

DIGITAL WELL-BEING WORK SYSTEMS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW ON INNOVATING HIGH-PERFORMANCE HRM FOR GEN Z

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ABSTRACT

The literature on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) confirms its drive for engagement, innovation, and performance but it also reveals the *dark side* of work intensification, stress, and burnout. Meanwhile, digital well-being research shows that technostress, hyperconnectivity, and digital fatigue damage well-being and productivity, especially in Generation Z. By examining 22 articles (20 core studies + 2 scale instruments), this article synthesizes the practice of HPWS as a *performance driver* and the mechanism of digital well-being as a *protective lens*, then maps the two through cross-mapping. The results of the integration result in six dimensions of Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS): (1) Digitalized Training & Career Development, (2) Responsible Digital Flexibility, (3) Empowerment with Digital Mindfulness, (4) Reward for Healthy Digital Behaviour, (5) Safe-by-Design Performance Management, and (6) Inclusive & Ethical Digital Climate. This framework projects *dual outcomes*: sustainable performance and employee digital well-being. DWWS's theoretical contribution is to expand HPWS and enrich Sustainable HRM with a digital dimension that has been missed; Its practical contribution provides human-centered HRM policy guidelines for the Gen Z workforce.

Key words: High-Performance Work Systems; Digital Well-Being; Sustainable HRM; Generation Z; Narrative Review

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (born ±1997–2012) is now a significant part of the global workforce, projected to reach 27% by 2025 (Qureos, 2023). As digital natives, they are used to living connected for more than seven hours per day, which has implications for digital exhaustion up to 73% (Human8, 2025). The survey shows 77% of Gen Z prioritizes work-life balance in choosing a job, while mental stress remains high: 71% report having an "unhealthy" occupational health score (Mental Health America, 2024). This phenomenon is exacerbated by an always-on culture that blurs the boundaries of work and personal life, triggering burnout and intention to leave work (Forbes, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2024).

In HR management, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) have been shown to increase productivity through the practices of selection, training, performance-based compensation, and empowerment (Leduc et al., 2019). However, the literature highlights the "two faces of HPWS": in addition to high performance, the practice also has the potential to trigger stress, work intensification, and burnout (Park et al., 2023; Han et al., 2020). On the other hand, digital well-being research underscores the risks of technostress, hyperconnectivity, and digital fatigue (Büchi, 2024; Marsh et al., 2024), but the solutions offered are such as mindfulness apps and the right to disconnect—are still fragmented and rarely integrated with formal HRM policies (Floridou et al., 2025).

Based on this gap, this article aims to answer the research questioner: How can the integration of HPWS and digital well-being form a new conceptual framework for Sustainable HRM that is relevant to Generation Z? The novelty of this research is the proposal of the Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS) model, an integrative framework that unites the performance orientation of HPWS with digital welfare protection, thereby supporting sustainable performance as well as digital employee well-being.

HPWS: Performance Driver with Two Faces

HPWS is understood as a bundle of complementary HR practices—selection, training, compensation, flexibility, and empowerment—that have been shown to increase competence, innovation, and engagement (Singh et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025; Qamar et al., 2023). However, research also confirms the dark side of HPWS in the form of work intensification, stress, and burnout (Han et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023; Hauff et al., 2022), so its effectiveness in the long term is questionable.

Digital Well-Being: Risks and Solutions

Digital well-being is defined as a prosperous condition of healthy and controlled use of technology (Arslankara et al., 2022; Büchi, 2024). Key risks include technostress, digital fatigue, and hyperconnectivity, which are most experienced by Gen Z workers (Marsh et al., 2024; Supriyadi et al., 2025). Various interventions have been

proposed—ranging from digital wellness programs, mindfulness training, to AI-based platforms to monitor digital load (Amirabdollahian et al., 2025; Kawakami et al., 2024)—but still sporadic and unbound in the HRM system.

Sustainable HRM: Integration Opportunities

Sustainable HRM flows emphasize the balance between organizational performance and long-term employee well-being (Bai, 2024; Flu, 2024). However, digital dimensions such as the right to disconnect and digital load management have not been explicitly included in this framework. In fact, for Generation Z, the issue of digital well-being is very crucial for retention and productivity (Human8, 2025).

Synthesis: Towards DWWS

A synthesis of the literature shows: HPWS is effective but risky; digital well-being offers protection yet is still fragmented; and sustainable HRM has not absorbed the digital dimension. The integration of the three forms DWWS, a high-performance work system designed with the principles of digital well-being, including digital literacy, mindfulness, disconnect policies, digital load metrics, and an inclusive digital climate. DWWS is proposed as a new paradigm that bridges the sustainable performance and digital well-being of Gen Z.

METHOD

This study uses a *narrative review* approach to review the literature on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and digital well-being, with the aim of developing an integrative conceptual framework. Articles were collected from reputable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis, Springer, MDPI, and SAGE, using inclusion criteria in the form of *peer-reviewed publications* for the period 2015–2025 that are relevant to the themes of HPWS, digital well-being, or sustainable HRM. *Non-peer-reviewed articles*, proceedings, as well as those outside the context of HRM are excluded. From the selection process, 22 articles were obtained from different publishers to maintain a diversity of perspectives. (Results in Appendix 1) The analysis was carried out in a thematic narrative, namely by examining the definitions, dimensions, relationship mechanisms, potential "dark sides," and digital intervention strategies reviewed in the literature. This thematic synthesis became the basis for the formulation of the conceptual framework of Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS) as the main contribution of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the 22 articles yielded four main themes that complemented each other. First, HPWS has two faces. On the one hand, the practice of strict selection, training, performance-based compensation, flexibility, and empowerment has been shown to improve employee competence, innovation, and engagement (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Boxall & Macky, 2009; Jiang et al., 2012; Lepak et al., 2006; Li et al., 2025; Qamar et al., 2023; Parent-Lamarche et al., 2023). However, on the other hand, the literature highlights the *dark side* in the form of work pressure, stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout when work demands are not managed properly (Peccei et al., 2013; Pfeffer, 1998; Han et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023; Hauff et al., 2022). This raises doubts about the sustainability of HPWS if welfare aspects are neglected.

Second, digital risks in the modern world of work are increasingly prominent. Generation Z, as digital natives, face technostress, hyperconnectivity, and digital fatigue which have a negative impact on mental health, work-life balance, and productivity (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Tarafdard et al., 2015; Ayyagari et al., 2011; Marsh et al., 2024; Supriyadi et al., 2025). Recent studies have also reported the association between the intensity of smartphone use/work email and work-family conflict and increased turnover intention (Derks et al., 2014; Derks & Bakker, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Luqman et al., 2017).

Third, digital interventions to improve welfare are still fragmentary. Research tests a variety of approaches, ranging from mindfulness apps, digital wellness programs, to the use of AI sensing tools to monitor digital workloads (Vodanovich et al., 2018; Reinecke & Basto-Fleitas, 2021; Amirabdollahian et al., 2025; Floridou et al., 2025; McDuff et al., 2024; Kawakami et al., 2024). While promising, most of these interventions are rooted in psychology or technology and have not been formally integrated into HRM policies.

Fourth, the sustainable HRM framework provides a long-term lens that is human-centered, but the digital dimension has not been adequately accommodated. The HRM literature emphasizes the importance of combining performance and well-being (Nishii et al., 2008; Parker et al., 2017; Bai, 2024; Flu, 2024). However, issues such as *the right to disconnect*, notification management, and digital workloads are rarely explicitly discussed. The HWB-PWS scale (Parent-Lamarche et al., 2023) has indeed begun to integrate welfare aspects in HRM, and the Digital Well-Being scale (Arslankara et al., 2022) provides a measure of healthy digital behaviour. However, both still stand alone without integration into a performance-oriented work system.

Overall, these findings show that the literature on HPWS, digital well-being, and sustainable HRM is still running in parallel without a clear common ground. This gap opens a new framework that integrates HPWS practices with digital well-being strategies—Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS)—which is projected to address the unique needs of Generation Z, while bridging high-performance goals with sustainable digital well-being (Qureshi et al., 2020; Human8, 2025). Explain on Figure 1.

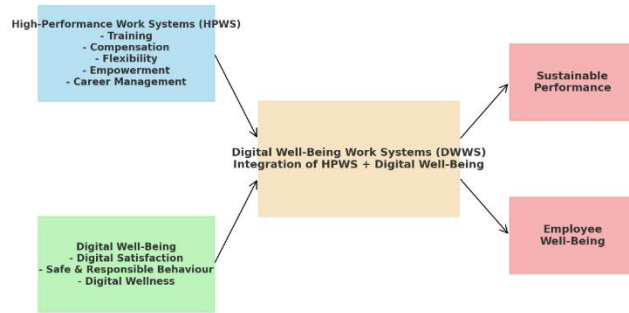


Figure.1 Integration HPWS and Digital Well Being

Conceptual Framework: Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS)

Integration premise. We *cross-mapped* the HPWS practice and the digital well-being protective mechanism to derive the six dimensions of DWWS. The basic logic: performance drivers (HPWS) are combined with protective lenses (DWBs) so that performance targets do not trigger excessive digital loads (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Tarafdar et al., 2015; Parent-Lamarche et al., 2023; Arslankara et al., 2022). Explain on Table 1.

Table 1. Cross Mapping HPWS and Digital Well Being

Dimensi DWWS	HPWS Asal	DWB Pendamping	Source
D1. Digitalized Training & Career Development	Training & Career Management	Digital Literacy & Digital Satisfaction	Becker & Huselid (1998); Jiang et al. (2012); Parent-Lamarche et al. (2023); Arslankara et al. (2022)
D2. Responsible Digital Flexibility	Work Flexibility	Right to Disconnect & Healthy Boundaries	Derks et al. (2014); Derks & Bakker (2014); Mazmanian et al. (2013); Parent-Lamarche et al. (2023)
D3. Empowerment with Digital Mindfulness	Empowerment & Autonomy	Mindfulness & Technostress Management	Boxall & Macky (2009); Tarafdar et al. (2015); Reinecke & Basto-Fleitas (2021)
D4. Reward for Healthy Digital Behaviour	Compensation & Rewards	Safe & Responsible Digital Behaviour	Lepak et al. (2006); Ayyagari et al. (2011); Arslankara et al. (2022)
D5. Safe-by-Design Performance Management	Performance Management	Digital Wellness Metrics & Fatigue	Peccei et al. (2013); Ragu-Nathan et al. (2008); Parker et al. (2017)
D6. Inclusive & Ethical Digital Climate	OHS & Diversity Climate	Digital Civility & Inclusion	Pfeffer (1998); Parent-Lamarche et al. (2023); Qureshi et al. (2020)

Based on cross mapping, the Six dimensions of DWWS were obtained (synthesis results):

1. Digitalized Training & Career Development training/careers that include digital literacy & ethics, anti-overload micro-learning, and coaching on the healthy use of digital tools (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Jiang et al., 2012; Arslankara et al., 2022).
2. Responsible Digital Flexibility—work flexibility accompanied by digital communication limitations (*quiet hours*, SLA response, *right to disconnect*) to prevent *after-hours intrusion* (Derks et al., 2014; Derks & Bakker, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Parent-Lamarche et al., 2023).
3. Empowerment with Digital Mindfulness—autonomy/participation accompanied by digital mindfulness training and *check-in* of the burden of technology to reduce overload and improve *flow* (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Tarafdar et al., 2015; Reinecke & Basto-Fleitas, 2021).
4. Reward for Healthy Digital Behaviour—rewards/incentives for safe and ethical digital behaviours (email etiquette, data security, *non-overtime spamming*) to align the performance culture with digital safety (Lepak et al., 2006; Ayyagari et al., 2011; Arslankara et al., 2022).
5. Safe-by-Design Performance Management—KPIs, sprint rhythms, and feedback that incorporate digital load metrics (notifications, synchronous meetings, *deep work* time) to prevent work intensification (Peccei et al., 2013; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Parker et al., 2017).
6. Inclusive & Ethical Digital Climate—digital politeness/inclusion guidelines, online harassment reporting channels, and equitable access to tools to maintain psychological safety (Pfeffer, 1998; Parent-Lamarche et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2020).

A succinct proposition. These six dimensions mediate the HPWS-performance relationship by reducing technostress and increasing engagement, resulting in dual outcomes: sustainable performance (organization) and

employee digital well-being (individual), especially in Gen Z workers (Tarafdar et al., 2015; Qureshi et al., 2020; Human8, 2025).

The Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS) framework contributes to human resource management theory by expanding the traditional boundaries of the High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) concept. Whereas HPWS originally emphasized productivity through integrated HR practices (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Boxall & Macky, 2009), DWWS reconceptualizes performance as an outcome that must coexist with employees' psychological and digital well-being. This theoretical shift bridges a long-standing gap between the strategic HRM literature, which often prioritizes efficiency, and the technostress literature, which primarily focuses on digital strain without linking it to systemic HRM mechanisms (Tarafdar et al., 2015; Ayyagari et al., 2011). In doing so, DWWS introduces a hybrid paradigm that unites both streams under the lens of Sustainable HRM, extending it with a digital dimension that has been largely overlooked in prior research (Bai, 2024; Flu, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, DWWS positions digital well-being as an essential job resource within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, emphasizing its motivational role in buffering against digital overload and sustaining engagement. This integrative stance enriches the sustainability discourse by framing employee well-being not as an ancillary concern but as a structural component of high-performance systems. Consequently, DWWS represents a value-based evolution of HPWS that aligns performance excellence with human flourishing in digitally intensive contexts.

Practically, the DWWS model provides organizations—particularly those employing Generation Z workforces—with a structured pathway to balance performance demands with digital well-being. The six DWWS dimensions translate theoretical principles into actionable HRM practices: integrating digital literacy into career training, enforcing quiet hours and response service level agreements (SLAs), embedding digital mindfulness within empowerment programs, developing incentive systems that reward healthy digital behavior, incorporating digital load metrics into performance reviews, and fostering ethical, inclusive digital work climates. Collectively, these practices offer a holistic HRM blueprint that supports both sustainable engagement and psychological resilience in technology-saturated workplaces.

Moreover, DWWS aligns with global recommendations such as those by the World Economic Forum (2024) and Human8 (2025), which emphasize the importance of balancing digital intensity with human well-being. By operationalizing this principle, DWWS transforms abstract well-being ideals into measurable HRM components, making it highly relevant for multinational firms navigating hybrid or remote work transitions.

In sum, DWWS advances HRM scholarship by reframing digital well-being as a strategic performance enabler rather than a peripheral wellness concern. It offers a robust conceptual foundation for future empirical studies exploring how organizations can sustain high performance while safeguarding the mental health of the digital workforce. These steps are expected to be able to maintain engagement, productivity, and digital well-being. Future research should empirically validate the DWWS framework by examining the mediating and moderating roles of its six dimensions within the HPWS–performance link using longitudinal designs. Studies could explore how digital flexibility and mindfulness buffer technostress and burnout, particularly in hybrid work settings. The development of a Digital Load Index (DLI) is also recommended to quantify digital workload and recovery capacity. Cross-cultural validation, especially in developing economies with dominant Generation Z workforces, would further enhance the global relevance and practical utility of DWWS as a model for sustainable HRM in the digital era

CONCLUSION

This narrative review concludes that integrating High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) with digital well-being is crucial to address the dual challenge of sustaining organizational performance and ensuring employee welfare, particularly for Generation Z. Through cross-mapping 22 articles, the proposed Digital Well-Being Work Systems (DWWS) framework introduces six integrated dimensions—digitalized training and career development, responsible digital flexibility, empowerment with digital mindfulness, reward for healthy digital behaviour, safe-by-design performance management, and inclusive & ethical digital climate. These dimensions not only mitigate technostress and digital fatigue but also strengthen engagement and innovation, thereby enabling dual outcomes: sustainable performance for organizations and digital well-being for employees. By bridging the gaps between HPWS, technostress research, and sustainable HRM, DWWS contributes both theoretically and practically as a novel paradigm for managing the Gen Z workforce in the digital era.

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