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Peer Review

Review of: "The Human Factor in HR 5.0: Technological Innovation, Workforce Adaptability, and Cognitive Balance in Developing Economies"

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Dear Author,

Thank you for your manuscript, which aims to assess the implementation of the HR 5.0 concept within the specific context of a developing economy - specifically, Zimbabwe. This paper addresses an important topic and possesses several strengths. The author connects advanced technological innovations with the human factor, placing emphasis on cognitive balance and workforce adaptability. The paper offers a valuable theoretical perspective on the duality of technology through the Job Demands-Resources model and innovatively incorporates the African philosophy of Ubuntu as a sociocultural mediator for coping with technostress. However, despite its theoretical contribution and clear conceptual model, the work contains significant methodological and formal flaws that require thorough revision. In my opinion, the paper requires major improvements before it can be published. Please see my comments below.

The abstract summarizes the objectives, methodology, and key recommendations. The introduction convincingly defines a research gap: existing HR 5.0 models implicitly assume the stable infrastructure of the Global North, whereas in developing countries, power outages, high data costs, and skills deficits transform technological resources into an increased cognitive burden. The stated objectives are clear and logically sequenced.

The methodological section states that a systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 protocol, resulting in the final selection of 39 studies. The search criteria and keywords are appropriately formulated. However, there is a methodological inconsistency in this section: in the text of

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subsection 2.1, the author claims that no meta-analysis was performed due to the heterogeneity of the studies; yet, the PRISMA flow diagram explicitly lists 11 studies as included in a quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis). This discrepancy must be clarified.

The author successfully synthesizes three theoretical pillars: the Job Demands-Resources model, Cognitive Load Theory, and the philosophy of Ubuntu. In Chapter 3.3 (p. 11 - 12), text from Chapter 3.2 has been copied verbatim. Furthermore, no mention of the philosophy of Ubuntu is made in that chapter.

In the conceptual model, the author outlines five relevant findings (e.g., the impact of macroeconomic volatility, infrastructure failure, and collective support through Ubuntu). The conceptual model (Fig. 2) is presented clearly and logically connects inputs, HR 5.0 practices, adaptability, mental balance, and organizational outcomes, while accounting for the moderating influence of the environment.

The study's primary contribution lies in moving beyond a one-sided Western perspective and successfully contextualizing HR 5.0 within developing economies that face infrastructure constraints. Utilizing the Job Demands-Resources model, the author aptly captures the duality of technology - where a tool intended for productivity can, under inadequate conditions, become a source of cognitive strain. Furthermore, the study innovatively incorporates the African philosophy of Ubuntu as a collective counterweight to individualistic approaches to managing technostress. This entire synthesis is encapsulated within a clear and comprehensive conceptual model (Fig. 2), which establishes a robust theoretical foundation for future empirical research.

The benefits for management (the "technology + people" approach) and for public policy - derived from linking digitalization with investments in energy and education - are articulated in a substantive and pragmatic manner. The conclusion provides an adequate synthesis of the study's main ideas.

A notable shortcoming is a methodological inconsistency in the PRISMA diagram: while the text on page 7 states, "No meta-analysis was conducted...", Figure 1 on page 8 lists "Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) (n = 11)." This discrepancy must be corrected. Subsection 3.3 (pp. 11 - 12) is a verbatim copy of subsection 3.2 (including the same citation of Debue & van de Leemput). The author must provide the actual content regarding the Ubuntu philosophy. As the work consists exclusively of a literature review and a conceptual proposal, it lacks empirical validation within actual business organizations. There are also minor stylistic inaccuracies throughout the text.

I recommend that the article be accepted subject to major revisions!

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.