



ACADEMY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

THE HUMAN ODYSSEY

NEWSLETTER

Feb- March- April -May

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Dear Readers ,

**Greetings from Academy of HRD,
Ahmedabad!**

We are delighted to bring forth the latest volume of “The Human Odyssey”. As the Organizations across the globe have adjusted well to the new normal and learnt the ways of modern management the learning has been constant for leaders and managers for creating well being practices and empowering teams.

AHRD also continues to be a course of learning for its community. We have a consistent flow of coursework classes which inspires our scholars for world class research. We also continue to provide management development programs for students and executives.

Happy to share that the fellows are contributing and writing their insights as they progress their journey as researchers. Hope overall it will be a delight to go through our initiatives. Look forward to your suggestions & feedback.

Best Wishes,

**Dr. Shreshtha Dabral
Director**



VIRTUAL CLASS

PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH

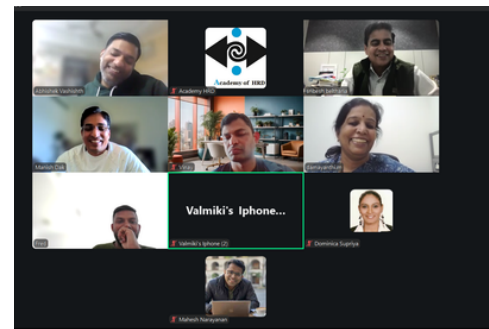


The academic year for the batch 2025 started with course work “Philosophy of Research”.

The session was facilitated by Prof. Rajesh Chandwani, Chairman AHRD, Professor at IIM Ahmedabad.

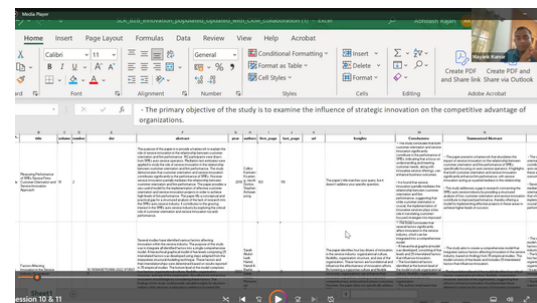
Structured Equation Modelling

Dr. Abhishek Vashisht, Associate Director, Tetr College of Business facilitated the session on “Structured Equation Modelling” for the batch 2024.



Systematic Literature Review

Prof. Mayank Kumar, IIM Bangalore facilitated the session on “Systematic Literature Review” for the fellow batch 2025.



AHRD NEWS

CHRO CONCLAVE 2026



We extend our sincere gratitude to Ganpat University – Centre for Management Studies and Research for the opportunity to be associated as the Knowledge Partner for the CHRO Conclave 2026.

It was an honour to be part of this distinguished platform, which brought together HR leaders, industry experts, academicians, and practitioners to exchange insights on the evolving world of work, leadership, and people practices.

A special note of thanks to Dr. Mahendra Sharma, Pro-Chancellor & Director General (Vice Chancellor), for presenting a memento to our Director, Dr. Shreshtha Dabral, on behalf of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD), recognizing our valued partnership and shared commitment to advancing excellence in human resource development and management education.

It is a privilege for the Academy of Human Resources Development (AHRD) to collaborate on this esteemed platform alongside fellow knowledge partners, contributing to meaningful dialogue and advancing thought leadership in the HR domain.

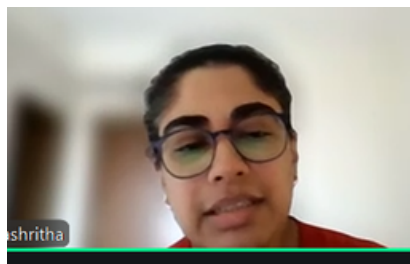
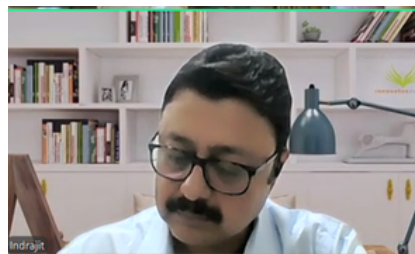
Our appreciation to the organizing team for bringing together such a distinguished forum of HR leaders and practitioners.

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

FINAL THESIS PRESENTATION

AHRD Proudly acknowledge the successful completion of the academic milestone ; the Final Thesis Presentation of the following scholars

Mr. Indrajit Chatterjee, Fellow Scholar completed his final stage of fellowship “**Final Thesis Presentation**” on 18 Feb 2026. His topic was “*Role of Family Business Owner in Succession Planning - a sectoral study in Specialty Chemical Companies in Mumbai*”



Ms. Aashritha Mathur Fellow Scholar, completed her final stage of fellowship “**Final Thesis Presentation**” on 18 Feb 2026. Her Topic was *Exploring the role of Spirituality and Self-Esteem in nurturing Resilience in working professionals.*

TITLE DEFENSE

The scholars reached their last phase of fellowship “**The Research Presentation**”. Scholars shared their research ideas and took a step forward in their fellowship path. We are delighted to congratulate our scholars on the successful completion of their **Title Defense**, a significant milestone in their Research Journey.

Best Wishes for Your Research Journey Ahead!



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INSIGHT SHARING

HRD as Sensemaking Infrastructure in BANI Organizations



Mr. Rahul Jha

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Cheers Interactive**

The contemporary organizational environment has moved beyond the familiar VUCA framework into what is increasingly described as a BANI world—Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible. Unlike VUCA, which focused largely on external instability, BANI emphasizes human vulnerability, emotional strain, and interpretive breakdowns. In such contexts, organizations struggle not because of a lack of information, but because of an inability to generate shared meaning. This shift elevates Human Resource Development (HRD) from a training-oriented function to what may be understood as a critical sensemaking infrastructure embedded within organizational life.

Sensemaking refers to the process through which individuals and groups interpret ambiguous signals and construct meaning that enables action.

Research in organization studies highlights that meaning does not reside in data or events themselves but emerges through interaction, dialogue, and reflection. In BANI environments, where cause-and-effect relationships are unclear and anxiety is high, sensemaking becomes central to organizational functioning. HRD systems, through leadership development, onboarding, and learning architectures, play a key role in shaping how sensemaking occurs.

This interpretation suggests that the value of HRD in BANI contexts lies less in content delivery and more in shaping how individuals collectively interpret unfolding realities.

From an HRD perspective, development interventions must move beyond skill acquisition to foster interpretive capability. Programs that integrate reflective practice, facilitated dialogue, storytelling, and multi-perspective analysis help employees navigate ambiguity more effectively. Leadership development initiatives can deliberately include ambiguous scenarios that require judgment rather than technical solutions. Such designs strengthen cognitive flexibility and reduce overreliance on simplistic explanations.

HRD also functions as a narrative alignment mechanism.

In BANI contexts, fragmented interpretations can quickly lead to confusion and misaligned action. HRD practices such as after-action reviews, learning forums, and cross-functional reflection sessions help consolidate diverse experiences into shared organizational understanding. These mechanisms build institutional memory and enable future sensemaking.

Equally important is HRD's role in fostering psychological safety. Sensemaking requires openness to doubt, questioning, and alternative viewpoints. HRD can cultivate such conditions by legitimizing inquiry, supporting leader vulnerability, and embedding reflective norms into development processes.

Conceptually, this reframing positions HRD not as a peripheral support function, but as the organizational mechanism through which ambiguity is interpreted and coordinated action becomes possible.

In conclusion, viewing HRD as sensemaking infrastructure provides a powerful lens for understanding its strategic value in BANI organizations. This perspective extends HRD theory beyond competence building toward meaning creation, collective interpretation, and organizational resilience, thereby positioning HRD as a strategic interpretive function in contemporary organizations.

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Working Women, Working Mother



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Working women across generations have been navigating their professional and caregiving responsibilities with grit and resilience. It is pertinent to acknowledge their contribution as a strategic imperative towards organizational excellence. Organizations need to eschew archaic structures that impede a woman's potential, redefine policies & practices that enhance capabilities to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Historically, women entered the mainstream workforce in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We observed a significant rise in female labor force participation post the World Wars in the 20th century. The 21st-century globalization is marked by stupendous acceleration in digitalization & global shifts; women have an important role to play in these interesting times.

The women of today have galvanized the workforce through their strength and presence across various ecosystems and markets. Women are exceptional corporate leaders when they are given actual power and responsibility, not merely appointed to positions cosmetically with limited participation in key managerial positions. As per McKinsey's Women in the Workplace Report 2025, more women are joining the workforce at entry levels, the number is declining at managerial levels, and then it funnels into a broken rung at the C-suite levels. This hourglass effect is visible and a matter of reflection in OECD countries as well. We must deliberate upon these findings to address the systematic inequalities in a real and robust manner.

As women take on more paid work, they are regarded at the same time as natural multitaskers or caregivers. While there is a sense of joy and freedom attached to working and balancing it with caregiving responsibilities, this balancing act could become staggering at a point. The working hours for women widen as they get married and enter the childcare phase during their life

stage along with their professional trajectory. As a matter of fact, working women get limited time to pursue their own wellness and self-care priorities. They have to work double shifts in certain essential sectors, sleeping fewer hours in their prime working years, as per recent studies. There is a case for reimagining the workplace & organization that has ethical profit at its front and center. In the current “polycrisis” era, women can catalyze conscious capitalism, ensuring organizations thrive amidst uncertainty. Their creative and nurturing force, especially at a leadership level, can forge equitable institutions with an enduring value system. Their strength in empowering productive efficiency and elevating the collective consciousness must be leveraged at all levels for progress.

The advent of AI, the digital age, and generational shifts command us to move from authoritarian to a creative style of leadership. Flexibility offered to caregiving mothers makes the system anti-fragile. The post-COVID era has provided us with an opportunity to realize hybrid coexistence without compromising on performance metrics. The Scandinavian model of formalizing part-time employment, parental leave, public investment in childcare infrastructure, and structural capability-building initiatives can help create intergenerational compounding effects in both the formal and informal workforces.

The appointment of Sanae Takaichi as the first-ever female head of state in a culturally conservative country like Japan symbolizes steps towards infusing economic vitality into its ageing ecosystem.

India, aspiring to become a developed state under the Viksit Bharat mandate of 2047, can harness the potential of its women’s workforce beautifully. Women, from the armed forces to medicine, law, space research, and even frontline healthcare volunteers as ASHA workers, have consistently proven their mettle. A rising India moves towards institutional maturity, whole-of-society approach is necessary if it wants to realise its manifest destiny.

We must be responsible and carry forward our legacy wisely towards a more inclusive and equitable future of work.

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When “Meaning” is not enough – *Boundary conditions and the dark side of “Meaningful Work”*



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Beyond merely carrying out their assigned tasks and receiving financial rewards, employees are driven by a desire to find deeper meaning and significance in their work. Though it cannot undermine the relevance of other factors, a silent quest for meaningful work has its own space. “Meaningful work” has emerged as a highly valued job attribute, with employees often willing to sacrifice higher income and advancement prospects in pursuit of greater meaning in their roles. Many professionals actively reflect on the significance of their work and seek to understand its inherent value. The concept of meaningful work has roots in philosophy and psychology, particularly existentialism, which views the search for purpose as a fundamental human motivation. Frankl (1963) argued that

meaning comes from engaging in purposeful actions and contributing to others. This idea now plays a key role in organizational sciences, defining meaningful work as purposeful, significant, and valuable. Research consistently shows meaningful work boosts well-being and resilience, and within the Job Demands–Resources model, it is seen as a resource that helps buffer stress and prevent burnout. Meaningful work is a subjective experience (Rosso et al., 2010) shaped by episodic moments that people integrate into an overall sense of their work's significance (Bailey and Madden, 2017). Steger et al. (2012) define meaningful work through three main dimensions: **psychological meaningfulness** (perceiving one's work as valuable), **meaning making** (work as a core source of meaning and self-understanding), and **greater good motivations** (the drive to positively impact society).

The Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) identifies meaningful work as a crucial psychological factor contributing to increased job satisfaction, enhanced work quality, and reduced turnover rates. Allan et al. (2019) demonstrated that meaningful work exhibits correlations with work engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, sense of

life meaning, general health, and withdrawal intentions, organizational citizenship behaviors and self-assessed job performance. Meaningful work has been shown to positively influence productivity, commitment, and innovative behavior. Additionally, Meng & Lin (2023) noted that meaningful work helps mitigate the adverse effects of hindrance stressors. These findings underscore the value of meaningful work as a significant personal resource.

But, like any other positive organizational & personal resources, meaningful work has its own limitations. Moreover, it also has a dark side producing counter-productive effects in certain situations. While we emphasize the positive side that has been extensively researched and published, it's worthwhile to present the other side of the story.

Boundary Conditions of Meaningful Work

Recent studies indicate that even strong psychological resources like finding meaning in one's work can lose their effectiveness in very demanding jobs. When people face constant high demands at work, their energy gets drained, which can reduce the positive impact of meaningful work. For example, research in healthcare and human services shows that meaningful work helps prevent emotional burnout when workloads are moderate, but its benefits fade as job demands increase (Bakker et al., 2005; Van den Tooren & De Jonge, 2010). The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory sheds light on this by focusing on how ongoing stress

leads to the depletion of personal resources (Hobfoll, 2001). While meaningful work is valuable, employees who deal with relentless high demands may not have enough time to recover, leading to a cycle of resource loss. Van den Broeck et al. (2011) discovered that motivational resources only help buffer stress up to a certain point—after which heavy job demands take over.

The Dark Side of Meaningful Work

Apart from its limitations, meaningful work also can have negative consequences. Scholars contend that meaningful work may heighten emotional investment, moral responsibility, and identity attachment, thereby potentially increasing susceptibility to stress and strain. When employees find their work deeply meaningful, they are more likely to go above and beyond, take on too much, and endure tough situations because they believe their efforts have value or moral importance.

Empirical research supports this viewpoint. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) observed that zookeepers who regarded their roles as meaningful were willing to tolerate suboptimal working conditions and significant workloads, which ultimately led to higher levels of strain and burnout. Employees engaged in meaningful work may unknowingly harm themselves by working excessive hours and neglecting rest, a phenomenon referred to as "passion exploitation," wherein the sense of purpose increase tolerance but may compromise well-being.

Thus, meaningful work can function as a double-edged sword since, while it offers fulfilment and satisfaction, the resulting intense commitment may obstruct the necessary detachment from work, contributing to potential health concerns and diminished work-life balance. This should not deter employees from searching for meaning, nor should it impede progressive employers in providing meaningful job profiles, but one needs to be careful about its boundaries of influence and the negative consequences.

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Women in Leadership and Strategic Decision Making in the UAE Private Sector



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In today's rapidly changing business environment, organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of diversity in leadership. Diverse leadership teams bring different perspectives, experiences and ideas which often lead to better decision-making and stronger organizational performance. Among the various dimensions of diversity, gender diversity has emerged as a key factor in promoting innovation, sustainability and effective governance.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made significant progress in advancing gender equality and empowering women in leadership. Through government initiatives, policy reforms and educational opportunities; women have gained greater access to professional careers and leadership positions across both public

and private sectors. As a result, women now play an increasingly visible role in the country's economic and organizational development.

However, while more women are occupying managerial and executive positions, an important question remains: **Do they have a meaningful influence on strategic decision-making?** Representation alone does not guarantee participation in key organizational decisions. Therefore, it is important to examine not only the number of women in leadership positions but also their actual involvement in shaping organizational strategies and policies.

Women in Leadership

Leadership is closely connected to decision-making. Effective leaders identify challenges, analyze information, evaluate alternatives, manage risks and implement solutions that support organizational goals. Research has consistently shown that leadership teams with diverse perspectives are better equipped to solve complex problems and generate innovative ideas. This makes gender diversity a valuable asset in today's competitive business environment.

Studies suggest that women often bring collaborative and participative leadership styles to organizations. They tend to encourage open communication,

teamwork and inclusive discussions which allows employees to contribute ideas and perspectives. Such leadership approaches can improve employee engagement, strengthen workplace relationships and create a culture of trust and transparency.

Another important strength associated with women leaders is emotional intelligence. The ability to understand and manage interpersonal relationships helps leaders navigate challenges, resolve conflicts and guide organizations through periods of change. These qualities contribute positively to employee development, talent retention and overall organizational effectiveness.

Challenges facing women leaders

Despite the progress made in the UAE, women still face several challenges in advancing to senior decision-making roles. Traditional perceptions of leadership, limited access to influential networks, work-life balance pressures and the absence of strong organizational support systems can restrict women's opportunities for advancement. Overcoming these barriers requires organizations to adopt inclusive policies, leadership development programs, mentorship opportunities and flexible work arrangements.

Strategic Value of Women's Leadership

Promoting women's participation in leadership is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic business decision.

Organizations that embrace gender inclusive leadership often experience higher levels of innovation, strong problem solving capabilities, improved governance and enhanced organizational reputation. Diverse leadership teams are better positioned to understand complex market dynamics and respond effectively to changing business conditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, women's participation in leadership and strategic decision-making is becoming increasingly important for organizational success. The UAE has created a strong foundation for women's advancement however continued efforts are needed to ensure meaningful participation in strategic decisions. By fostering inclusive workplace cultures and removing barriers to leadership, better decision-making and sustainable long-term growth. Empowering women in leadership should therefore be viewed not only as a social responsibility but also as a strategic investment in the future success and competitiveness of organizations.

The Illusion of Alignment - When Reactions Replace Real Agreement

management
communication
resources - execution
goals skills values processes
human silos organization
alignment strategy
leaders teams people
systems culture results
accountability
performance
engagement



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Organizations and teams often move forward with decisions that appear to have collective agreement, when in reality, many individuals privately hold reservations about them. In management literature, this phenomenon is commonly associated with the Abilene Paradox — a situation where groups collectively agree to actions that none of the individuals genuinely support.

Behind this paradox lies a quieter psychological force: **Pluralistic Ignorance**. This happens when individuals privately disagree with something but assume that others support it. Because of that assumption, they stay silent. Each person thinks they are the only one who feels differently — when in reality, everyone feels the same.

Pluralistic ignorance explains the silence. The Abilene Paradox is what happens because of that silence.

While this phenomenon has always existed, today's work environment — especially with a digitally native workforce — may be making it more common.

Modern communication platforms have significantly changed how workplace interactions occur. Teams now collaborate extensively through WhatsApp groups, Microsoft Teams channels, emails, and workplace collaboration tools where quick reactions often replace detailed discussions.

Consider a typical workplace scenario. A Manager proposes on a team WhatsApp group: *“Let's move the deadline to Friday and push the current scope.”*

Within minutes, the message shows multiple thumbs-up reactions. No questions. No concerns. The manager interprets this as alignment. But privately, some team members feel the timeline is unrealistic. Others believe the scope is unclear. A few think it may affect quality. Yet no one wants to be the only person to question the plan in a visible group setting.

The safest option is to react, not respond.

What looks like agreement is often just **digital silence dressed as approval**.

This is where the Abilene Paradox meets the realities of a Gen Z workplace.

Now, remember that Gen Z professionals have grown up in environments shaped by visibility and instant feedback — likes 👍, reactions 🙌,

and social validation 🙏.

Expressing disagreement in a public digital space can feel riskier than staying silent. Add to this the pressures of early careers and constant digital engagement, - the default response often becomes *compliance rather than challenge*.

It is important to note that this is not a Generational weakness. Every Generation adapts to its context. Today's context simply makes quiet agreement easier than open discussion.

The risk for Organizations is not disagreement — *it is the illusion of alignment*.

When decisions move forward based on assumed consensus, the consequences often appear later. Concerns that were never voiced begin to surface during execution, ownership remains weak, rework increases, and frustration builds quietly beneath the surface.

Breaking this pattern does not require major structural changes. Often, small shifts in how leaders invite responses can make a meaningful difference.

For instance instead of asking, “Is everyone okay with this?”, it helps to ask, “What concerns do you see?”

Seeking individual inputs rather than relying on group silence, using anonymous feedback for sensitive matters, and treating dissent as a constructive contribution rather than negativity can gradually build a culture where honest perspectives are shared more openly.

In digital workplaces, reactions are easy. Reflection is not.

In the age of instant communication, the real leadership challenge is not getting people to agree. It is making it safe for someone to say, “*I’m not sure this will work.*”

After all, organizations don’t fail because people disagree — they fail when everyone agrees too easily.

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