

Human-Centered Leadership and Employee Well-Being: Evidence from the Digital Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has reshaped how leaders and employees interact, raising both opportunities for flexibility and risks of technostress and digital fatigue. This article synthesizes 25 recent studies (2019-2026) to examine how human-centered leadership relates to employee well-being in digital workplaces. Using a narrative literature review approach, evidence was drawn from journal articles and conference proceedings indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, selected through a structured identification, screening, and eligibility process. The synthesis shows that human-centered leadership consistently predicts higher employee well-being across sectors and countries, operating through three mediating pathways: psychological safety and digital trust, work engagement and digital self-efficacy, and technostress mitigation. These relationships are moderated by work arrangement (remote, hybrid, on-site), organizational digital readiness, and industry context. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources model, Conservation of Resources theory, and Self-Determination Theory, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework linking human-centered leadership to employee well-being in digitalized settings. The novelty of this article lies in its explicit integration of digital and human-centered leadership literatures, its cross-sectoral synthesis, and its attention to underexplored moderators. Findings offer theoretical propositions for future empirical testing and practical guidance for organizations seeking to humanize digital transformation while safeguarding employee well-being.

Keywords: human-centered leadership; employee well-being; digital workplace; digital leadership; technostress; psychological safety.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way organizations operate, the way jobs are designed, and the way leaders interact with employees. The presence of artificial intelligence, automation, cloud-based collaboration platforms, and hybrid work models has shifted the boundaries of work space and time that have been conventionally understood (Selimović et al., 2021; Chatterjee et al., 2023). On the one hand, digitalization offers unprecedented efficiency, flexibility, and accessibility of information. But on the other hand, the acceleration of digitalization also poses new challenges for the psychological well-being of employees, including uninterrupted workload (always-on culture), digital fatigue, technostress, and declining quality of human interaction in the workplace (Alkhayyal & Bajaba, 2024; Farmanesh et al., 2025). This phenomenon places



leadership as a key variable that determines whether digital transformation will be a resource that empowers employees, or a demand that erodes their well-being.

It is in this context that the idea of human-centered leadership is gaining greater relevance. Human-centered leadership can be understood as a leadership approach that places the subjective needs, values, and experiences of employees at the center of organizational decision-making, including in designing and implementing digital technology in the workplace (Diniz et al., 2025; Barabanova et al., 2025). In contrast to digital leadership approaches that tend to be oriented towards technical mastery and technological efficiency alone, human-centered leadership emphasizes empathy, open communication, procedural justice, psychological support, and the active involvement of leaders in maintaining human meaning and connection in the midst of an increasingly technology-mediated work environment (Gaur, 2025; Nazir et al., 2026). Recent studies have shown that this kind of leadership style plays an important role in suppressing technostress, building digital trust, and increasing the psychological security of employees working in digital and hybrid environments (Qaiser et al., 2025; Bregenzer & Jiménez, 2021).

Employee well-being itself is a multidimensional construct that includes the affective dimension (positive and negative emotions experienced at work), the cognitive dimension (job satisfaction), and the psychological dimension (sense of meaning, autonomy, and self-growth) (Nugroho et al., 2024; Han et al., 2025). In the digital era, this well-being is increasingly influenced by technological factors, such as the intensity of use of digital devices, the expectation of instant response, and the blurring of work-life boundary blurring (Mateen et al., 2025; Palmucci & Santoro, 2024). Therefore, understanding how leadership can mitigate the negative impact of digitalization while maximizing its positive potential is an urgent research agenda, both academically and practically.

The literature on digital leadership and employee well-being has grown tremendously in the last five years. Zeike et al. (2019) is one of the pioneering studies that links digital leadership skills with employee psychological well-being, finding that leaders' competencies in managing virtual communication are positively correlated with the well-being of subordinates. The study was then enriched by various studies that explored the mediation and moderation mechanisms that explain these relationships, such as work engagement (Li et al., 2024), psychological safety (Qaiser et al., 2025), digital self-efficacy (Farmanesh et al., 2025), and job demands-resources (Han et al., 2025). In addition, a number of studies have also highlighted the dark side of digitalization, such as technostress and digital fatigue that can moderate and mediate the relationship between leadership and well-being (Alkhayyal & Bajaba, 2024; Bregenzer & Jiménez, 2021).

However, a review of the existing literature shows a significant number of research gaps. First, most studies still treat "digital leadership" and "human-centered leadership" as two stand-alone constructs, even though the two are conceptually complementary: digital leadership focuses on technological capabilities, while human-centered leadership emphasizes the humanistic dimension that counters the demands of such technology (Diniz et al., 2025; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2026 in the concept of happiness-based leadership as a derivative). Conceptual integration between the two is still rarely explicitly discussed within a

coherent analytical framework. Second, many previous empirical studies have been cross-sectional and focused on one particular sector or country (e.g. the financial sector in Afzal & Khan, 2025; Selimović et al., 2021), so the generalization of findings across organizational contexts is still limited. Third, the mechanisms through which human-centered leadership affects employee well-being in the digital environment whether through psychological safety pathways, work engagement pathways, or technostress mitigation pathways have not been systematically synthesized in a single, integrated conceptual model. Fourth, there is a lack of studies that explicitly consider the role of moderation of work models (remote, hybrid, on-site) and the level of digital readiness of organizations on the effectiveness of human-centered leadership (Bharati & Gosavi, 2026; Qaiser et al., 2025).

Based on these gaps, this article offers a number of novelties. First, the study integrates the literature on digital leadership and human-centered leadership into a single conceptual framework that explicitly maps three key mediation pathways psychological safety and digital trust, work engagement and digital efficacy, and technostress and digital workload that link human-centered leadership to employee well-being in a digital work environment. Second, this study synthesizes across sectors and across countries of 25 recent studies (2019–2026) to identify patterns of consistency and contradiction of findings, something that has rarely been done comprehensively in previous studies that tend to focus on a single context. Third, this article specifically highlights the role of moderation of work models (remote, hybrid, on-site) and organizational digital readiness, which has been an under-explored area in the leadership and employee well-being literature. Fourth, in contrast to most descriptive literature reviews, this study produces theoretical propositions that can be empirically tested in future research, while offering concrete managerial implications for organizations undergoing digital transformation.

Theoretically, the relationship between human-centered leadership and employee well-being in the digital environment can be explained through several complementary lenses. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model explains that human-centered leadership functions as a job resource that balances digital demands such as information overload and relentless connectivity, thereby reducing the risk of burnout and increasing work engagement (Han et al., 2025; Oberländer & Bipp, 2022). The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory adds that the support of empathetic leaders helps employees retain and nurture their psychological resources amid the threat of losing resources due to the acceleration of digitalization (Alkhayyal & Bajaba, 2024). Meanwhile, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights how human-centered leadership meets employees' basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness which in turn drives intrinsic motivation and eudaimonic well-being, even when work interactions are heavily mediated by technology (Nazir et al., 2026; Klebe & Felfe, 2023). These three theoretical perspectives provide a strong foundation but have not been widely explicitly integrated in recent empirical studies of digital leadership.

The urgency of this study is also driven by empirical findings that show an increasing trend of mental health complaints related to digital work in various parts of the world. Bregenzler and Jiménez (2021) through a large-scale web-based survey found that digital risk factors in the workplace contribute significantly to increased

work stress, while supportive leadership has been shown to be a significant protective factor. Similarly, Avtalion et al. (2025) show that an organization's digital climate—which is heavily influenced by leadership styles—has a direct impact on employee well-being across various industry sectors. These findings confirm that leadership is not just a complementary variable, but a central determinant that determines whether an organization's digital transformation will be sustainable and humane, or incur significant psychological and social costs for the workforce.

Thus, the main objectives of this article are: (1) to synthesize the current empirical evidence regarding the relationship between human-centered leadership and employee well-being in a digital work environment; (2) identify the mediation and moderation mechanisms that explain the relationship; and (3) formulate a conceptual framework and future research agenda that can enrich theoretical and managerial practice understanding of leadership in the digital era. This article is expected to contribute both to the development of contemporary leadership theory and to human resource practitioners in designing leadership strategies that humanize the digital transformation process.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a narrative literature review approach that aims to synthesize the latest empirical evidence on the relationship between human-centered leadership and employee well-being in a digital workplace. The narrative approach was chosen because the purpose of this study is not to conduct statistical aggregation (meta-analysis), but to identify patterns, themes, mechanisms, and conceptual gaps among studies that are methodologically and contextually diverse.

The literature selection process is carried out through four stages as illustrated in Figure 1, namely identification, screening, feasibility assessment, and final inclusion. At the identification stage, searches were conducted on Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and PubMed databases using a combination of keywords "human-centered leadership", "digital leadership", "employee well-being", "digital workplace", and "technostress" for the 2019-2026 publication range. The limitation of the last five-year time span is intended to ensure the relevance of the findings to the context of the acceleration of digital transformation post-pandemic. An initial search yielded 214 potentially relevant articles.

At the screening stage, duplication was eliminated and filtered by title and abstract to assess the suitability of the theme, leaving 96 articles. The feasibility assessment stage is carried out through the reading of the full-text of all articles that pass the screening, with inclusion criteria: (1) the article is an indexed scientific journal or a reputable conference proceeding; (2) explicitly discuss leadership (whether digital, transformational, or human-centered) in relation to employee well-being, engagement, or psychological condition; (3) in the context of a digitized work environment, both remote, hybrid, and on-site with high intensity of technology use; and (4) have an active and accessible digital object identifier (DOI). Exclusion criteria include opinion articles without an empirical basis or literature reviews that do not go through a peer-review process. This stage resulted in 41 articles that met the eligibility.

In the final stage, a more rigorous assessment of quality and thematic relevance was carried out, considering recency, research design strength, and conceptual contribution to the theme of human-centered leadership and digital employee well-being, resulting in 25 final articles that were analyzed in depth in this article (see Table 1 in the Results and Discussion section).

Data analysis was carried out through thematic synthesis, which is the process of thematic coding of the findings of each study to identify recurring patterns, reported mediation and moderation mechanisms, and areas of contradiction or inconsistency between studies. This process resulted in three main themes of mediation (psychological safety and digital trust; work engagement and digital efficacy; and technostress mitigation) and two themes of moderation (work models and digital readiness of organizations), which were further integrated into the conceptual framework as presented in Figure 2. This framework is built by referring to three main theoretical foundations, namely the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which together explain the psychological mechanisms behind the relationship between human-centered leadership and employee well-being in the digital age



Figure 1 The flow of study selection (narrative review) from 214 initial articles to 25 articles dianalisis.



Figure 2. The conceptual framework of people-centered leadership relationships and employee well-being in a digital work environment, along with the mediation and moderation pathways identified from the literature synthesis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Synthesis of 25 Studies on Human-Centered Leadership and Employee Well-Being in a Digital Work Environment

Author(s) (Year)	Context/Sector	Variable Focus	Key Mechanism	Main Findings
Zeike et al. (2019)	Cross-sector, Germany	Digital leadership skills – psychological well-being	Virtual communication	Digital leadership skills are positively associated with employees' psychological well-being.
Bregenzer & Jiménez (2021)	Multi-sector web survey	Digital risks – employee stress and resources	Leadership support	Supportive leadership mitigates the negative effects of digital risks on work-related stress.
Selimović et al. (2021)	Financial services	Digital transformation – employee expectations	Organizational trust	The effectiveness of digital transformation depends on the organizational trust fostered by leadership.

Alkhayyal & Bajaba (2024)	Virtual work, Saudi Arabia	Digital leadership – technostress	Work-based learning	Digital leadership reduces technostress when supported by work-based learning initiatives.
Li et al. (2024)	Knowledge-based organizations, China	Middle managers' digital leadership – work engagement	Work engagement	Digital leadership exhibited by middle managers enhances employee work engagement.
Nugroho et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Digital leadership – affective well-being	Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and job satisfaction	The effect of digital leadership on affective well-being is mediated by OCB and job satisfaction.
Oberländer & Bipp (2022)	COVID-19 pandemic	Digital competence and social support – work engagement	Supervisor social support	Leaders' digital competence and social support significantly increase employee work engagement.
Chatterjee et al. (2023)	Multinational organizations	Digital workplace – organizational performance	Digital leadership capability (moderator)	Digital leadership capability moderates the relationship between workplace digitalization and organizational performance.
Chan et al. (2021)	Malaysia	Digital literacy – employee engagement	Organizational support	Leadership-supported digital literacy enhances employee engagement.
Klebe & Felfe (2023)	Laboratory experiment, Germany	Health-oriented leadership – digital versus face-to-face contexts	Working conditions (moderator)	The effectiveness of health-oriented leadership is slightly weaker in digital work settings than in face-to-face environments.
Bartsch et al. (2020)	Service sector during the COVID-19 crisis	Crisis leadership – digital transformation	Personalized communication	Personalized and supportive leadership is crucial during emergency digital transformation.

Farmanesh et al. (2025)	Industry 4.0	Digital leadership – technostress and well-being	Digital self-efficacy	Digital leadership enhances employee well-being by strengthening digital self-efficacy.
Afzal & Khan (2025)	FinTech	Authentic leadership – well-being and gender	Authentic leadership	Authentic leadership improves employee well-being, with variations across gender dynamics.
Mateen et al. (2025)	Hybrid work, multi-sector	Productivity – digital burnout	Work-home balance	Leadership plays a critical role in balancing productivity while preventing digital burnout.
Gaur (2025)	Digital workplace	People-centered leadership – engagement and performance	Engagement strategies	People-centered leadership enhances employee engagement and organizational performance.
Qaiser et al. (2025)	Hybrid universities	Digital leadership – employee thriving	Psychological safety and AI readiness	Psychological safety mediates the relationship between digital leadership and employee thriving, while AI readiness strengthens this relationship.
Diniz et al. (2025)	Systematic review (Scopus-indexed studies)	Human-centered leadership – organizational culture	Organizational culture	Human-centered leadership serves as a pathway to employee well-being and innovative work behavior.
Barabanova et al. (2025)	Cross-country	Human-centered organizational culture – global workplace	Organizational culture and strategy	A human-centered organizational culture is a strategic prerequisite for creating humane digital workplaces.
Nazir et al. (2026)	Inclusive organizations	Human-centered digital transformation – technostress	Neurodivergent inclusion	A human-centered approach effectively manages technostress while fostering the

				inclusion of neurodivergent employees.
Pflügner et al. (2026)	Digital healthcare	Digital health-oriented leadership	Digital health support	Digital health-oriented leadership sustains and improves employee well-being.
Avtalion et al. (2025)	Multi-sector	Digital climate – employee well-being	Organizational digital climate	A positive organizational digital climate has a direct positive impact on employee well-being.
Abbu et al. (2022)	Multinational organizations	Human dimension of digital leadership	Humanistic capabilities	The human dimension of digital leadership is a key predictor of successful digital transformation.
Han et al. (2025)	China	Workplace digitalization – well-being (JD-R model)	Job demands and digital anxiety	Workplace digitalization reduces job demands and digital anxiety, thereby improving employee well-being.
Salas-Vallina et al. (2020)	Multi-sector, Spain	HRM practices and engaging leadership – well-being and performance	HRM–leadership synergy	Optimal employee well-being requires the synergy of effective HRM practices and engaging leadership.

The synthesis of the 25 studies analyzed in this article yielded three interrelated findings: (1) human-centered leadership is consistently and positively associated with employee well-being in digital work environments; (2) this relationship is mediated through three primary pathways, namely psychological safety and digital trust, work engagement and digital self-efficacy, and technostress mitigation; and (3) the strength of these relationships is moderated by work arrangements (remote, hybrid, or on-site), organizational digital readiness, and industry context. A summary of the literature synthesis is presented in Table 1.

First, regarding the direct relationship between leadership and employee well-being, nearly all reviewed studies reported a consistently positive association. Zeike et al. (2019) provided one of the earliest empirical demonstrations that digital leadership skills, particularly the ability to communicate empathetically through virtual channels, are positively correlated with employees' psychological well-being. This finding is reinforced

by more recent studies. For example, Qaiser et al. (2025) found that digital leadership contributes significantly to employee thriving in hybrid university settings, while Gaur (2025) demonstrated that people-centered leadership enhances employee engagement and performance in digital workplaces. Similar patterns were observed across diverse contexts, including the financial services sector (Afzal & Khan, 2025; Selimović et al., 2021), digital healthcare (Pflügner et al., 2026), and knowledge-based organizations (Li et al., 2024). The consistency of these findings across industries strengthens the argument that human-centered leadership is not industry-specific but rather represents a universal leadership principle for addressing the challenges of workplace digitalization.

Second, psychological safety and digital trust emerged as the most consistently supported mediating mechanisms. Qaiser et al. (2025) explicitly tested and confirmed the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between digital leadership and employee thriving. Similarly, Nazir et al. (2026) demonstrated that a human-centered leadership approach is essential for managing technostress while simultaneously fostering the inclusion of neurodivergent employees, highlighting an often-overlooked dimension of psychological safety. These findings are consistent with Bregenzer and Jiménez (2021), who confirmed that workplace digital risks can be substantially mitigated through supportive and communicative leadership. Digital trust, as a closely related construct, also emerged as a critical prerequisite. Chan et al. (2021) showed that digital literacy facilitated through organizational support—including leadership support—significantly enhances employee engagement in digitally enabled work environments.

Third, work engagement and digital self-efficacy also received strong empirical support as mediating pathways. Li et al. (2024) found that middle managers' digital leadership significantly enhances employee work engagement. Likewise, Farmanesh et al. (2025) reported that effective digital leadership not only alleviates technostress but also strengthens employee well-being in the Industry 4.0 era by enhancing digital self-efficacy. Han et al. (2025) further supported these findings by demonstrating that workplace digitalization reduces job demands and digital anxiety when managed appropriately, thereby improving employee well-being through increased job resources within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework. Abbu et al. (2022) similarly concluded that the human dimension of digital leadership is a key predictor of successful organizational digital transformation, extending beyond purely technical competencies.

Fourth, the technostress mitigation pathway revealed a more nuanced pattern. Alkhayyal and Bajaba (2024) found that digital leadership effectively reduces technostress only when combined with work-based learning, suggesting that leadership alone is insufficient without complementary organizational support mechanisms. Meanwhile, Oberländer and Bipp (2022) reported that employees' digital competence and social support—primarily provided by direct supervisors—jointly enhance work engagement during periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings imply that the effectiveness of human-centered leadership depends on interactions with both individual and organizational resources rather than functioning independently.

Regarding moderating factors, the synthesized evidence indicates that work arrangements play a critical role in determining the strength of the relationship between leadership and employee well-being. Mateen et al. (2025) found that in hybrid work environments, balancing productivity with the prevention of digital burnout depends heavily on leadership capable of managing the blurred boundaries between work and home. Similarly, Bartsch et al. (2020) showed that during the COVID-19 crisis, effective

leadership under crisis-induced digital transformation required a more personalized and supportive communication style than under normal circumstances. Klebe and Felfe (2023), through a laboratory experiment, further demonstrated that the effectiveness of health-oriented leadership differs significantly between face-to-face and digital work contexts, indicating that identical leadership behaviors do not necessarily produce equivalent outcomes across different work arrangements. These findings underscore the importance of adapting leadership styles to prevailing modes of work.

Organizational digital readiness also emerged as an important moderator. Chatterjee et al. (2023) found that digital leadership capability moderates the relationship between the digital workplace and organizational performance, indirectly influencing employee well-being by reducing technology-related friction. Barabanova et al. (2025) extended this argument by demonstrating that a human-centered organizational culture is a strategic prerequisite for implementing humane digital workplace practices globally. Collectively, these findings suggest that human-centered leadership is most effective when supported by mature digital infrastructure and a conducive organizational culture rather than being implemented in organizations with limited digital readiness.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the relevance of integrating the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as discussed in the background section. Human-centered leadership functions simultaneously as a job resource that offsets digital job demands (JD-R), as a psychological resource that is protected and strengthened (COR), and as a mechanism for fulfilling employees' basic psychological needs (SDT). These mechanisms operate concurrently rather than independently. Therefore, future research should test multiple mediation models incorporating these three pathways simultaneously, rather than examining each mechanism in isolation, as has been the predominant approach in the existing literature.

Practically, these findings have several important implications for organizations. First, organizations should integrate digital leadership development with human-centered leadership training instead of treating them as separate initiatives. Second, hybrid and remote work policies should be accompanied by explicit leadership guidelines that help leaders maintain psychological safety and meaningful human connections despite technology-mediated interactions. Third, investments in organizational digital readiness—including technological infrastructure and employees' digital literacy—should be aligned with the development of human-centered leadership capabilities, as these factors mutually reinforce one another in enhancing employee well-being.

Not all studies, however, reported entirely consistent findings. Selimović et al. (2021), for example, found that employees' expectations and intentions regarding digital workplace transformation in the financial services sector varied considerably depending on the level of trust previously established between employees and management. This suggests that the effectiveness of human-centered leadership develops cumulatively over time rather than producing immediate effects. Likewise, Klebe and Felfe (2023) reported that the positive effects of health-oriented leadership were slightly weaker in digital work settings than in face-to-face environments, contradicting the common assumption that supportive leadership is automatically more valuable in digital contexts. Such inconsistencies indicate that the relationship between leadership and well-being in digital workplaces is contingent upon contextual factors, including the quality of supervisor–employee relationships, team digital maturity, and the extent of remaining face-to-face

interaction in hybrid work arrangements—variables that have not yet been adequately controlled in existing research designs.

Overall, the synthesis presented in Table 1 and the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 confirms that human-centered leadership is not external to the process of digitalization but rather serves as the balancing mechanism that determines whether workplace digitalization produces a well-being dividend or imposes psychological costs on employees. The triangulation of evidence across industries, countries, and levels of analysis provides a robust foundation for developing both theoretical propositions and practical recommendations in the conclusion section.

Nevertheless, the synthesis also identified several limitations in the existing literature. Most studies employed cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference, while the majority of research originated from developing countries in Asia and the Middle East (e.g., Akbar et al., 2025; Nugroho et al., 2024) or developed European countries (e.g., Bregenzer & Jiménez, 2021; Klebe & Felfe, 2023), indicating that broader cross-cultural representation remains necessary. Furthermore, the operational definition of human-centered leadership varies considerably across studies. Some conceptualize it as a component of transformational leadership or happiness-based leadership (Diniz et al., 2025), whereas others treat it as an independent construct (Barabanova et al., 2025), potentially leading to inconsistencies in future empirical measurement.

Findings related to affective well-being also warrant particular attention. Nugroho et al. (2024) demonstrated that the influence of digital leadership on employees' affective well-being is mediated by organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and job satisfaction, indicating that leadership influences well-being indirectly through broader changes in work attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, Salas-Vallina et al. (2020) argued that optimal employee well-being and performance require synergy between supportive human resource management (HRM) practices and engaging leadership, rather than relying on leadership alone. These findings reinforce the conclusion that human-centered leadership should be understood as one component of a broader organizational system rather than as an isolated intervention.

The synthesized evidence also revealed slight variations in effect size across different levels of analysis. Studies conducted at the individual or frontline managerial level (Li et al., 2024; Nugroho et al., 2024) generally reported stronger effects than studies conducted at the organizational or policy level (Barabanova et al., 2025; Diniz et al., 2025). This difference is likely attributable to psychological proximity, whereby employees experience the impact of human-centered leadership most directly through interactions with their immediate supervisors rather than through abstract organizational policies. Consequently, leadership development initiatives should prioritize frontline managers while ensuring alignment with higher-level organizational policies and culture to achieve sustainable and long-lasting organizational outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This article synthesizes 25 recent studies (2019-2026) to understand the relationship between human-centered leadership and employee well-being in a digital work environment. The results of the synthesis show that human-centered leadership consistently contributes positively to employee well-being across different sectors and country contexts, through three main mediating pathways: psychological safety and digital trust, work engagement and digital efficacy, and technostress mitigation. This relationship is strengthened or weakened by the work

model applied by the organization, the level of digital readiness, and the context of the industrial sector, which suggests that the effectiveness of human-centered leadership is contingent on the organizational context, rather than absolutely universal.

The novelty of this article lies in the explicit integration of the digital leadership literature and human-centered leadership into one coherent conceptual framework, a comprehensive cross-sectoral and cross-country synthesis, attention to moderators that have been under-explored, and the formulation of empirically testable theoretical propositions. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of the integration of JD-R Model, COR Theory, and Self-Determination Theory in explaining the mechanism of human-centered leadership in the digital environment. Practically, organizations are advised to simultaneously integrate the development of digital and humanistic leadership competencies, formulate explicit leadership guidelines for hybrid and remote work contexts, and align digital infrastructure investments with human-centered leadership capacity building.

Future research is recommended to conduct empirical testing of the conceptual framework proposed in this article, in particular through longitudinal design and multiple mediation models that test all three mediation pathways simultaneously, as well as to expand the scope of cultural and industrial sector contexts to improve the generalization of findings on human-centered leadership in the digital age of work.

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