

Humanizing Digital Leadership: Coexistence of Empathy-AI from Women CEOs in HRM 5.0



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Journal of Emerging Management Studies
Volume 4 Issue 1
@2026 DAV Research
Management Cell
<https://doi.org/10.3126/jems.v4i1.95436>

Abstract

Purpose - Human Resource 5.0 refers to the fifth generation of human resources, characterized by the realignment of HR processes and practices with technology, data, and analytics. This study examines the coexistence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and empathy in women-led strategic leadership with reference to HRM 5.0.

Design/methodology/approach - The study is grounded in an interpretivist, qualitative approach to analyze women CEOs on the Fortune 500 list. The secondary data were collected from publicly available sources, including interviews, posts, narratives, and company reports, associated with 55 women CEOs listed in Fortune's 500 companies during 2024-2025. Open and axial coding techniques were used to identify themes in leadership and HRM 5.0.

Findings - The study identifies three main leadership competency styles – empathetic (44%), servant (16%), and transformational (60%) that collectively define HRM 5.0. The women's CEO strategically leveraged empathy practices alongside HRM 5.0 practices such as predictive analytics, digital learning, and people analytics to promote inclusivity, ethics, and psychological safety.

Implications - The women CEOs demonstrate a unique ability to reinforce HRM 5.0 through AI-driven decision-making and humanistic values such as empathy, ethics, and inclusive engagement platforms. The study contributes to management literature by conceptualizing HRM 5.0 as a five-pillar model.

Originality/value - The paper contributes to modern HRM literature by conceptualizing HRM 5.0 as a human-centric framework that centres human ethics, emotions, and behaviors within Artificial Intelligence, and by positing women CEOs as strategic enablers of empathetic AI-driven leadership.

Keywords – Artificial intelligence, Empathy, HRM 5.0, Leadership competencies, Women CEOs,

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Received: March 09, 2026
Revised: April 02, 2026
Accepted: April 27, 2026

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How to cite this paper:

Kaur, S., & Shukla, M. (2026). Humanizing digital leadership: Coexistence of Empathy-AI from women CEOs in HRM 5.0. *Journal of Emerging Management Studies*, 4(1), 56-79. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jems.v4i1.95436>

1. Introduction

Ecological instability, geopolitical tensions, and rapid automation have reengineered the role of Human Resource Management (HRM), elevating employee expectations and productivity by creating a more human-centric, resilient, ethical, and adaptable workforce ecosystem (Pontes et al., 2021). HRM 4.0 has been a revolutionary concept that has reconceptualized business operations and customer interactions through the integration of technology. Thus, making businesses and organizations more efficient, agile, and environmentally friendly (Zizic et al., 2022). However, the challenges created due to numerous technological advancements, such as over-reliance on algorithms, algorithmic biases, limited focus on well-being, ethical systems, and diminishing human touch, led to a transition from HRM 4.0 to HRM 5.0 - it is the next strategic frontier in HR evolution. It is expected to focus on collaboration between human dignity (such as well-being, inclusion, and empathy), technological capabilities (such as artificial intelligence, robotics, machine learning, and predictive analytics), and ethical innovation to complement the workforce in new ways and build a sustainable socio-technical ecosystem. Thus, it is fair to assert that the success of SDG goals within Industry 5.0 is closely dependent on a strategically redefined HR function.

In the Industry 5.0 landscape, HRM plays a pivotal role in strengthening human technology integration (da Silva et al., 2022; Del Giudice et al., 2021) and creating a collaborative, empathetic, resilient, ethical, and sustainable culture in favor of both the workforce and organization (Nurani et al., 2021; Taj & Jhanjhi, 2022). One of the fundamental principles of HRM5.0 is “innovation,” defined as an intentional, structured pathway that fuses technology with the complexities of human behavior, attitudes, and emotions. Connected to this, by leveraging innovative techniques such as AI, machine learning, data analytics, and digital twins, HRM5.0 amplifies employee engagement, augments talent acquisition, engineers a personalized workforce experience, and increases employee and organizational capabilities. However, if these innovations or intelligent technologies are deployed without human-machine synergy and charismatic or visionary leadership, they could pose systemic risks to moral, cultural, ethical, and institutional challenges.

Moreover, in line with the above views, promoting and improving gender diversity in executive and C-suite roles is imperative, particularly in I5.0, where innovation, resilience, agility, and inclusivity are vital for long-term sustainable organizational productivity and effectiveness. A report by Morgen Stanley (2020) states that organizations with distinct gender diversity across leadership positions exhibit greater financial health and enhanced ROE (Return on Equity). Similarly, McKinsey's report on “Diversity Matters Even More” (2023) found that companies with 30% diversity representation in leadership positions demonstrate sustained profitability and organizational resilience.

In this context, thriving in the evolving landscape of HRM5.0 will largely depend on involving diverse leadership across various positions to promote agility, adaptability, and innovation. Comprehensive research on women leadership suggests that they exhibit higher levels of prolific competencies in spearheading dynamic outcomes couples with fostering meaningful connections (Forbes, 2023), highly developed sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) frameworks (Credit Suisse, 2016) and contributing significantly to a higher level of psychological safety, analytical thinking, and emotional intelligence through inclusivity, collaboration, empathy, and consensus building (Coach Hub, 2025). Remarkable cases from businesses include PepsiCo under Indra Nooyi and General Motors under Mary Barra. Connecting that, Leena Nair (Global CEO, Chanel) exemplifies HRM5.0 through her empathetic, visionary, inclusive, and sustainable leadership adeptness, aligning luxury with ethical values and human-prioritized principles.

From personnel management through digitization, well-being, collaboration, and innovation to strategic management, Human Resource Management (HRM) has undergone a remarkable transition across multiple generations. HRM5.0 is the most recent trend and should not be seen as merely a sequential extension of HRM4.0. Rather, it reflects the integration of smart technologies with deeply rooted human values such as empathy, inclusion, resilience, and ethics. These traits, which are fundamental to our evolutionary history, have become vital in today's humanistic leadership practices. Marie et al. (2024) emphasized women's interpersonal strengths such as consensus-building, sensitivity, and cooperation. Additionally, a closer look at previous studies has shown that women exhibit higher levels of empathetic and transformational leadership than men (Eagly et al., 2003) and are perceived as more ethical (Carton, 2022; Forbes, 2021).

By delving into various dimensions of creative leadership styles, structural challenges, and AI-driven strategies employed by 50 women CEOs working in Fortune 500 companies, the present study articulates a dynamic interplay among AI, gender, empathy, and personal leadership philosophies. The study aims to understand the unified leadership theme, challenges, and AI strategies employed by women CEOs. By delving into these dimensions, the research further analyzed the interplay of empathy, AI, gender, and personal leadership philosophy to reinforce the human-centered ethos of HRM 5.0. This study serves two purposes: it examines multifaceted leadership competencies emerging across Fortune 500 women CEOs that reflect the humanistic framework of HRM5.0 and analyze how empathy and AI coexist in women-led strategic leadership that reflects the humanistic framework of HRM5.0. In doing so, this study strengthens and advances the human-centered foundation of HRM 5.0.

2. Literature Review

Alignment of workforce behavior with organizational strategies is a critical factor in driving digital transformation, shaping Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 (Xu et al., 2021), and in a human-centered HRM 5.0 framework. By enhancing employees' cognitive skills, resilience, collaboration, and sustainable practices, HRM plays a key role in Industry 5.0 (da Silva et al., 2022; Del Giudice et al., 2021; Pontes et al., 2021). In line with this, Ramos Gutiérrez S. and García-Gutiérrez (2025) argue that HRM 5.0 reflects the core principles of Industry 5.0 by fostering synergy between intelligent machines and a humanized environment. Sustainability, human-centricity, resilience, digital mindsets, adaptability, and future readiness have been identified as the key leadership characteristics within Industry 5.0 (Whitehead et al., 2025; Warner-Søderholm & Kuoppamäki, 2025). Unlike HRM 4.0, which predominantly prioritizes technological and operational efficiency, HRM 5.0 addresses the limitations of HRM 4.0 by re-centering social, human, and environmental sustainability. In the context of the sustainable transition towards Society 5.0, Stryzhak (2022) explored the synergistic interplay between digital technologies and human capital development.

Earlier studies suggest that female leaders often exhibit nurturing, empathetic, and compassionate qualities, particularly during crises (Vongas & Al Hajj, 2015). Lanier (2025) explained that, through the application of the Empowered H.I.G.H. (Humanistic, Individualistic, Goal, Hope Approach) framework, female executives align empathy with strategic thinking to enhance organizational influence and social capital, and to manage change. Additionally, people-centered leadership extends beyond formal authority to valuing, understanding, and responding to the humanistic needs of diverse stakeholders (Dolamore et al., 2021; Gregory et al., 2011; Safuan, 2025).

However, the transformation towards people-centric architecture hinges on the leadership that can strategically integrate and embed the principles of Industry 5.0- technology, human value, and sustainability into the socio-technical structure of HRM 5.0. Consistent evidence from prior studies (Almunawar et al., 2025; Ilyushina et al., 2024; Strohmeier, 2020) suggests that digital transformation requires strategic alignment among technological systems, employee readiness, and leadership capabilities. Moreover, female leaders embody visionary, sustainable, and socially conscious approaches (Sueda et al., 2020) and play an imperative role in reinforcing organizational performance through commitment to CSR, transparency, open communication (Ciappei et al., 2023), and collaboration, empathy, and stakeholder engagement (Hougaard et al., 2022). Bridging the academic research and business practice, Kruse (2023) reported in *Forbes* that female leaders are more efficacious than their male counterparts across multiple leadership metrics. Additionally, a study by IE Insights (2018) suggests that greater female participation in executive roles and female entrepreneurship contributes positively to organizations' performance outcomes and social objectives. In this regard, the present study positions women CEOs as critical architects of this integration, illustrating how empathetic leadership, blended with AI-enabled decision-making, embodies the human-centered ethos of HRM 5.0. The progression from HRM 1.0 to HRM 5.0 could be articulated in phases, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Generations of Human Resource Management

Phase	Primary focus	Key Theories	Core Pillars	Challenges
HRM 1.0 Personnel Management	Administrative control and compliance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Administrative Theory (Henri Fayol, 1916) • Bureaucratic Theory Max Weber (1922) • Scientific Management Frederick W. Taylor (1911) 	Wage administration, record keeping, recruitment, and regulatory labor compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational inefficiencies due to manual processes • Transactional employer-employee relationship • Low employee engagement and participation • Structural rigidity and organizational dominance • Bureaucratic inertia
HRM 2.0 Human Relations	HR-business alignment, workforce welfare, and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Abraham Maslow (1943) • McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y Douglas McGregor (1960) • Human Relations Theory Elton Mayo (Hawthorne Studies, 1920s–1930s) 	Employee welfare, communication, satisfaction, participation, motivation, training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient structural transformation • Lack of strategic rigor • Morale-centred HR systems • Authoritarian management approach • Resistance to structural change
HRM 3.0 Strategic HRM	Strategic human capital architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Capital Theory Becker (1964) • Contingency Theory Schuler & Jackson (1987) • Dynamic Capabilities Theory Teece et al. (1997) 	Talent management, performance management, change management, and employer branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overemphasis on productivity over human dignity • Reduced ethical consideration in strategic decision making • ROI driven workforce governance • Neglect of psychological safety and social dimensions • Increased burnout and stress due to high employee expectations
HRM 4.0 Digital HRM	Digitalization and data-driven automated HR systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-Technical Systems Theory Trist & Bamforth (1951) • Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Davis (1989) • Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Venkatesh et al. (2003) 	AI recruitment, automation of HR processes (AI, Robotics, ML), HR analytics, remote and hybrid HR systems, innovation, and agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of job displacement due to AI and robotics • Employee resistance to technology • Algorithmic biases and data privacy risks • Digital skill gaps due to AI integration • High implementation costs are involved in digital infrastructure
HRM 5.0 Human-centric digitalized HRM	Human-technology integration and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathetic Leadership Theory Kock et al. (2019) • Transformational Leadership Theory Bass & Avolio (1994) • Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) 	Personalised employee experience, well-being, collaboration, empathy, resilience, inclusivity, emotional intelligence, and ethical organizational governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership capability gaps • Balancing employee, stakeholders, societal, and environmental demands • Emotional sustainability constraints • Transformational fatigue

Source: Author's Compilation

2.1 HRM 5.0

HRM5.0 is more than the integration of smart technologies- it has a clear strategic socio-technical advantage that bridges innovation with human-centered and long-term sustainable value creation. It reflects a fundamental shift from transactional management to transformational, value-driven leadership. Prior research has increasingly examined the strategic value of gender-diverse leadership in contemporary organizations (Nyeadi et al., 2021; S. C. Chen & Shao, 2022). Adisa (2024) defines HRM5.0 as a transformative evolution in human resource management that emphasizes integrating digitalization, sustainability, and ethical leadership into the human resource system. Fawehinmi et al. (2024) expand on this perspective by describing HRM5.0 as an organizational instrument that embeds the principles of inclusivity, well-being, and sustainability into organizational processes. Furthermore, by cultivating a culture of continuous learning and remote work options, HRM5.0 promotes workforce flexibility and agility (Jahan, 2022). Collectively, the literature positions HRM5.0 as a conceptual evolution of human resource management aligned with the Industry5.0 paradigm, structured around five strategic pillars - namely personalized employee experience, well-being, emotional intelligence, empathy, and inclusivity- that promote sustainable co-creation of employees, organizations, the environment, and society. The aforesaid pillars are intrinsically associated with the Leadership5.0 principles such as human-centricity, digital mindset, sustainability, and resilience, which shape leadership behavior and attitudes in a rapidly changing socio-technical environment. Within this framework, a few critical leadership approaches emerge that help navigate scientifically evolving workplaces, including empathetic leadership theory (Kock et al., 2019), transformational leadership (James MacGregor Burns, 1978), and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). According to Thomas et al. (2023), integrating servant and transformational leadership approaches enhances leadership effectiveness in Industry 5.0 contexts. Building on these viewpoints, this study conceptualizes Industry5.0 as mounting the strategic direction, HRM5.0 interprets this direction into a structured workforce layout, and Leadership5.0 facilitates and reinforces the transformation through humanistic and empathetic leadership approaches. From this perspective, the growing body of literature on gender diversity is important, as women leaders are often associated with empathetic engagement, inclusive decision-making, and ethical stewardship. These qualities resonate strongly with the principles and practices of Leadership 5.0, positioning them as leading actors in nurturing people-centric and sustainable transitions as envisioned by Industry 5.0 and HRM 5.0.

2.2 Contemporary Leadership Competencies Framing HRM 5.0

In the context of the present study, HRM 5.0 is interpreted through specific leadership theories, primarily transformational, empathetic, and servant leadership. The main characteristics of these leadership theories are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Key Traits of Different Leadership Theories

Theory	Foundational Scholar and the Year	Core Focus	Strategic Outcome
Empathetic Leadership	Kock et al., 2019	Workforce Emotions, Perspective, and Needs	Wellbeing, Engagement, Trust, Psychological Safety
Transformational Leadership	James MacGregor Burns, 1978	Intellectual Stimulation, Vision, and Motivational Influence	Innovation, Motivation, Organizational Change, and Digital Transformation
Servant Leadership	Robert K. Greenleaf, 1970	Ethical Responsibility, Long-term capability development	Growth, Commitment, Development, Ethical Leadership

Source: Author's Compilation

3. Method

Research Design and Sampling

The paper contributes to the analysis of patterns among Fortune 500 women CEOs and integrates the interplay between empathetic leadership and AI within HRM 5.0. The paper uses an interpretivist orientation to understand women leaders' goals and intentions. The qualitative, exploratory approach focuses on publicly

available resources such as CEO-authored blogs, press releases, and LinkedIn posts. This approach explains the leaders’ modest data. The Fortune 500 list of women captures the largest U.S profit-making firms. However, the sample is U.S.-centric, but the selection provides an authentic overview of HRM 5.0.

Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria involve the women holding the CEO role or equivalent to the title of top executive at the companies listed in the Fortune 500 for more than one year. Any source of public narratives in English (blogs, firm’s reports, company website pages, and LinkedIn profiles) to retrieve sufficient textual analysis. On the other hand, exclusion criteria involve an interim or acting Women CEO, who was designated with a short duration of service with little public narrative, and non-Fortune 500 firms and male CEOs (purposely to preserve the focus and remove the biased comparison). The time frame covers 2024-2025 to capture the present AI and HRM 5.0 reference.

Ethical Considerations

Even with secondary data, the author sought to use publicly available, non-intrusive, and ethically sourced data. No personal information was accessed or disclosed in any form.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Fortune magazine publishes the Fortune 500 list every year, ranking the largest U.S. companies by revenue. The data can be accessed online directly from the website. The following steps were taken to answer the research objectives.

1. Go to the official Fortune 500 Ranking 2025 (<https://fortune.com/ranking/fortune500/2025/>) on Fortune’s websites
2. Extract the list of companies and their CEOs
3. Identify and filter women working as CEOs
4. For 2025, 55 women CEOs lead the top list. (11% of the total)
5. Cross-verify CEO names and gender identities using multiple reputable sources such as Fortune editorial reports, company websites, industry databases, and LinkedIn Profiles.
6. Freeze the final sample frame
7. Create the master sheet mentioning the CEO’s name (names are used only as illustrations), the company name, industry details, HRM 5.0 practices, leadership style, and publicly announced program emphasized
8. Aligned the database with the research objectives
9. Open coding to identify emergent themes and use axial coding to think about the themes (iterative inductive-conductive coding)
10. Ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations

Of the 55 women CEOs, 6 exited the Fortune 500 list this year due to resignations, retirements, or their companies dropping off the list whereas 9 new joiners are mostly due to internal promotions. The findings show that approximately 83.6% of women are continuing from the previous year, and newly appointed CEOs account for 16.4%. The most common industries in which women were employed are insurance, finance, retail, and technology. Table 3 highlights the list of 55 women CEOs, along with their HRM 5.0 practices and leadership styles, are as follows.

Table 3
Top 55 Women CEOs -HRM 5.0 and leadership approach

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
1	Mary Barra	Automotive	General Motors	People-first transformation in HR Operations, Enablement, and Strategy	Prioritizes Empathy and Inclusive Leadership, Open Communication Employee Engagement	“Employee Connections” “Global Town Hall” “Engagement” “Reverse Mentoring”

S. No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
2	Gail K. Boudreaux	Health Insurance	Elevance Health	Digital care management AI to reduce hospital readmissions Responsible use of digital technologies	Athletic Leadership due to sports background, Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership for promoting the next generation and diversity	"Responsible AI" "Concierge Care Program" "Affordable Connectivity Program"
3	Jane Fraser	Banking Services	Citigroup	"Citi Assist" is an AI-powered virtual assistant "Citi-Stylus" for document management "Internal AI Champions & Accelerators Program to bridge the gap between technology and daily operations	Data-driven methodical approach towards operations, empathetic, and transformative	"Ethical principles 2019" "AI-first" Culture "Zoom-free Fridays", "Speak Up"
4	Sarah London	Health Insurance	Centene	Use Gen AI for targeting Social Challenges of Health, Predictive Modelling for Patient Needs & Hospital Resources	Strategic and Transformative leadership style by focusing on people-first. To ensure responsible use of AI, the position of Director of AI Ethics and Governance is introduced	"Culture Ambassadors" "SDOH" "Centene Task Force" "One Cent team Culture"
5	Priscilla Almodovar	Financial Services	Fannie	Talent Analytics and Fraud Detection with AI Employee Engagement and Performance Dashboard	Introduced the role of Diversity & Inclusion officer	"Employee Resource Groups for LGBTQ " "Ethics Hotline" "Internal mobility development"
6	Carol B. Tomé	Logistics	UPS	AI to reduce friction AI coach "Valence." To guide career succession and personalized development	People-led Organizational Leadership Inclusive and Empathetic Approach towards DEI	"Business Resource Groups" "Customer-First, People-led, Innovation-Driven" Scholarships for women and minority students

S. No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
7	Susan Patricia Griffith	Insurance	Progressive	Data-driven culture to enhance customer satisfaction and talent acquisition Recruitment: "Asynchronous video interview analysis."	Human-centric and value-based leadership	"Tone at the Top" Culture to promote diversity and authenticity "DEI" Commitment to LGBTQ "Golden Rules for Integrity"
8	Safra A. Catz	Technology	Oracle	"Oracle Fusion Human Capital Management" "Catz" for upskilling Development and Workforce Learning	Known for "quiet" and "disciplined" style Responsible leadership in terms of dealing with corporate strategy	"Operationalizing AI" in 2026 AI-Led HRM "Digital Literacy"
9	Thasunda Brown Duckett	Financial Services	TIAA	AI integrates into retirement plans by providing psychological safety TIAA gAlt for cybersecurity training	Empathetic leadership to promote diversity, Inclusive leadership by focusing on DEI	"Be OK with hard." "Future wise" "Guild Network" for AI Upskilling & Automation of Routine Tasks
10	Corie S. Barry	Retail	Best Buy	Focuses on "Humanizing" HR Services "Human Capital Management and Governance" Report 2025	ESG Initiatives focusing on digital equity, technology sustainability "AI should work alongside people, not replace them." Leadership programs for women	"In-home Advisor" and "In-store Expertise" for digital equity "Workday Skills Cloud"
11	Phebe N. Novakovic	Aerospace & Defence	General Dynamics	Responsible HRM with a focus on sustainability and ethics	Emphasizes "Ethos" and servant-oriented leadership	Education Engagement General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT)

S. No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
12	Kathy J. Warden	Aerospace & Defence	Northrop Grumman	Gen AI to reshape job design, AI in recruitment and Selection Virtual environment to stimulate physical interactions	Sustainable "Ethos" to nurture an inclusive workforce It is a value-driven culture that focuses on "Anyone can be a leader."	"NVIDIA" "AI factory" Internally and Externally
13	Jennifer Rumsey	Engines	Cummins	Partner with Textkernel to automate fast recruitment "Productive assessment process" for predictive talent management Green technology	Human-centric leadership approach Ethical AI approach towards Digital Strategic HR leaders, rather than administrators	"Slow Down to Speed Ahead" "Microsoft Purview" Reskill > Recruit "Hire-to-retain"
14	Vicki A. Hollub	Energy	Occidental Petroleum	Unconscious bias training to emphasize DEI Oxy's approach to AI uses Optical Character recognition for automating documentation and routine tasks, safety, Training, development, and continuous monitoring engagement	Well-Known for her transformative leadership, converting a traditional company into a leader "First woman to emphasize 'We' over 'I'" Hollub "virtual conversations" to engage executive/ leadership performances	Formal DEI program to recruit, retain, and engage talent and diverse backgrounds Employee Resources Groups (ERGs) to foster belongingness across the community Human capital management (HCM)
15	Patricia K. Poppe	Utilities	PG & E	AI in Knowledge & Decision Support via Chatbots and AI Champions.	Servant Leadership #lovemycoworkers #leadingwithlove Disciplined and transformative leadership by investing in culture change	"Workforce-centered AI"

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
16	Heidi G. Petz	Chemicals	Sherwin-Williams	Electronic-HRM is an AI-enabled tracking system for automating screening. Self-paced and virtual training platforms Diversity metrics for culture programs	Inclusive leadership style	“Create your possible” “Internships and co-op programs”
17	Lisa T. Su	Semiconductors	AMD	Open-source AI ecosystem through ROCm platform AI to augment human expertise rather than a zero-sum game between humans and machines	Popularly known as “Midnight CEO,” working for a hands-on approach “Learning at each step.” Transformative leadership	“Run towards the problems.” “Queen of Chips” “Innovating Equity”
18	Christine A. Leahy	Technology Retail	CDW	AI in talent acquisition with the help of smart recruitment and predictive attrition model AI-algorithm fairness in hiring HR Chatbots	Collaborative Leadership focused on ethical, inclusive, and ESG integration	“Coworker-first” “Women’s Opportunity Network”
19	Jennifer A. Parmentier	Industrial	Parker-Hannifin	92 % response rate in global surveys to track engagement. Digital platform to track environmental, health, and safety (EHS) AI to identify gender-sensitive laws	Customer-centric and performance-driven leadership	“The Win-Strategy” “High-Performance teams” “Micro-learning Module 4.0”

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
20	Maria Black	HR Services	Automatic Data Processing	Gen AI as a "Big Step Change" in HR HCM for Intelligent Payroll and Compliance (Alert for incorrect tax) Gen AI for Job Description, Bias Mitigation	Human-centric leadership approach to transform the workplace	"AI is a new work colleague." ADP Assist = AI + Gen AI AI Chatbots like Nudge Engine "Candidate Relevancy"
21	Beth E. Ford	Agriculture	Land O'Lakes	Flexible workplace policies for talent acquisition Gen AI in learning assistants	Led by empathy and authentic leadership, by the "Team Sport" philosophy as a servant leadership	"Oz" "HR4WARD"
22	Kim Dang	Energy	Kinder Morgan	AI to deploy engineers and technicians Attrition Risks Prediction and Knowledge Retention	Performance-oriented and safety-driven leadership	Virtual Training for Emergency Response Microlearning Platforms Data Privacy Monitoring
23	Julie Sweet	IT Services	Accenture	Gen AI for role- redesign, upskilling programs, Mandate Reinvention for employees as "agents of continuous reinvention	"Human in the head" approach, which enables leaders to use AI for creativity rather than automate it. Transformative leadership "engine of reinvention."	"Speak-up" Culture to enhance result-oriented work culture "AI-first" Strategy "Use AI or Exit" "Touch the Keyboard"

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
24	Stephanie L. Ferris	Financial Tech	Fidelity National Information Services	Use AI to recruit and track on Workday Software AI-based screenings Aligns with industry 5.0 principles with human cognitive abilities, rather than substituting them	A strategic, customer-centric, and innovation-driven approach of leadership to emphasize human development by accelerating digital expansion	“Agentic Commerce” to detect fraud and risk modelling. “Treasury GPT” for utilizing AI 24/7 Responsible AI to invite “outside-in approach” in startups
25	Kathleen E. Johnson	Telecom	Lumen Technologies	AI Academy to upskill AI and Gen AI Using AI tools for automation	Digital Transformation Leadership style focusing on building AI enterprises	“Aight Lumen AI” “AI Ethics officers” “AI literacy and Upskilling Program”
26	Judith F. Marks	Industrial	Otis Worldwide	Workday Human Capital Management (HCM) AI readiness among executives	She leads with transformative, agile, resilience, and empathy	“Volunteer tracking App” AI-driven personalized learning modules “Otis Digital Services”
27	Penny Pennington	Financial Services	Edward Jones	Focus on People Analytics Expansion with AI tools like Microsoft Copilot Chat, Live Chat, and Automated Summaries for HR workflows	A relationship-first leadership approach led the company to lifelong learning	“Knowledge-powered, relationship-first” advisor model “AI-learning Journey” for responsible AI
28	Lauren R. Hobart	Retail	Dick’s Sporting Goods	AI talent platform for hiring and supporting internal talent Digital Engagement Surveys	Forward-thinking and instinctive leader scaling for omnichannel marketing and digital transformation	“Eightfold AI” “Elevation Hub”

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
29	Ariane Gorin	Travel Tech	Expedia	<p>“Dogfood” is a high engagement program</p> <p>Platform skilling, Data science hiring, and neuro-inclusion in recruitment</p>	Her “test and learn” philosophy makes the company highly effective with a data-driven mindset.	<p>“Best at the Basics”</p> <p>“Strategically Rehire”</p> <p>“Authentic Value with AI”</p> <p>“LLM s Model for 19 different languages”</p>
30	Lori D. Koch	Industrial	DuPont	<p>Implementation of AI for “executionary” tasks like data entry</p> <p>Computer vision and predictive analysis for the detection of risks/accidents</p>	She balanced the traditional industrial model with contemporary digital urgency like STOP DataPro for Safety	<p>“Skill-Reservoirs”</p> <p>“AI-driven talent audit”</p> <p>“AI-Literacy Model”</p>
31	Ellen G. Cooper	Insurance	Lincoln National	<p>Dedicated position of “Chief AI” and “Data and Analytics Officer.”</p> <p>AI to enhance disability insurance claims</p> <p>Gen AI for internal efficiency, AWS Cloud,</p>	People-centric and digital transformation leadership	<p>“Human-in-the-loop”</p> <p>“EvolutionIQ’s”</p> <p>“LincSmart + WorkDay”</p>
32	Kathleen M. Mazzarella	Distribution	Graybar Electric	<p>Data Analytics Dashboard for HR Planning Forecast</p> <p>Predictive Analytics for the retirement program</p> <p>Competency-based virtual interviews</p> <p>Workday Adoption for HCM</p>	<p>She focuses on continuous learning and improvement in the digital ecosystem, along with back-end operations</p> <p>Strongly transformative and servant leadership</p>	<p>‘Dig In, Be Disciplined, and Get Honest Feedback from using AI tools’</p> <p>“AI Vice President” Post</p> <p>“Employee Ownership Stock plan” to embrace an ownership culture</p>

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
33	Joey Wat	Restaurants	Yum China Holdings	An AI-powered tool to manage restaurant data, scheduling, and labour management. AI-Generated Content to support employees 24*7 Metaverse and gamified-based engagement programs	Her leadership style supports 4 lakhs-plus diverse employees through highly digitized, transformative leadership.	“People-first approach” “Mobile-first learning approach” “Q-Smart” AI assistant for Store manager “Super Brain” Tool
34	Lori J. Reyerkerk	Materials	Celanese	HRIS to digitization, an e-learning platform for employee skill building	People-first and Inclusive approach to turn people safer, and a calculated risk mentality	“Co-ownership” model “Champion HR”
35	Reshma Kewalramani	Bio-technology	Vertex Pharmaceuticals	An AI strategic framework for shaping roles, skills, and collaboration of the team. Workday and Analytics Dashboard	Mission-driven leadership where the company’s mission is to transform medicines for people Focuses on results-oriented prioritization of scientific breakthroughs and excellence	AI-enabled training programs with top institutions like Harvard “Digital-mindset approach” “Vertex fellowships”
36	Teresa J. Rasmussen	Financial Services	Thrivent Financial	Workday HRIS Consultant and Cloud Automation to integrate core HR functions Digital self-services like Chatbots for employee engagement and predictive analytics for hiring and resume parsing	Purpose-driven, holistic, and mission-oriented leadership is based on the company’s mission, values, norms, and trust. Recognized as the most forward-thinking and inclusive leadership approach	“600 financial advisors” for talent pipeline growth “DEI priorities”

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
37	Joanna Geraghty	Airlines	JetBlue Airways	AI to assist crewmembers "Vice President of AI" post Onboarding Chatbots, talent, and workforce analytics	Servant leadership by adopting "Treating people right." Mostly aligns with value-based leadership principles such as Safety, Caring, Fun, Passion, and Integrity.	"Culture of services" "Disenchanted" "30-minute turnarounds"
38	Joyce A. Mullen	IT Services	Insight Enterprises	Integrating AI Agents and tools to tailor HR functions like internal queries, documentation, and Recruitment	Collaborative and people-driven leadership to generate a sense of ownership and learning rather than top-down tech deployment	"InsightGPT" "AskHRChatbots" "Onboarding Support 24*7" "AI Fight Academy" for upskilling employees on AI
39	Kristin C. Peck	Animal Health	Zoetis	"Global head of People Analytics" post to integrate AI with talent acquisition, retention, engagement, and DE&I	A robust use of digital tools and AI in pioneering innovative solutions makes for transformative leadership.	"Listening to my people." "Office hours"
40	Adaire Fox-Martin	Data Centres	Equinix	The "Chief Digital and Innovation Officer" post is to integrate AI into HR functions.	Empathetic approach with an aggressive approach to sustainability, operational excellence, and culture	"Cloud-first mentality" "SAP One Billion Lives Ventures"

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
41	Mary N. Dillon	Retail	Foot Locker	<p>Predictive talent assessment</p> <p>AI to manage a high volume of applicants.</p> <p>Automated onboarding and an NLP tool to assess text-based feedback</p>	<p>An empathetic, collaborative, and customer-centric approach to leadership</p> <p>Inclusive and compassionate leadership skills make her a renowned and inclusive leader in a culture.</p>	<p>“Listening to Front-line Employees”</p> <p>“2600 + global stores omnichannel.”</p> <p>“Fit Score” partnering with Infor to assess talent</p> <p>“iCIMS”</p> <p>“InMoment’s</p>
42	Jennifer M. Johnson	Financial Services	Franklin Resources	<p>Ethical AI and careful governance of Agentic AI in HR Operations, analytics, and strategy.</p>	<p>Known as a 2026 CNBC “Changemaker” for her dedication to technology adoption, innovation, and inclusion</p>	<p>“Azure AI” Microsoft</p> <p>“Wand AI”</p>
43	Laura J. Alber	Retail	Williams-Sonoma	<p>AI to reduce manual routine work, internal communication, and documentation</p>	<p>Foster a strong value-based culture and emphasize “one that’s direct.” entrepreneurial thinking</p>	<p>“Digital-first but not digital-only”</p> <p>“Offsetting headcount growth”</p>
44	Toni Townes-Whitley	IT/Engineering	Science Applications International	<p>Employee upskilling to ensure the “adopt and adapt” digital tools</p> <p>Introduced an Ethical AI framework in recruitment and employee management</p>	<p>Known for a servant leadership style that emphasizes trust, ethical AI, and digital transformation</p>	<p>“Human Capital” as a key differentiator</p> <p>“Ethical AI”</p> <p>“Share the mic.”</p> <p>“AcceleratHER Academy”</p>
45	Kathleen Quirk	Mining & Metals	Freeport-McMoRan	<p>An AI model to provide data literacy and upskilling across teams.</p> <p>AI-HR for recruitment and talent management</p>	<p>A “people-focused” culture defines her Strategic and resilient style of leadership.</p>	<p>Women empowerment initiatives like “DreamBuilders.”</p> <p>“SAP” and “Taleo”</p>

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
46	Deanna Strable-Soethout	Financial Services	Principal Financial Group	Eliminate 90% toil tasks by automating them and redesigning their roles for high-impact performance.	Believed in “hands-on execution.” To empower leadership roles. Highly inclusive and digitally enabled workforce culture	“AI-Ready Leadership” Active LGBTQ+ and ERGs initiatives.
47	Kecia Steelman	Retail	Ulta Beauty	HR documentation streamlined by incorporating SAP and HRIS Digital Learning platform, like an LMS, for the ethical use of AI	Emphasize a “people-first” approach by focusing on collaboration, culture, and listening to them	“SAP Success Factors with OpenText” LMS for Onboarding and Career Development “AI Agents” by 2026
48	Jennifer Witz	Media & Entertainment	Sirius XM	Heavenly invested in employee upskilling on digital fluency. AI-enabled tools for payroll automation, skills gap insights, talent analysis by using Workday, Oracle, SAP SuccessFactors	An example of major strategic leadership that focuses on a digital and podcast-focused platform	Sirius Conversational AI No formal AI-driven HR initiatives have been publicized yet.
49	Maryann Mannen	Energy	Marathon Petroleum	Reshape workforce roles and use augmented roles with AI capabilities	Leadership focuses on an inclusive, continuous, important, and safe workplace culture. Transactional and	Separate AI-HRM activities have not yet been widely publicized.

S.No	Women Leaders	Industry	Company	HRM 5.0	Leadership Approach	Public Narrative
50	Susan Morris	Retail	Albertsons	Gen AI for optimizing the workforce forecasting and scheduling	Digital transformation leadership where AI plays an important role	Partnership with Microsoft for GitHub Copilot training for developers
51	Marina Cheung	Financial Data & Analytics	S & P Global	HRM practices like hybrid work models, engagement programs via AI, and data analytics	The position of CHRO is to strengthen HR leadership Emphasizes a strong inclusive leadership program The use of Adaptive leadership to navigate the global financial market	S & P Capital IQ ESG Scores and Sustainability analytics
52	Shelley Simpson	Transportation & Logistics	J.B. Hunt Transport Services	Digitalization of logistics aligning with HRM 5.0. Employee Safety and Well-being Programs Green HRM practices	Collaborative leadership promotes women's leadership in a traditionally male-dominated industry.	"J. B Hunt 360 Degree" Workplace flexibility
53	Gunjan Kedia	Banking	U.S. Bancorp	Use of AI in workforce analytics, Upskilling via Fintech Tools, hybrid models,	The digital-first leadership model focuses on customer-centric experience	"Speak Up" Culture "Business Resource Groups"
54	Joi Harris (September 2025)	Energy	DTE Energy	AI Integration for upskilling employees	Transformational and Inclusive Leadership	Workplace Safety
55	Yi He (Co-CEO) (December 2025)	Cryptocurrency Exchange	Binance	Project-based Teams Remote-first Crypto & Finance Skills	Entrepreneurial and Adaptive Leadership	Web3 talent focus

Source: Author's Own Composition

Our study examines different leadership styles and HRM 5.0 practices; their coding would enhance its analytical findings and themes. The coding scheme helps compare leadership styles across industries and identify the dominant pattern. Secondly, coding would assist in comprehending the leadership style with HRM 5.0 practices.

Coding follows two categories (Table 4)

1. Category 1 (Letter): for level 1
2. Category 2 (Number): for level 2

Table 4
Coding Scheme of Leadership Styles

Leadership (Objective 1)		
L1	Empathetic	Human-oriented Leadership
L2	Transformational	Shifting into digitization
L3	Servant	Value-based practices
Human Resources Management 5.0 (Objective 2)		
H1	AI-enabled HR practices	AI Workforce tools and techniques
H2	Predictive and analytics HR	People Analytics
Ethical AI (E)		
E1	Accountability, Fairness, and Trust	Fair and Transparent AI in HR processes
Skilled AI Literacy (S)		
S1	Upskilling, reskilling, and learning	Preparing employees for AI -driven decisions and the workplace
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture (DEI)		
D1	Equitable opportunities and inclusion decisions	It relates to and reflects inclusive growth, fairness, and human dignity

The coexistence of empathy and AI in women-led leadership enables human-centric digital paradigms. Women CEOs emphasize AI tools such as predictive analytics, AI Chatbots, and HRIS dashboards to streamline HR processes, allowing leaders to focus on employee engagement, inclusion, development, well-being, and sustainability, ensuring trust, transparency, and technology. Emotional intelligence, listening to employees, Mentoring, and DEI recruitment and selection actively moderate AI bias, ethical risks, and cyber fraud. Therefore, empathy plays a dual role in integrating HRM 5.0 and human values to achieve sustainable organizational outcomes.

Table 5
Emerging Leadership Competencies across Fortune 500 women CEOs

Leadership Competencies	Analytical Dimension	Practices Evident from Women CEO's (Table)	HRM5.0 Humanistic Interpretation
Empathetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People-centered HR transformation • DEI and inclusivity • Digital wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee engagement platforms, global town halls, reverse mentoring • LGBTQ groups, ERGs, women's networks • Hybrid work, employee Safety and well-being programs, Zoom-free Fridays, flexible digital work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects human-oriented leadership through employee participation, employee voice, trust, and emotional responsiveness • Promotes inclusion, equity, and workforce dignity • Balances digital flexibility with employee safety and well-being

Leadership Competencies	Analytical Dimension	Practices Evident from Women CEO's (Table)	HRM5.0 Humanistic Interpretation
Transformational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart workforce architecture • Future skills development framework • Predictive analytics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Chatbots, predictive talent management systems, and AI virtual assistants • digital literacy programs, AI academies • talent dashboards, attrition prediction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates strategic integration of AI within HR systems • Strengthens workforce readiness through continuous capability development • Represents strategic leadership through analytics-driven decision making
Servant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical AI accountability • Inclusive and cultural integration • Sustainability-driven HR practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible AI principles, transparency in hiring algorithms, and AI ethics officers • Employee ownership models, Speak-up culture, ethos-driven leadership, treating people right, #leadingwithlove • Green HRM, digital equity programs, ESG initiatives, sustainability analytics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes transparency, accountability, and ethically responsible leadership • Enhances relationship with different stakeholders through organizational values such as integrity, trust, care, and shared responsibility • Integrates sustainability into responsible leadership values and practices

Source: Author's Own Composition

Careful analysis of Table 3 reveals three emerging leadership competencies, i.e., empathetic, transformational, and servant.

Table 6
Percentage Distribution of Emerging Leadership Traits (Generated from Table 3)

Leadership Competencies	Frequency (n=55)	Percentage
Empathetic	18	32.73%
Transformational	25	45.45%
Servant	12	21.82%

Table 6 shows that transformational leadership is the most salient leadership competency (45.45%). These findings align with transformational leadership theory, explaining that women CEOs lead strategic digital transformation through innovation, upskilling, reskilling, technological readiness, and adaptability. Furthermore, empathetic leadership remains a significant human-centered competency (32.73%), reflecting female leaders' ability to align digital innovation through inclusivity, emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and well-being. However, servant leadership appears to be adopted only occasionally (21.82%), underscoring female leaders' capability to ingrain stakeholder well-being, shared values, and ethical responsibility within a rapidly evolving, digitized ecosystem.

Table 7
Percentage Distribution of the Five HRM5.0 Dimensions (Generated from Table 3)

HRM5.0 Dimension	Frequency (n=55)	Percentage	Analytical Implication
AI-enabled workforce architecture	16	29.09%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI strengthens rather than supplants human reasoning • Human-in-the-loop sustains people-centered AI integration
Strategic people capability enhancement	15	27.27%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from short-term technological gains to long-term workforce resilience • Advances workforce readiness through continuous AI learning
Analytics-driven workforce intelligence	12	21.82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from intuition-based HR practices to data-driven workforce management • Workforce intelligence and predictive analytics augment strategic decision making
AI ethical integrity	8	14.55%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical AI is evolving from technical oversight into a leadership-driven strategy • Commitment to trust, transparency, and ethical AI responsibility
Inclusive workforce management	4	7.27%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion shifts from a standalone policy to a people management strategy that supports organizational trust and legitimacy • Embedding inclusion through formalized and empathetic people-centered management practices

Source: Author's Own Composition

Table 7 highlights AI-enabled workforce architecture as one of the highly visible HRM 5.0 trait amongst top women CEOs. This suggest that female leaders are using AI to automate processes, structure, and services for employees, thereby creating a more technology integrated workplace environment to improve an overall employee experience. The table further illustrates that besides using AI for automation, they are using AI for developing and strengthening human capability and growth accounting of 27.27%. In addition, 12 out of 55 female leaders feels data analytics, and predictive tools, a critical component of HRM5.0 dimension. However, ethical use of AI and role of diversity, inclusion and empathy still remains highly significant. Although these qualities are not reflected as a separate trait but are highly embedded into AI-enabled workforce architecture and Strategic people capability enhancement.

5. Conclusion

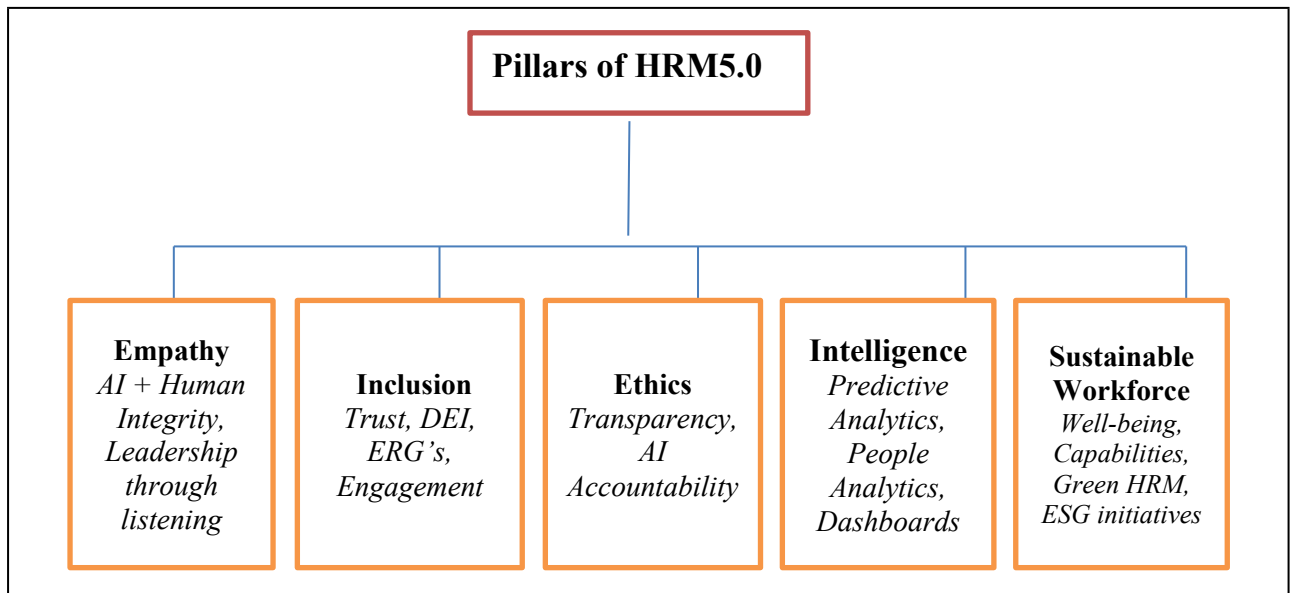
The study finds that female leaders drive HRM 5.0 efficiently and effectively through technical transformation while sustaining strong people-centric leadership competencies across diverse industries. In line with this, the evidence from the present study further shows that digitalization is not merely a technological intervention; it is embedded in a broader strategic workforce ecosystem, in which AI-enabled workforce tectonics, digital platforms, and AI ethical integrity are deeply embedded in organizational processes. Additionally, narratives like "AI literacy and Upskilling Program", "AI Academy", "AI First Culture", "People First Approach", and "Human-in-the-loop", articulates that women have progressed to a top executive leadership positions by leveraging empathy as a core leadership competency. They have also used multiple digital tools to enhance well-informed decision making, workforce capabilities, and HR system, redesigning while ensuring that workforce engagement, participation, and inclusion remain integral to organizational practices and processes.

At the same time, initiatives such as "Global Town Hall", "Listening to Front-line Employees", "Speak Up", "Women's Opportunity Network", "Reverse Mentoring", and "Employee Connections" demonstrate that technological innovation remains closely associated with inclusion, relational trust, empathy, and employee voice. This

suggests that women-led organizations interpret HRM 5.0 as a strategic balance between automation or technological capability and workforce inclusion, ethical responsibility, and long-term workforce sustainability. Based on a review of the literature and analytical findings from Fortune 500 women CEOs, the present study proposes five strategic pillars of HRM 5.0 (Figure 1) that reflect how female executives lead workforce and organizational transformation amid dynamically evolving digital and human expectations.

Figure 1

Women CEOs' Leadership Approaches via HRM 5.0 and AI



6. Limitations

The present paper focuses exclusively on U.S. companies listed in the Fortune 500, cross-cultural variation in leadership approaches, and HRM 5.0, thereby limiting the study's generalizability to the global context. The author used thematic codes such as L, H, E, S, and D to ensure the correct narrative; despite this effort, subjectivity may still arise due to the author's interpretation. Relying on public narratives may reflect limited depth of information and may not generalize to women CEOs worldwide. Furthermore, rapidly evolving workplace dynamics, such as AI policies, the climate crisis, and leadership styles, may not generalize the findings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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