

Evaluating The Role of Blockchain-Based Sustainable HRM Practices for Supporting Employee Mental Health in the Digital Workplace: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Sector Companies in India

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Abstract

This research analyses the implications of blockchain-supported sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in promoting employee mental well-being in a digital workplace, with a specific mention of two companies in the public and private sectors in India. With interpretivist philosophy, an inductive approach, and an exploratory research design, the study is based on secondary sources of data that include academic, industry, and organizational research. Thematic analysis disclosed that blockchain improves transparency, privacy, and trust, which leads to the psychological safety of employees. Nevertheless, adoption of various sectors varies in that the former involves private firms, which are innovation-centred, and the latter involves the state-owned enterprises, where there are structural and resource constraints. The paper underlines the potential of blockchain as an enabler, but points out the importance of an industry-specific approach, cultural fit, and comprehensive wellness provisions.

Keywords: Blockchain, Sustainable HRM (Human Resource Management), Employee Mental Well-being, Digital Workplace, Psychological Safety, Transparency, India, Public and Private Sector.

INTRODUCTION

Gorski et al. (2022) highlight that the ongoing digitalization of the workplace has created potential challenges and opportunities for

organizations in the world. Although Marsh et al. (2022) emphasize that with the help of technology, efficiency and flexibility have increased, it has also led to the rise of mental health issues among employees because of issues such as work intensification, digital fatigue, and less social

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interaction. In these regards, sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have been needed in efforts to enhance the well-being of employees. New-level technologies, such as blockchain, are becoming a more commonly-discussed method of enhancing HRM through the guarantee of transparency, privacy, and trust in the company process. The recent evidence supports the fact that a Plum Employee Health survey of the year 2025 shows that one employee in five currently seeks mental help, against 20% considering giving up because of burnout (BW Online Bureau, 2025). Similarly, according to a national emotional well-being investigation made in 2024, 90 percent of professionals under 25 years had anxiety vs. 67 percent of individuals over 45, which validated being young (Ramesh, 2025).

Blockchain provides a decentralized and tamper-resistant system capable of storing and securely handling sensitive information about its employees, including their mental health-related records, and strengthening the transparency and accountability of the HRM practices (Kumar et al., 2024). Companies in the public and private sectors in India are starting to incorporate blockchain solutions in HRM systems (Panda et al., 2024). As an example, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Larsen & Toubro (L&T), and Hindustan Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) and other private companies are testing blockchain power driven solutions, whereas Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), ONGC, Coal India, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and the State Bank of India (SBI) are public enterprises which are testing similar ideas. Such a comparative analysis of these areas yields significant insights into the role of blockchain in facilitating sustainable HRM with regard to possible mental health issues in digital work environments.

The aim of this research is to critically analyse how blockchain-enabled sustainable HRM practices manage mental health challenges in digital workplaces, with a comparative priority on

appointed private and public sector organizations in India.

- To determine detailed blockchain-based HRM tools assumed for mental health support in digital workplaces within designated private and public organisations in India.
- To assess how blockchain ensures transparency, data security, and trust in mental health-related HRM processes across private and public sector organizations.
- To compare employee perceptions of the effectiveness of blockchain-driven mental health initiatives in digital work settings across selected public and private sector companies.
- To evaluate key challenges and enablers in implementing blockchain for mental health-focused sustainable HRM in the digital workplace, distinguishing between private and public sector contexts.

Research Questions

1. What specific blockchain-integrated HRM systems are implemented for employee mental health support in digital workplaces within selected public (IOC, ONGC, Coal India, BPCL, HAL, SBI) and private (Reliance, TCS, L&T, HDFC) companies in India?
2. How does blockchain contribute to improving transparency, data privacy, and trust in mental health-related HRM processes across public vs private companies?
3. How do employees in these selected private and public sector companies perceive the impact of blockchain-enabled mental health support initiatives on their well-being in digital work environments?
4. What sector-specific barriers and success factors influence blockchain adoption for mental health-focused sustainable HRM in digital workplaces in India?

This study is significant as it addresses the intersection of blockchain technology, sustainable HRM, and employee mental health—an

underexplored area in both academic and practical domains. In India, where workplace stress and digital overload are increasingly recognized as critical issues, exploring blockchain's potential to safeguard employee well-being offers timely insights (Tarafdar et al., 2007). Moreover, by comparing public and private sector companies, the study highlights sector-specific differences in adoption, implementation challenges, and employee perceptions. Findings from this research can guide policymakers, HR leaders, and technology developers in designing effective blockchain-enabled sustainable HRM practices that not only enhance mental health support but also foster long-term organizational resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The fast penetration of digital technologies into the workplace has escalated the potentialities and stress not only to labourers. Although the phenomenon of digitalization improves the performance of work, stress, burnout, and mental health issues have also become more severe (Singh & Gupta, 2025). Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) is emerging as a concept that considers the performance of the organization, together with the welfare of the employees in an organization (Griep et al., 2024). As blockchain has become an innovative technology, researchers have begun to explore the potential of the technology in HRM, specifically in increasing transparency, security, and trust (Griep et al., 2024). In this literature review, we critically evaluate the current body of research on the ways blockchain-enabled sustainable HRM can contribute to the maintenance of mental health in digital workplaces, in both the publicly funded and privately-owned organizational settings, in India, in particular.

Blockchain Technology in HRM

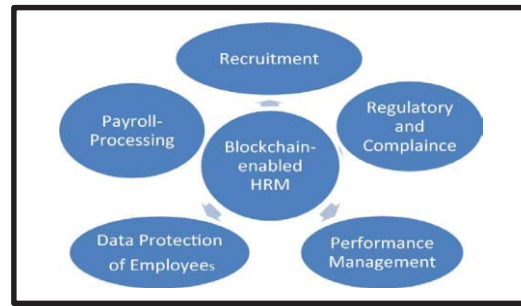


Figure 1: Application areas of blockchain technology in HRM (Source: Garima Vijh et al., 2023)

As De Filippi et al. (2020) state, blockchain has been referred to as a trust machine because it is decentralized, immutable, and transparent. The main application of blockchain in HRM is in the process of recruitment, verification of credentials, payroll, and management of employee data (Adhiatma, 2022). While these applications enhance efficiency, few scholars extend the discussion to mental health. Critics argue that blockchain remains overhyped, with limited large-scale adoption (Adhiatma, 2022). However, its ability to securely manage sensitive employee health data without manipulation or unauthorized access suggests strong potential in mental health-related HRM functions. This demonstrates a research gap where blockchain's applications in HRM have been explored mostly from an administrative efficiency perspective, but not sufficiently from a well-being perspective.

Sustainable HRM and Employee Mental Health in Digital Workplaces

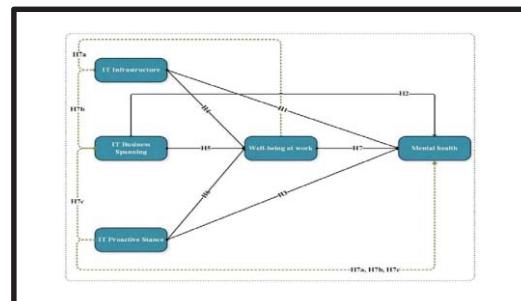


Figure 2: Association between digitalization and mental health (Source: (Sun et al., 2022)

Sustainable HRM emphasizes practices that safeguard employee well-being alongside long-term organizational success (Lu et al., 2023). WHO (2024) confirms that mental health is a critical determinant of productivity, engagement, and retention. Cases of digital burnout, anxiety, and work-related stress are on the rise in India because of hybrid and remote models (NASSCOM, 2021). Theorists like Shaheen et al. (2023) state that HRM tends to put performance results before real well-being. Blockchain may rebut this bias due to the introduction of fairness, trust, and privacy in HR procedures, and will therefore be in line with sustainable HRM values. Nevertheless, the interventions based on technology are questioned by the critics who fear that they may depersonalize mental health support and propose a balance between technological and human-resisting interventions (Shaheen et al. 2023).

Blockchain-Enabled Mental Health Support in HRM

According to Salima Hamouche et al. (2023), blockchain has the potential to prove beneficial in securing employee assistance programs, counselling records, and wellness initiatives to ensure that any form of employee harassment is put into perspective. Confidentiality and workload allocation transparency and fairness, performance reviews could also be guaranteed, supported by transparent smart contracts that minimize the stressors. However, it also has shortcomings: blockchain involves a considerable expense on infrastructure and being literate in digital equipment, which can decrease accessibility even in the Indian public sector (Adel, 2024). According to Smith and Sinkford (2022), blockchain is not the solution to centuries of stigmatization involving mental health at the workplace in India; cultural acceptance and supportive leadership are equally important. Therefore, blockchain ought to be regarded as a support, rather than an alternative, to the holistic well-being practices.

Comparative Perspectives: Public vs. Private Sector

Adoption in India

Digital HR systems, payroll, and recruitment are some fields in which firms in the private sector, such as Reliance Industries, TCS, and HDFC, have gone experimental with blockchain. On the contrary, state-owned companies such as Indian Oil Corporation, ONGC, and SBI hit the brakes, saying it was due to bureaucratic systems and budgetary constraints (Larsen, 2025). Patrucco et al. (2025) argue that while the private sector is innovation-driven, the public sector prioritizes compliance and risk aversion. This suggests that employee perceptions of blockchain-enabled mental health initiatives may vary significantly: private sector employees may value efficiency and innovation, whereas public sector employees may emphasize trust, transparency, and job security. This divergence underscores the need for comparative research, which remains underexplored in current literature.

Theoretical Perspectives

- Socio-Technical Systems Theory (Walker et al., 2008): Suggests that technology and social systems must align for effective outcomes (Walker et al., 2008). Blockchain in HRM must be embedded within supportive cultural and managerial practices to genuinely improve mental health.
- Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989): Explains employee acceptance of blockchain tools based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. If blockchain-based HRM systems are seen as overly complex, employees may resist adoption despite potential benefits.
- AMO Theory: Posits that employee performance depends on Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity. Blockchain-enabled sustainable HRM can enhance “opportunity” by fostering trust and psychological safety for employees to seek support.
- Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984): Argues that organizations must balance multiple stakeholder needs (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). Blockchain

adoption for mental health should consider employees, employers, unions, and regulators, especially in India's public sector.

Critically, while these theories provide frameworks, their integration is essential. TAM alone cannot capture cultural stigma around mental health, and Socio-Technical Theory may overlook strategic pressures faced by corporations. Thus, a multi-theoretical approach is needed.

Although blockchain's role in HRM is increasingly studied, limited attention has been given to its application in supporting mental health, particularly within sustainable HRM frameworks. Moreover, comparative studies between India's public and private sectors remain scarce, despite their distinct organizational cultures and adoption patterns. This gap provides strong justification for the present research.

The literature reveals both optimism and scepticism regarding blockchain in HRM. While blockchain offers transparency, trust, and data security, scholars caution against technological determinism and highlight the importance of organizational culture, leadership, and employee trust in shaping outcomes. Sustainable HRM offers a valuable perspective, as it bridges the connection between technological innovation and employee well-being, ultimately fostering long-term organizational resilience. Given the unique challenges in the Indian public and private sectors, a comparative study is timely and necessary.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, which emphasizes understanding social realities through subjective meanings and experiences. As the study aims to investigate the effects of blockchain-enabled sustainable HRM practices on employee mental health in digital workplaces, interpretivism should be adopted because it will recognize the unique circumstances, subtle, descriptive, and

context-dependent nature of perceptions among employees (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Contrary to positivism, which allows working with quantifiable variables, interpretivism can give more details as to how employees perceive the role of blockchain in creating the phenomena of trust, transparency, and well-being in HRM systems.

The inductive method is used, going no further initially than making specific observations because of the move towards generalizations and the development of theory (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). Since the issue of HRM incorporating blockchain to aid mental health is a relatively new field that lacks numerous empirical studies, an inductive procedure allows exploring the themes and patterns without being held by prior assumptions (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). The results will contribute to theoretical backgrounds concerning sustainable HRM, adoption of technologies, and mental health within an organization.

The given exploratory design of the study is possible due to the newness of blockchain applications in HRM and the lack of a body of empirical research. It enables one to be flexible when exploring the issues that remain under-researched, especially when making a comparative analysis of the public and private sector contexts in India (Hay et al., 2019). The convergent exploratory design helps in framing new knowledge concerning the opportunities and barriers to blockchain-enabled HRM in mental-health development.

In this study, the secondary method of data collection will be used. Sources of information will include peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, organizational reports, white papers in the industry, and authentic websites. Information about companies operating in the public sector (IOC, ONGC, Coal India, BPCL, HAL, and SBI) and the private companies (Reliance, TCS, L&T, and HDFC) will be used to build a comparison on practices followed by the providers. Secondary data would be

suitable because it enables the researcher to have access to the broad scope of knowledge regarding the previous findings and, at the same time, remains feasible and economical.

Thematic analysis will be used to identify, analyse, and interpret recurring patterns in the collected data. Themes such as blockchain-enabled transparency, employee trust, privacy in mental health data, and sector-specific barriers will be coded and compared. This approach enables the systematic synthesis of secondary sources while aligning with the interpretivist philosophy by highlighting diverse perspectives (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Although the study uses secondary data, ethical rigor will be maintained by ensuring that all sources are credible, properly cited, and free from plagiarism. Sensitive information from organizational reports will be handled responsibly, ensuring confidentiality and integrity (Anyanwu et al., 2024). The researcher will also adopt transparency in interpretation, avoiding bias and misrepresentation of data to ensure academic honesty and reliability.

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Blockchain for Transparency, Privacy, and Trust

Across the reviewed literature and industry reports, blockchain is consistently highlighted as a tool for enhancing transparency and trust in HRM processes. In private sector companies such as Reliance Industries and TCS, blockchain is being explored to manage sensitive employee health records securely, ensuring that mental health disclosures remain confidential and tamper-proof. Similarly, there has also been a pilot of blockchain in payroll and data authentication in the public organizations (SBI and IOC) that has had an indirect contribution to employee trust towards the HR systems. Notwithstanding, Duan et al. (2024) also opine that the adoption of blockchain is at an infantile level

with minimal considerable application. Although King et al. (2021) claim that transparency enhances psychological safety and promotes the willingness of employees to talk about their mental condition, critics warn that blockchain is not able to overcome work-related stigma or cultural barriers to revealing mental health disorders.

2. Enablers and Challenges in Implementation

The evidence shows that there are special facilitators and challenges to the introduction of blockchain-enabled HRM of mental health in the public and private sectors. At the business/private sector level, the enabling factors are good digital infrastructure, an ability to invest more, and the culture of innovation, as witnessed in TCS and HDFC (HDFC, 2021; TCS, 2025). Such companies prove more dynamic in testing blockchain technology in support of employee well-being. Contrastingly, public sector companies like ONGC and Coal India are hindered by bureaucracy, legacy systems, and budget pools that all restrict innovation. The common theme in the two industries involves the high price of embracing blockchain technology, poor digital literacy levels, and fear of data interoperability. In addition, the presence of organizational resistance to change, particularly in the case of the public sector, is also an obstacle to full integration (Lopes & Miguel, 2024). The results indicate that implementation preparations must be made in organizational terms and on a cultural basis before blockchain can be considered a possibility.

3. Employee Perceptions of Blockchain in Mental Health Support

According to secondary sources, although there is little direct survey data on employees, there is some incongruence in the perception data across sectors based on reports and case studies. Even in privately owned companies, such as L&T and HDFC, employees claimed to have a positive perception of blockchain-based initiatives, especially their roles in encouraging fairness in work allocation and privacy

in the process of accessing mental health services (Mittal, 2017). Conversely, the employees who work in a public company like BPCL and HAL (firstly) or have no prior knowledge about blockchain systems (secondly) feel cynical because they worry about being over-monitored (Deshpande, 2019). It indicates that technological characteristics alone do not determine the acceptance of employees, but additionally, such aspects as organizational culture, digital literacy, and the already existing, or lack of, trust in management. Therefore, the adoption of blockchain as part of mental health support needs infrastructure related to technology and a supportive culture.

The three important insights come out in the analysis. To start with, blockchain can improve trust, privacy, and transparency concerning HRM procedures, which is why it is a prospective vehicle in terms of mental health support. Second, patterns of adoption are quite different: the pattern of adoption is innovative in government apparatus, whereas it is conservative and limited by structural constraints in the case of government businesses. Third, employees' attitudes vary between sectors, and employees in the private sector are more receptive to blockchain-related initiatives than government employees in the public sector. These results support the position of the organizational context as a determinant of the successful application of blockchain-based sustainable HRM.

These findings are consistent with the socio-technical systems theory that states that to attain the desired outcomes, technology needs to be streamlined with organizational culture and social practices. Although Azhar (2024) is right to point out that blockchain has the potential to facilitate data security and confidence, whether it is capable of promoting mental health is determined by more comprehensive HR policies, top management initiatives, and cultural tolerance. The findings also confirm the Technology Acceptance Model in the sense that the perceptions of employees regarding the usefulness and simplicity of using blockchain are the key factors

that determine adoption. Significantly, the paper makes it clear that blockchain cannot be considered as a solution by itself and should be used as an enabling mechanism of mental health support. The benefits of blockchain will have a restricted scope without supporting efforts, i.e., counselling services, awareness campaigns, and leadership courses.

In sum, the analysis indicates that blockchain-powered sustainable HRM has a good prospect of overcoming mental health issues in the case of digital workplaces in India. Nevertheless, specific approaches should be used: in the case of the former institution, a drive towards innovation should be utilised, and in the case of the latter institution, the specific actions to be taken ought to be aimed at closing the structural gaps and also encouraging a culture of digital literacy.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCHES

This research has critically reviewed the importance of sustainable HRM practices enabled by blockchain in contributing to employee mental health in digital workplace environments, with a comparative bearing on the case of some selected firms in India (both the public and the private sectors). The results demonstrate the potential usefulness of blockchain to increase the level of transparency, privacy, and trust in HR management operations and make employees less afraid of seeking mental health assistance due to fear of discrimination or cognizant of data abuse. Nonetheless, the patterns of adoption vary by sector; where in the case of private firms like TCS, HDFC and Reliance, the adoption rates are higher as they have a better digital foundation and the culture of innovation, the adoption rate is lower in public firms like ONGC, SBI and coal India due to the bureaucratic nature, cost, and digital literacy issues. Notably, blockchain is not the single solution to the mental health issues that happen in workplaces; its effect is determined by how it is aligned with the organizational culture, leadership, and policies in human resources.

- According to the Use Cases of Pilot Undertakings, Private companies are advised to consolidate pilot blockchain adoption regarding mental health, whereas the government authorities must focus on building appropriate capacities and staggered adoption processes (Campagna & Bhada, 2024).
- Employee Awareness and Training: Organizations should educate employees on the benefits of blockchain-enabled HRM, reducing scepticism and resistance.
- Integration with Holistic Well-Being Programs: Blockchain should complement – not replace – counselling services, employee assistance programs, and wellness initiatives (Maluegha et al., 2024).
- Policy and Regulatory Support: Regulators in government and the industry need to provide guidelines on blockchain application in employee health data management to facilitate necessary control in the space to manage health ethically and safely (J et al., 2023).

The present study was based on secondary data, so employee perceptions and organizational conduct might have been colourless in this case. The analysis did not involve primary data such as interviews or surveys, which could have provided richer insights (Kelly et al., 2024). Additionally, the findings are context-specific to India and may not be directly generalizable to other regions.

Future research can adopt primary data collection through surveys and interviews with employees and HR managers to capture firsthand experiences of blockchain-enabled HRM in mental health support. Comparative studies across different countries or industries could provide broader insights into adoption patterns. Moreover, future work could explore the integration of blockchain with other emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to create more comprehensive and personalized employee well-being solutions.

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