

REFRAMING STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: HUMAN CAPITAL AS A KEY MECHANISM OF ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES

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Abstract

Changes in the global organizational environment, characterized by technological turbulence, market uncertainty, sustainability pressures, and institutional complexity, have raised fundamental theoretical issues in the strategic management literature, particularly regarding how organizations build sustainable and adaptive capacity. Recent literature suggests that organizational failure is more often rooted in weak internal capabilities to execute and update strategy than in strategy formulation errors, making Strategic Human Resource Management a central issue in contemporary discourse. However, a review of the past five years has revealed the main limitations of the SHRM literature, which is still dominated by tests of direct relationships with performance or competitive advantage, with inconsistent empirical results and a lack of mechanistic explanations integrated with the resource-based view and dynamic capability. The literature also shows the fragmented use of mediating variables such as human capital without a coherent, process-based causal framework. This literature review aims to develop a conceptual synthesis that integrates SHRM, human capital, and dynamic capabilities into a consistent, mechanism-based explanatory framework. The approach used is an integrative literature review with a systematic search of reputable international databases for the period 2020–2025, accompanied by citation-chaining and thematic and configurative synthesis. The main conceptual findings confirm that SHRM functions as a process-based strategic architecture that shapes the quality of human capital as a microfoundation for the formation of dynamic organizational capabilities. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in clarifying the causal mechanisms of SHRM through human capital and expanding the theory's boundaries to digital and algorithmic contexts. Further research should examine time-based designs, cross-level mechanisms, and technological boundary conditions in the development of contemporary SHRM theory.

Keywords: : *strategic human resource management , human capital , dynamic capability , integrative literature review , mechanism-based theory*

INTRODUCTION

Global organizational environmental change is characterized by accelerated technological innovation, market volatility, sustainability pressures, and increasing institutional complexity, forcing organizations to adapt their strategies and internal processes continually. In this context, competitive advantage is no longer determined solely by market position or physical asset ownership but rather by an organization's ability to adaptively build and mobilize internal resources. Recent strategic management literature suggests that organizational failure to respond to change is more often caused by limited internal capacity to execute and adapt to strategy than by weaknesses in strategy formulation itself (Tece, 2023; Wu, 2025). This situation places strategic human resource management as an increasingly central theoretical issue in explaining how organizations build long-term resilience and adaptive capacities. In this development, Strategic Human Resource Management is positioned as an approach that emphasizes the alignment of human resource policies and practices with organizational strategy. Unlike traditional administrative approaches, SHRM is understood as a policy system designed to shape the competencies, behaviors, and commitments of human resources to align with the organization's strategic needs. Theoretical studies conducted over the past five years have confirmed that SHRM functions as a strategic architecture that directs organizational investments toward developing valuable and difficult-to-replicate internal capacities (Banazılı, 2024; Ulrich, 2024; Zahoor et al., 2025). However, although SHRM is normatively viewed as important, the literature also shows that the relationship between SHRM and organizational strategic outcomes is not always

consistent. The mainstream SHRM literature is dominated by two major theoretical approaches. The first approach is rooted in the resource-based view, which considers human resources as strategic assets with the potential to possess valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate, and non-substitutable characteristics. From this perspective, SHRM practices are understood as mechanisms that shape human capital as a source of competitive advantage (Barney et al., 2024; Wright et al., 2024). The second approach develops from a dynamic capability perspective, emphasizing an organization's ability to sense change, seize opportunities, and continuously reconfigure resources. Recent literature emphasizes that dynamic capabilities are key to maintaining strategic relevance in rapidly changing environments (Teece, 2023; Pitelis et al., 2023). These two approaches are often used separately, although they are conceptually complementary in nature.

However, the empirical literature from the past three years has revealed several fundamental limitations. First, many studies still position SHRM as a direct antecedent to organizational performance, effectiveness, or competitive advantage. Meta-analyses and cross-sector studies indicate that the strength of this direct influence tends to vary and is often weakened when the internal context and mechanisms are considered (Ranalan, 2025; Knies et al., 2024). Second, the use of mediating variables such as human capital, organizational commitment, and organizational learning remains fragmented. Some studies examine a single mediator without explaining its relationship to a broader theoretical framework, while others combine several mediators without elucidating the causal logic between these internal mechanisms (Agha et al., 2025; Hossain et al., 2025). Consequently, the transformation process from SHRM policies to organizational adaptive capacity remains unclear.

Another prominent limitation is the absence of a robust mechanistic explanation of how SHRM practices are converted into dynamic organizational capabilities. The RBV provides an explanation of the strategic value of human resources but is relatively weak in explaining the process of resource renewal in a dynamic environment. In contrast, the dynamic capability perspective emphasizes the adaptation process but often neglects the human capital-based microfoundations that enable this process to operate effectively. Recent empirical studies have shown that human capital plays a crucial role as a microfoundation of dynamic capabilities. However, this relationship has rarely been systematically tested or discussed within a comprehensive framework (Peng et al., 2024; Hina et al., 2025). This indicates a significant theoretical gap in the literature.

Based on this gap, this literature review article aims to develop a conceptual synthesis that integrates SHRM, the resource-based view (RBV), and dynamic capabilities into a coherent explanatory framework. This study explicitly positions human capital as the primary internal mechanism that bridges SHRM policies with the formation of organizational adaptive capabilities. The theoretical contribution offered lies not only in cross-theory integration but also in affirming the processual nature of SHRM as a trigger for the transformation of human resources into dynamic capabilities of the firm. This approach is expected to enrich the SHRM discourse by providing a more mechanistic, adaptive, and relevant explanation of contemporary organizational challenges.

Structurally, this article begins with an explanation of the literature review methodology used to ensure the academic rigor. The next section outlines the main theoretical foundations underlying the study, followed by a literature synthesis highlighting the patterns of findings, contradictions, and conceptual gaps. The article then develops an integrative conceptual framework that positions human capital as a key mechanism in the relationship between SHRM and dynamic capability. The final section discusses the theoretical contributions and a relevant further research agenda for the development of strategic management and human resource literature.

METHODOLOGY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Review Design and Rationale

This study employs an integrative literature review approach, combined with a systematic search procedure and configurative synthesis techniques. This design choice is based on the article's primary objective, which is to reframe Strategic Human Resource Management as a strategic mechanism that works through human capital to build dynamic capability. The integrative approach allows for the integration and reinterpretation of conceptual and empirical evidence across research traditions, which is relevant to the multidisciplinary nature of SHRM studies that exhibit significant theoretical fragmentation (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). Unlike systematic reviews, which focus on aggregating findings or estimating quantitative effects, integrative literature reviews are designed to identify conceptual patterns, challenge dominant assumptions, and construct coherent mechanistic explanations of the relationships between constructs (Pauwels et al., 2024). This approach is well-suited for theory development and causal reconstruction, particularly when the available literature utilizes diverse and incomparable construct definitions, levels of analysis and empirical contexts (Chong, 2025). To maintain methodological rigor and transparency, this study adopts the principles of design decisions, selection documentation, and review

reporting in contemporary management research, emphasizing the clarity of scope, logic of literature selection, and explicit synthesis techniques (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). This section serves as a conceptual foundation that bridges the rationality of review design with an operational explanation of how literature is collected, filtered, and analyzed systematically so that the resulting synthesis can be academically justified.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across several major academic databases to ensure coverage of the literature on management, human resources and organizational strategy. The databases used included Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ABI INFORM or ProQuest Business, EBSCO Business Source, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, and Taylor and Francis Online. These databases were selected based on the predominance of publications on SHRM, human capital, and dynamic capability in reputable international journals that are consistently indexed within them (Pauwels et al., 2024; Ng et al., 2025). The search strategy was developed iteratively using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators representing three main clusters: SHRM, human capital, and dynamic capability. The search focused on titles, abstracts, and keywords to increase the precision of the initial results. In addition to the keyword-based search, citation chaining techniques were used through forward and backward citation searches to identify key articles with high theoretical influence that did not always appear in the initial keyword-based search results (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). This approach ensures that the search process is not only broad in scope but also sensitive to the dynamics of conceptual discourse, which often evolves through core reference articles and theoretical anchor papers.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain the quality and relevance of the synthesized literature, inclusion and exclusion criteria were explicitly established before the selection process commenced. The articles included in the synthesis must be peer-reviewed publications in reputable academic journals, either conceptual or empirical. Substantively, articles must address at least one core construct, namely SHRM, human capital, or dynamic capability, and include an explanation of the relationships between constructs or mechanisms relevant to the article's objectives (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). Empirical studies require a clear methodological design and adequate reporting of results to enable the extraction of conceptual information, research context, and key findings. Conceptual studies should present explicit theoretical arguments, clear construct definitions, and systematically traceable contribution claims to the literature. Non-academic publications, short editorials without theory development, and articles that only peripherally mention core constructs were excluded from the main synthesis, in line with recommendations for improving the quality of reviews in international management journals (Pauwels et al., 2024). These criteria serve as a foundation to ensure that the resulting synthesis is not contaminated by methodologically weak or conceptually irrelevant literature.

Time Frame of Publication

The primary publication span used in this review was 2020–2025. This span was chosen because it represents the most recent phase of literature highlighting the shift in HR's role from an administrative function to an organizational strategic architecture, as well as the increasing attention to dynamic capabilities in response to the uncertainty and complexity of the global business environment (Sauer & Seuring, 2023; Ng et al., 2025). To maintain theoretical continuity, several classic works before 2020 were selectively included as conceptual foundations, particularly when they served as key theoretical references still referenced in the current literature. However, the synthesized empirical evidence is prioritized from the last three years to reflect contemporary organizational conditions and is contextually relevant (Pauwels et al., 2024).

Screening and Selection Process

The literature selection process was conducted through structured and documented stages as follows. The first stage involved screening titles and abstracts to identify their initial relevance to the study focus. This screening was conducted by two independent reviewers to minimize the selection bias. Disagreements were resolved through focused discussions based on the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria (van der Braak et al., 2023). The second stage involved a full-text assessment of articles that passed the initial screening process. At this stage, articles were evaluated based on construct fit, clarity of causal relationships, and their contribution to the understanding of SHRM, human capital, and dynamic capability mechanisms. All selection decisions and

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exclusion reasons were systematically documented to maintain transparency and enable replication of the review process, as recommended by contemporary review reporting practices (Sahni, 2023; Sauer & Seuring, 2023). This stepwise approach ensures that the synthesized literature is not only topically relevant but also conceptually and methodologically robust.

Literature Synthesis Technique

The literature synthesis was conducted using two complementary layers. The first layer was a mechanism-based thematic synthesis, where articles were coded according to patterns of relationships, internal processes, and boundary conditions that explain how SHRM practices influence human capital formation and how human capital contributes to the development of dynamic capabilities. This approach enabled the identification of consistent patterns and empirical contradictions across organizational contexts and industry sectors (Chong, 2025). The second layer is a configurative synthesis that integrates the thematic findings into a coherent conceptual framework. This stage focuses on aligning construct definitions, establishing consistency across the levels of analysis, and reconstructing causal pathways that position human capital as the primary internal mechanism bridging SHRM and dynamic capability. The results of this synthesis form the basis for developing an integrative conceptual framework and the theoretical contributions offered by this article, in line with the practice of theory-building reviews in the strategic management literature (Sauer & Seuring, 2023; Pauwels et al., 2024).

Table 1. Summary of Literature Search Strategy

Component	Description
Database	Scopus; Web of Science; ProQuest Business; EBSCO Business Source; ScienceDirect; Emerald; SpringerLink; Wiley; Taylor and Francis
Keyword clusters	Strategic human resource management; human capital ; dynamic capabilities
Search field	Title; abstract; keywords
Additional techniques	Citation chaining ; forward and backward citation
Year range	2020–2025

Table 2. Literature Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication type	Peer reviewed journal articles	Short editorial; popular opinion; proceedings without peer review
Focus on substance	SHRM, human capital , or dynamic capability with a discussion of mechanisms	Peripheral mention of constructs
Study design	Conceptual with clear theoretical arguments or empirical with explicit methods	Unclear methods or inadequate reporting
Language	English	Other languages
Theoretical relevance	Contribute to the explanation of relationships or mechanisms	Not relevant to the purpose of synthesis

Theoretical relevance Contribute to the explanation of relationships or mechanisms Not relevant to the purpose of synthesis

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This theoretical foundation positions Strategic Human Resource Management as a strategic mechanism that works through the formation of human capital to strengthen an organization’s dynamic capability. SHRM is not understood as a collection of administrative practices but as a strategic architecture that orchestrates human resources to produce sustainable adaptive capacity. The theoretical framework is constructed argumentatively by integrating major theories in the contemporary literature, particularly dynamic capability, strategic human capital, the renewal of the resource-based view, and the micro-foundations perspective, to explain causal processes that have so far remained fragmented. This approach allows for a critical assessment of the basic assumptions, theoretical positions, explanatory power, and conceptual limitations of each theoretical lens, so that the conceptual foundation of the article lies in the integration of mechanisms, not simply in the coexistence of theories. The main theoretical reference is limited to the last three years (2023–2026).

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Table 3. Theoretical foundations, core claims, and relevance to the article's focus

No	Main theoretical lens	Main theoretical references	Basic assumptions of the theory	Position in contemporary literature	The power to explain phenomena	Conceptual limitations	Direct relevance to the focus of the article
1	Dynamic capability as a theory of strategic adaptation	Teece (2025), Pitelis et al. (2024), Moi et al. (2026)	repeated resource renewals.	It has become the dominant lens for explaining competition in turbulence, including global and phygital contexts.	Describe transformation, resource orchestration, and strategic renewal as processes	Definitions are often broad, risking overlap with other capabilities if the microfoundations are not clarified.	Becoming a target capability built through SHRM and mediated by the quality of human capital
2	Time and process based SHRM	Boon et al. (2025), Zahoor et al. (2025)	HR systems work through accumulation, sequence, and time lags, not instant effects.	Correcting the static tendencies of SHRM and forcing a reading of mechanisms and boundary conditions	Explaining variation in SHRM findings across studies through temporal and configurational logic	Demanding clarity in the definition of time- and process-sensitive design to avoid becoming a rhetorical label.	Locking the argument that SHRM forms human capital first, then adaptive capabilities are formed later
3	Strategic human capital and micro foundation agenda	Kryscynski et al. (2024), Schulze et al. (2024)	Value heterogeneity arises from the quality, scarcity, and strategic allocation of human capital.	Strengthening the micro agenda of the strategy foundation and shifting the focus from HR practices to human capital mechanisms is also important.	Describes the pathway from SHRM design to outcomes through competencies, knowledge and mobilization.	The challenge of measuring and separating the effects of human capital stock versus its development process	Positioning human capital as an internal engine that bridges SHRM and dynamic capability
4	Resource orchestration and RBV updates	Bhandari et al. (2023), Öztürk & Bağış (2025)	Excellence is not just about having resources but also about orchestrating acquisitions, bundling, leveraging, and managing external dependencies.	Strengthening the RBV to be more dynamic and sensitive to environmental pressures	It provides causal language to explain the conversion of resources into capabilities.	Cross-theoretical integration risks being eclectic if the core mechanisms are not selected rigorously.	Strengthening the reading of SHRM as an orchestration architecture that transforms HR investments into adaptive capabilities.
5	Dynamic managerial capabilities and microfoundations	Heubeck (2023), Baishya et al. (2025)	Organizational adaptive capabilities are based on cognition, competence, and managerial actions as micro-	Becoming a micro to macro bridge to explain the variations of sensing, seizing, transforming	This explains why organizations with similar resources can differ in the speed and quality of adaptation.	There is a risk of overlap with leadership and conceptual boundary issues if definitions are not clearly defined.	It emphasizes that effective SHRM requires building managerial human capital as a driver of capability

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			foundations.				orchestration.
6	Algorithmic management and SHRM in the AI era	Keegan & Meijerink (2025), Kim et al. (2025), Gong et al. (2024)	Algorithms are changing HR decision architecture, work control, and value-creation processes.	Going mainstream to explain HRM transformation in the AI and algorithmic era	It explains the changes in HR mechanisms from administration to governance and system design.	Issues of transparency, ethics, and algorithmic bias make generalization and operationalization difficult to achieve.	Clarifying why reframing SHRM is necessary so that human capital remains the basis of dynamic capabilities in AI-based organizations.
7	Digital transformation, resilience, and applied dynamic capabilities	Dubey et al. (2024), De Fano et al. (2025), Moi et al. (2026)	Dynamic capabilities are strengthened through alliances, digital transformation, AI dexterity, and hybrid resource orchestration.	Expanding DC on crisis, digital innovation ecosystem, and phygital	Explaining why adaptive capabilities emerge strongly in organizations that are able to integrate physical and digital assets	The risk of domination of certain contexts, so that boundary conditions need to be stated explicitly	Strengthening the claim that SHRM must build digital and coordinative human capital to keep DC resilient
8	Contemporary HRM, the relevance of science to practice, and the conceptual agenda	Paauwe & Voorde (2025), Lau et al. (2025), Liang & Li (2024), Ammirato et al. (2023)	A strong HR theory needs to remain relevant, testable, and able to provide a mechanism map to outcomes	Strengthening the impact agenda and conceptual framework of contemporary HRM	Justify the need for a conceptual synthesis that produces a research framework and an agenda.	Risk becomes normative when contributions are not condensed into mechanisms or boundary conditions.	Supports the integrative review option to bring together SHRM, human capital, and dynamic capability as an operational model.

The dynamic capability lens provides organizational-level answers to how excellence is sustained as the environment changes; however, this lens often requires micro-specific foundations to avoid becoming too broad an umbrella concept. This is where SHRM and human capital become important, as they provide the internal machinery that explains the origin of the capacity for sensing, seizing, and transforming. The Teece framework emphasizes iterative renewal as the core of strategy, and recent conceptual reviews extend its scope to global strategy and hybrid digital ecosystems. Time-based SHRM addresses a major problem in the SHRM literature: inconsistency in findings when studies treat HR systems as static objects. A temporal perspective emphasizes that HR practices operate through accumulation, implementation sequences, and lags in impact; therefore, mechanistic pathways need to be interpreted as processes. An agenda-based review framework also enforces the establishment of core mechanisms and boundary conditions, preventing the proposed model from adding variables without causal logic. Strategic human capital addresses the most crucial micro-question for this study: how HR investments are transformed into valuable resources that can be mobilized for adaptation. The editorial research agenda in this area emphasizes opportunities for theory development through refined definitions, levels of analysis, and empirical designs that test mechanisms rather than simply associations. This implies that placing human capital as the primary mediator is not a cosmetic choice but a theoretical one consistent with the direction of contemporary literature. The updated RBV, through resource orchestration and its integration with resource dependence, enriches the boundary conditions argument. SHRM can be understood as a system that orchestrates human capital; however, orchestration is only meaningful when organizations also face access constraints, dependencies, and external

pressures. A theoretical synthesis that bridges these two traditions helps explain when human capital investments generate real adaptive capabilities and when their effects are attenuated by such constraints. The changing architecture of HR in the AI era demands sharper reframing. Algorithmic management and algorithmic HRM are transforming decision-making and control processes, which can either strengthen or undermine human capital quality. Therefore, building dynamic capability through HRRM requires attention to algorithmic governance, digital competency, and coordinative capacity to ensure that adaptive capabilities are not fragile.

SYNTHESIS OF PRIOR LITERATURE

Consistent relationship patterns

The most consistent pathways indicate that SHRM and performance-oriented HR practices, such as HPWS, tend to enhance performance, innovation, resilience, and adaptive capabilities when the causal pathways run through internal mechanisms based on human capital. Empirical evidence in the innovation context confirms that the effect of HPWS on innovation capabilities is more stable when mediated by intellectual capital, including human capital, which helps explain the black box relationship between HR practices and innovation outcomes (Javed et al., 2023). Another finding confirms that the relationship between HPWS and product innovation is stronger when the dynamic capabilities framework is used to interpret the role of mediators that enable innovation, not just routine efficiency improvements (Alpkan et al., 2023). In the context of strategic HR capabilities, empirical literature shows that strategic human capabilities tend to be linked to performance by strengthening more adaptive organizational capabilities, so that the relationship between SHRM and performance rarely stands alone without the process of internal capability formation (Ulrich et al., 2024).

Theoretical debates and empirical contradictions

The main debate arises from two issues. First, the literature differs on whether SHRM directly impacts performance or is positioned as a trigger for capability-based mechanisms. Empirical evidence in the area of organizational resilience suggests that SHRM practices work most effectively when synergized with organizational culture, meaning that the effects of SHRM are conditional and do not automatically appear in all organizations (Georgescu et al., 2024). Second, there is a contradiction related to the technology. On the one hand, smart HRM and the application of technology in HR can drive innovation when organizations can manage their practices strategically and purposefully, reinforcing the notion that technology works as an enabler, not a substitute, for strategic HR design (Al Faouri et al., 2024). On the other hand, evidence on algorithmic HRM emphasizes that automating HR decisions can enhance organizational success but also opens up conceptual risks related to bias, governance, and the quality of strategic decisions, making outcomes highly dependent on system design and control (Alabdali et al., 2024).

Internal mechanisms that often appear but are not yet integrated

Four internal mechanisms appear repeatedly but are often treated separately, so their integration is still weak. The first mechanism is intellectual capital and its derivatives, particularly human capital and knowledge-sharing capacity. Evidence suggests that knowledge-based HR drives organizational performance, and its influence changes according to the state of intellectual capital as support for learning and coordination processes (Mebratie, 2025). This mechanism is also evident in studies that position knowledge-based HR practices as a bridge to open innovation through more dynamic organizational processes, enabling HR to function as a capability driver rather than simply an administrative practice (Alameddine, 2025). The second mechanism is resilience and agility as forms of adaptive capabilities that serve as intermediate outcomes. Empirical studies have shown that SHRM influences agility and resilience in supply chains or operations when combined with technological capabilities such as AI, confirming SHRM's mechanistic pathway to cross-functional adaptive capabilities (Yamin et al., 2024). The third mechanism is climate and culture as reinforcement or weakening of causal pathways. Evidence in the context of green HRM suggests that green dynamic capabilities are often used as a mediating mechanism between green HR practices and employee engagement, with an innovative climate as a condition that modifies the strength of the relationship (Mahmood & Ahmed, 2025). This finding parallels evidence of organizational resilience, which places culture as a prerequisite for SHRM practices to translate into adaptive capabilities (Georgescu et al., 2024). The fourth mechanism is continuous learning as a dynamic capability that underpins the digital transformation. Evidence from the healthcare context confirms that sustained learning can be understood as a dynamic capability that enables organizations to reorganize resources for digital adaptation (Starke and Ludviga, 2025).

Conceptual gaps that require theory development

The first gap is the weak integration of the levels of analysis. Many studies have integrated the construct of HR practices at the organizational level with innovation or performance outcomes at the organizational level. However, the mechanisms that operate at the individual and team levels are often not explicitly modeled. Studies of HPWS in the service sector indicate that HPWS impact service performance through psychological pathways oriented toward individual capabilities, necessitating an integrative model that coherently links microfoundations and organizational outcomes (Wang et al., 2024). The second gap is the specification of the boundary conditions in the digital era. Findings on smart HRM and algorithmic HRM suggest that technology can enhance organizational innovation and success; however, the theory lacks sufficient precision to explain when automation enhances human capital and when it erodes it through excessive control or distorted judgment (Al Faouri et al., 2024; Alabdali et al., 2024). The third gap is fragmentation among innovation, resilience, and sustainability pathways. Evidence from green HRM demonstrates the role of green dynamic capabilities as a mechanism, whereas the resilience literature emphasizes the synergy between SHRM practices and culture. The two are rarely linked within a consistent theoretical architecture to explain how SHRM builds adaptive capabilities that are simultaneously innovative and resilient (Mahmood & Ahmed, 2025; Georgescu et al. 2024). The fourth gap is the disconnect between resource orchestration and HR design. Several studies have captured dynamic capabilities in the context of sustainability and competitiveness; however, there is still a lack of operational explanations of how specific configurations of HR practices generate concrete orchestration capabilities at the process level. The literature that views dynamic capabilities as key to sustainability and excellence emphasizes the need to tie HR mechanisms to renewal routines, not just to end results (Bari et al., 2024; Dukhaykh & Alangri, 2026).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

The proposed conceptual framework positions Strategic Human Resource Management as a system architecture of practices that shape the quality and readiness of human capital to carry out the adaptive functions of the organization. Human capital is positioned as an internal mechanism that transforms strategic HR investments into an organizational capacity for sensing, seizing, and transforming, which is the core of dynamic capability (Teece, 2025). With this position, SHRM is not treated as a direct driver of performance but rather as a strategic input design that works through changing capabilities, aligning with the literature agenda that encourages a more dynamic and time-based reading of SHRM (Boon et al., 2025) and is based on a framework of mechanisms and boundary conditions (Zahoor et al., 2025).

The relationship between constructs and theory-based causal logic

1. of SHRM to human capital

stems from the idea that a consistent and complementary configuration of HR practices, such as selection, training, development, performance management, and rewards, will increase the stock of competencies, knowledge, and coordinative capacity. Empirical evidence in the context of HPWS indicates that high-performance work system practices are correlated with innovation capability, and this pathway is stronger when intellectual capital, including human capital, acts as a mediator (Javed et al., 2023).

2. From Human Capital to Dynamic Capabilities:

At this stage, human capital is understood as the microfoundation that enables organizations to carry out sensing, seizing, and transforming activities. Empirical evidence suggests that dynamic capabilities can act as a mediator connecting HPWS to innovation, as technological capability updates and adaptive capabilities bridge HR systems and innovation outputs (Alpkan et al., 2023).

3. SHRM to dynamic capabilities through human capital.

This framework emphasizes the sequential mediation. SHRM shapes human capital as a strategic resource, and human capital strengthens an organization's capability to adapt. Evidence across domains consistently indicates that SHRM more stably explains adaptive outcomes, such as resilience, agility, and process renewal, when clear internal mechanisms are in place. For example, SHRM practices are related to organizational resilience, and their influence becomes more convincing when organizational culture is considered a reinforcing context for this pathway (Georgescu et al., 2024).

4. Boundary conditions that strengthen or weaken causal pathways

This framework proposes three main boundary conditions that are supported by contemporary literature. Cultural context and innovation climate

Evidence in the GHRM domain suggests that green-oriented dynamic capabilities can mediate the relationship between green HR practices and engagement, while an innovative climate strengthens this relationship (Mahmood & Ahmed, 2025). This indicates that an organizational climate that encourages experimentation and learning helps SHRM to convert human capital into adaptive capabilities.

Technology and AI enablers in work processes

The integration of SHRM and AI has been shown to be relevant in explaining supply chain agility and resilience, indicating that technology can be a powerful enabler of SHRM's path to adaptive capabilities (Yamin et al., 2024). However, the literature also emphasizes the dark side of algorithmic governance, as algorithmic HRM has the potential to increase decision effectiveness while simultaneously risking bias, legitimacy, and the degradation of strategic decision quality (Gong et al., 2024; Alabdali et al., 2024).

Continuous learning as an operational bridge to transformation

Sustained learning can be understood as a form of dynamic capability that allows organizations to reconfigure services and processes in digital transformation, thus clarifying how learning-ready human capital becomes a prerequisite for capability renewal (Starke & Ludviga, 2025).

Differences and advantages of the frame compared to the previous model

This framework differs from dominant models that examine the direct influence of SHRM on performance or innovation by positioning human capital as the core mechanism and dynamic capability as the outcome of organizational-level capabilities that are more closely aligned with the demands of environmental turbulence. It also excels over single mediation models that often separate innovation, resilience, or digital transformation pathways by integrating all three into a consistent, adaptive capability logic. Furthermore, it incorporates technological boundary conditions and algorithmic governance as contemporary elements that explain why the effects of SHRM may be strengthened or weakened in AI- and digital-enabled organizations (Gong et al., 2024; Yamin et al., 2024).

Theoretical propositions

- P1. SHRM practices are positively related to the quality of an organization's human capital. (Javed et al., 2023)
- P2. The quality of human capital is positively related to the formation of an organization's dynamic capabilities. (Teece, 2025; Starke & Ludviga, 2025)
- P3. SHRM is positively related to dynamic capabilities through the mediation of human capital. (Boon et al., 2025; Zahoor et al., 2025)
- P4. Dynamic capability mediates the relationship between high-performance HR practices and innovation. (Alpkan et al., 2023)
- P5. Organizational culture and innovation climate strengthen the SHRM pathway toward adaptive outcomes through capability-enhancing mechanisms. (Georgescu et al., 2024; Mahmood & Ahmed, 2025)
- P6. The integration of technology and AI strengthens the influence of SHRM on adaptive capabilities, such as agility and resilience; however, the effect depends on the design of governance and controls. (Yamin et al., 2024; Gong et al., 2024; Alabdali et al., 2024)
- P7. Continuous learning strengthens the conversion of human capital into dynamic capabilities during digital transformation. (Starke & Ludviga, 2025)

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The proposed framework offers a measurable theoretical contribution by shifting the focus of SHRM from a direct relationship with organizational outcomes to a mechanism-based explanation. SHRM is positioned as a strategic architecture that shapes the quality and configuration of human capital, and these qualities serve as microfoundations that enable dynamic capabilities to form and operate stably in turbulence. This direction addresses the temporal agenda and framework of SHRM reviews, which demand a more precise reading of processes, boundary conditions, and explanations of why SHRM outcomes are often inconsistent across studies. A major contribution to mainstream theory development comes from repositioning SHRM as a process-based strategic architecture rather than a static package of practices. The temporal perspective emphasizes that SHRM effects depend on the accumulation, sequence of implementation, and lag in impact, necessitating that theory formulation incorporates the time dimension as an explanatory component and not simply as a control variable. In

this way, the framework reduces the ambiguity surrounding why SHRM and outcome relationships are often inconsistent due to the misalignment of time horizons and internal capability formation processes. Contributions to clarifying causal mechanisms are demonstrated by breaking down the SHRM black box into human capital formation pathways and microactivation pathways of dynamic capability foundations. The strategic human capital literature calls for a shift from associations to examining mechanisms and boundary conditions, so that the separation of human capital stocks, including reskilling and knowledge integration, becomes a prerequisite for SHRM models to have stable and testable explanatory power across contexts. Cross-theoretical integration is achieved by bringing together four lenses that have often operated in parallel. The dynamic capability paradigm explains why organizations require iterative renewal capabilities. The dynamic managerial capabilities perspective explains variations in orchestration quality through the decisions and cognition of managers. The strategic human capital perspective explains how human capital quality becomes a source of heterogeneity. The synthesis of RBV and resource dependence theory explains the boundary conditions of resource value when access and external pressures constrain choices. This integration produces an explanatory architecture that explicitly connects the micro and macro levels and positions SHRM as a system design that produces micro inputs for capability renewal. This contribution to boundary-spanning theory adds insight into two contemporary areas that are often sources of bias and contradictions. First, algorithmic technology in HR is transforming decision-making and control architectures, making the quality of human capital dependent on governance, transparency, and accountability. Second, digital transformation demands the redefinition of human capital as the capacity for reskilling and orchestrating hybrid assets. By incorporating these boundary conditions, the framework not only broadens the generalizability of the theory but also improves the precision of when technology enhances adaptation and when it erodes organizational learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A theoretically sound follow-up research agenda should focus on the question of when and through what sequence of processes SHRM actually produces changes in human capital quality that are strong enough to trigger dynamic capabilities, rather than simply producing short-term improvements in outcomes. A pressing research question is how impact lag, practice accumulation, and the sequence of HR practice implementation shape the trajectory of adaptive capability over time and when these effects weaken due to competency erosion or strategic shifts. This focus is important because the literature confirms that SHRM research remains weak in theorizing temporal effects, resulting in an inadequate understanding of changes and relationships over time (Boon et al., 2025; Zahoor et al., 2025). Future research should delve deeper into the internal mechanisms that have emerged repeatedly but are rarely integrated, particularly the human capital configuration that enables the sensing, seizing, and transforming dimensions. A priority research question is which competency configuration is most decisive and whether the combination of digital reskilling, data literacy, knowledge integration skills, cross-functional coordination skills, and managerial capacity produces a different quality of adaptive capability than narrower competency configurations. The strategic human capital literature has called for a shift from associations to more precise mechanisms and boundary conditions; however, empirical designs often stop at aggregate measures of human capital (Kryscynski et al., 2024; Schulze et al., 2025). Empirical evidence in the HPWS also suggests a mediating pathway for intellectual capital in driving innovation capabilities; however, there is still significant room for a more explicit examination of skill configurations and complementarities (Javed et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, future research should examine how digital transformation and HR technology governance alter the causal logic of SHRM. A valuable new research question is when smart HRM becomes an enabler of innovation and learning and when algorithmic HRM creates distortions that erode HR decision quality, perceptions of fairness, and organizational learning. The literature on algorithmic technology has shifted these issues to the center of contemporary HRM discussions and emphasizes the need to understand functional affordances, not just technology adoption (Gong et al., 2025; Gong et al., 2024; Keegan & Meijerink, 2025). Empirical findings suggest that smart HRM can strengthen the relationship between technology application and innovation performance, while the use of algorithmic HRM can influence strategic HR decision-making, making the examination of governance, transparency, and accountability a boundary condition that can no longer be ignored (Al Faouri et al., 2024; Alabdali et al., 2024). The suggested methodological approach needs to move from cross-sectional designs to designs that can capture processes, trajectories, and dynamics across levels. Longitudinal panel, cross-lagged, latent growth, and event-based designs are needed to examine the impact lags and sequences of HR practice implementation, as required by the SHRM temporal agenda (Boon et al., 2025). Multilevel SEM is needed to avoid confounding micro and macro pathways, for example, when human capital is

understood as individual and team capabilities, whereas dynamic capability is understood as organizational routines. Research also needs to test measurement invariance across contexts to ensure the comparability of findings across sectors and countries. Validation studies of relational HR systems provide examples of how micro-relational foundations can be operationalized, thus opening up opportunities to test the mechanisms of coordination, knowledge integration, and collaboration as channels for strategic human capital formation (Zhang et al., 2025). The development of analytical levels also needs to be expanded to network and ecosystem contexts, not just single organizations alone. A key research question is how SHRM and human capital contribute to dynamic capabilities when organizations rely on collaboration, alliances, and supply chains, particularly during crises and turbulence. Empirical evidence suggests that the combination of alliances and digital transformation can enhance supply chain capability and performance during crises, necessitating an explanation of the role of digital talent, digital culture, and cross-organizational coordination as part of the dynamic capability mechanism (Dubey et al., 2024; Yamin et al., 2024). Regarding internal resilience, empirical findings indicate that SHRM practices and organizational culture are associated with it. Therefore, further research needs to examine culture, innovation climate, and learning conditions as converters that transform SHRM investments into adaptive capabilities rather than simply as control variables (Georgescu et al., 2024; Mahmood & Ahmed, 2025).

Another valuable direction for further research is to expand the mechanisms to include continuous learning, open innovation, and sustainability, as these three often appear separately yet have the potential to serve as mutually reinforcing pathways to adaptive capability. Empirical findings suggest that continuous learning is a dynamic capability that enables digital transformation. Therefore, SHRM research needs to examine how training design, career systems, and knowledge-based practices foster learning habits, adaptive mindsets, and knowledge integration capabilities, which subsequently strengthen organizational capabilities (Starke & Ludviga, 2025; Paauwe & van de Voorde, 2025). In the innovation context, empirical findings suggest that knowledge-based HR practices mediate the influence of leadership on open innovation. Therefore, future research should explicitly link these channels to the dynamic capability framework to avoid fragmentation of the mechanisms (Alameddine, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This conclusion confirms the article's scholarly value by reframing Strategic Human Resource Management as a process-based strategic architecture that works through the formation of human capital to enable the organization's dynamic capability to develop sustainably. By shifting the focus from direct relationships to mechanism-based explanations, this study provides theoretical clarity to the inconsistencies in empirical findings that have characterized the SHRM literature. A key contribution lies in the cross-theoretical integration that brings together the perspectives of strategic human capital, dynamic capability, the renewed resource-based view, and micro-managerial foundations into a coherent and testable explanatory framework. The relevance of this article for future literature development lies in its ability to provide a precise conceptual foundation for process-based, time-based, and cross-level analysis. The proposed framework opens up space for examining adaptive mechanisms in digital, algorithmic, and high-uncertainty contexts, while simultaneously encouraging a shift in the SHRM research agenda from measuring practices to a deeper understanding of how and when strategic HR systems create organizational adaptive capacity. Thus, this article contributes not only to strengthening theoretical rigor but also to shaping future research directions that are more integrated, contextual, and strategically relevant to the field.

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