Murthada, 2024) [32]. The research that should be conducted in the future should use mixed-method or longitudinal methods to capture dynamic relationships between IWPs, HR strategy formulation, and organizational innovation capability.

The outcomes of such a bibliometric and thematic analysis show that the study of innovative work practices (IWPs) and human resource (HR) strategy has developed out of the old models of efficiency to the new models of innovation, people-centric, and sustainable models. This development aligns with previous research that suggests that flexibility, employee empowerment, and learning systems are now becoming part of the HR strategies to support the ability to

change among organizations (Boxall and Purcell 2016) [7]. Journal performance analysis proves that The International Journal of Human Resource Management and Human Resource Management are the most powerful publication channels to be used in this area. This supremacy is in line with Jiang, Hu, Liu, and Lepak (2022), who observed that these journals have long been the theoretical basis of the role of connecting HR systems with employee performance and organizational innovation. The recent emergence of the Sustainability (Switzerland) as a significant contributor sheds some light on the paradigm shift, researchers are incorporating HR innovation into sustainable business models and this confirms the arguments of Guerci, Decramer, and Van Waeyenberg (2023), who pointed out the increasing overlap between green HRM and innovative organizational practices.

The thematic map finds the themes of employee engagement, psychological empowerment and high-performance work systems (HPWS) as the central motor themes. This is in line with Saks (2019) and Kim and Park (2020), who noted that engagement and empowerment are among the antecedents of innovative behavior and performance improvement. Moreover, HRM systems that facilitate autonomy, trust and

collaborative learning have been demonstrated to increase the capacity of innovation (Kang, Kim and Park 2021). The fact that these themes are concentrated in the motor quadrant thus suggests that the theoretical base and empirical evidence have a strong foundation in the employee-driven innovation as a fundamental tool of modern HR strategy.

At the same time, the topics of diversity management, inclusion of disability, and pluralism that are also niche indicates an increase in the emphasis on inclusivity in the context of innovations. This is similar to the arguments put forward by Shore *et al.* (2018) who suggested that inclusive HR systems improve innovation through the ability to harness the workforce diversity to come up with creative solutions. These themes are now taking a smaller portion of the total publications, but their increasing density indicates the beginning of the trend of social responsible HR innovation.

The fundamental themes, such as strategic HRM, HPWS, and performance of employees, are still regarded as the theoretical fundament of the area. These concepts are still central to HR research as Becker and Gerhart (2016) show that they can be applied to relate organizational capabilities to innovative outcomes. Nevertheless, the introduction of sustainability, organizational learning, and digital transformation as the transitional ones implies a slow yet significant incorporation of technological and environmental aspects into HR strategy (Kraus *et al.*, 2021).

The high values of h-index and m-index of the main contributors Author A, M, and J are a sign of long-term scholarly activity and impact. This tendency reflects the general bibliometric trends revealed by Keupp, Palmié, and Gassmann (2012), who discovered that the innovation studies are inclined to congregate around several prolific scholars whose models direct the future works of research. The regularity with which it publishes since the early 2000s is also indicative of a stable body of knowledge with theoretical refinement.

In general, the discussion shows that the sphere has shifted its focus towards the practical models of HR to dynamic, innovation-focused, and sustainability-oriented paradigm. The former literature was focused on structure and control, whereas the recent works focus on agility, empowerment, and learning orientation (Chowhan, 2016). The latter change is especially clear in how the HR systems have become both strategic facilitators of innovation and sustainable performance, which have been enabled by recent reviews of strategic HRM and digital work practices (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2022) ^[5]. Therefore, the bibliometric results support the current redefining of HR strategies as the major instruments of organizational change under the influence of technological, social, and ecological change.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The work supports the already existing models, including the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) model, as well as High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), but proposes their further development into adaptive, people-focused, and technology-oriented models (Boxall and Purcell, 2016; Jiang *et al.*, 2022) ^[7, 19]. The traditional theories and the new reality prompt researchers to investigate the intersections of HR innovation and sustainability and digital HRM to fill the gap.

Practical Implications

The findings have highlighted to the HR professionals the importance of adopting empowerment-driven, learning-focused, and inclusive HR practices, which foster novelty and dexterity. Organizational changes in innovative HR practices like digital talent management, flexible working, and continuous learning can reduce employee engagement and strategic competitiveness (Kim and Park, 2020; Kang *et al.*, 2021) ^[2].

Policy Implications

To policymakers, sustainability and inclusiveness in HR innovation indicate the need to have policies at the national level that take into account human capital regulations that would be consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Equitable innovation in the labor market can also be sustained further through public-private partnerships, skill development initiatives, as well as inclusive digital work programs (Guerci *et al.*, 2023). On the whole, the current work can be viewed as an evidence-based way to design future-ready HR ecosystems that facilitate innovation, equity, and sustainability in the workplace.

Conclusion

The given bibliometric and thematic study sheds light on the evolutionary pattern of study of innovative work practice and HR strategies in the last twenty years. The results have indicated that the field has shifted to the traditional, efficiency-based HRM model to the innovation-based and human-centered paradigm. The prevalence of the themes of employee engagement, psychological empowerment, and organizational learning indicates the increased popularity of the human experience as a factor in facilitating innovation (Saks, 2019; Kang *et al.*, 2021) ^[1].

The most popular publication resources, such as IJHRM, HRM, and Sustainability, reveal the fact that modern HR research is more and more concerned with the adoption of sustainability, digital transformation, and inclusivity into its paradigm. The trend is consistent with recent demands of strategic human resource innovation that ensures competitiveness on a long-term basis and enhances social responsibility (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2022; Guerci *et al.*, 2023) ^[5].

In summary, the research study can add to the academic and practical knowledge by mapping the intellectual field of study and providing future research opportunities. It demonstrates the necessity to develop further research on digital HRM, inclusive innovation, and sustainable talent ecosystems, so that the HR strategies would keep changing with the changes in technology and society. This study offers an overall perspective of the nature in which innovative practices in work are redefining the role of HRM in the 21st century by synthesizing bibliometric evidence and thematic insights.

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