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HUMANISM, HOLISM, HARMONIZATION – CLASSICS OF HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT (HCM) IN THE FACE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

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Purpose: presenting the results of considerations on the importance of the ideas of humanism, holism and harmonization in the contemporary theory and practice of HCM.
Design/methodology/approach: the literature research covers the period 2010-2025. Empirical research was conducted by content analysis of 179 abstracts submitted to the 13th Congress of HRM Departments, which took place in 2025.
Findings: the following opposing/alternative trends to those preferred in HCM were identified: 1/ humanism – dehumanization, posthumanism, and transhumanism; 2/ holism – specialization and fragmentation; 3/ harmonization – chaos, improvisation, and coercion. The formulated conclusions are intended to open up new perspectives for the development of HCM theory and practice. However, they do not constitute a basis for changing HCM paradigms. However, they point to the need to verify the research methodology used in diagnosing and analyzing HCM-related phenomena.
Research limitations/implications: Limitations primarily concern the specificity of the source materials; the analyzed abstracts are not representative of the global knowledge base. However, due to the conference's prestige and national scope, they are representative of Polish scholarship. An additional limitation is the lack of research conducted in business practice on similar topics. Supplementing the presented considerations with the perspective of existing organizations would highlight the gap between HCM theory and practice in perceiving the evolution of holistic, humanistic, and harmonized approaches.
Practical implications: The considerations described here are of crucial practical importance, especially in the field of education for HR specialists. They also highlight the ethical and social threats to the development of alternative diving, and consequently, the need to create and implement control mechanisms and prevent/limit unacceptable practices.
Social implications: The issue of humanization of work and the existing or emerging threats to it is a key topic related to society, both in the macro context (the labor market) and micro context (the mechanisms of human functioning in the work environment). The trends presented in this article concern ongoing activities related to dehumanization, fragmentation, and lack of cohesion in human work, which can pose a significant threat, especially in the context of technological and cultural changes.
Originality/value: a new look at the evolution of HCM.
Keywords: humanizm, holizm, harmonizacja, dehumanizacja, transhumanizm.
Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Amid the countless scientific papers presenting research results on narrowly defined research problems, one cannot help but reflect on the holistic approach to human management in the context of evolutionary changes in social and economic life. Perhaps the time has come to review and organize the knowledge presented in previous years, identifying new trends, and even propose a name for the next stage in the history of management science. If managing people in organizations has been referred to as "human resources" or "human capital" management, is it time to recognize a different contribution of humans to the functioning of organizations, and thus a different role played within these entities? Assuming that the ideas of humanism, holism, and harmonization have thus far driven the evolution of human management science, the following research questions were formulated: 1) What views and approaches in contemporary human management constitute the opposite or alternative to humanism, holism, and harmonization? 2) Do the identified views and approaches contribute to a shift in the human management paradigms? The literature research that forms the basis for the considerations covers the period 2010-2025. Additionally, in order to deepen the analysis of the evolution of HRM phenomena, a review of 179 abstracts submitted to the 13th Congress of HRM Departments, which took place in 2025, was conducted. As a result of the research, the following trends were identified, which are opposite/alternative to the preferred ones in HRM, namely:

a) humanism – dehumanization, posthumanism, and transhumanism,

b) holism – specialization and fragmentation,

c) harmonization – chaos, improvisation, and coercion.

In accordance with the idealistic approach, it is postulated to maintain the current HCM paradigms, taking into account new technologies as an element of human support in work processes, and not humans as passive executors of commands generated by the products of new technology.

2. Humanism, holism, harmonization in HCM

B. Kożuch, using the term "contemporary organizational humanism" in her study, stated that interest in the aforementioned subject dates back to the 1930s and arose from disappointment with the methods of scientific work organization and classical organizational theory (Kożuch, 2016). However, it cannot be assumed that the founders of scientific management downplayed the aspect of human dignity and the value of human work (Mikuła, 2000). A. Borowski, a researcher of the historical evolution of the concept of "humanism",

noted that proponents of this term were guided by the idea of a "rebirth of humanity". In a very simplified approach, humanism emphasized the value of each person and creating conditions for the development of their abilities (competencies) and potential. This term was interpreted ambiguously, closely linked to the historical, religious, geopolitical, and cultural context. However, a common element could be identified, namely a focus on individual and collective identity, i.e., the humanity of a specific person, but also of a social group; Moreover, the relationship between individual humanity and a given reality, especially social reality (Borowski, 2009). For several years, attempts have been made to redefine these fundamental categories, namely "humanity" and "human dignity," and consequently, behavioral patterns and social norms. Posthumanism analyzes humans in a new biotechnological reality and places them in a surprising position. As Zawojski notes (Zawojski, 2017), in the "new world", the limitations of the natural "human form" will be overcome, and the boundaries of humanity will be transcended. Transhumanism, on the other hand, promotes the vision of a "posthuman" who, through neurotechnological, biotechnological, and nanotechnological tools (implants, vaccines, prostheses, etc.), strives to overcome human limitations.

S. Lem described an interesting picture of this reality in one of his short stories, presenting the story of the fictional character Harry Johns, against whom Cybernetics Comp. filed a lawsuit seeking the seizure of property owed to it due to unpaid debt. The defendant participated in numerous car races, resulting in accidents. After each accident, he contacted the company, which manufactures prosthetic arms, legs, artificial kidneys, hearts, and other replacement organs. Johns purchased a prosthetic left leg, two prosthetic arms, a chest, a neck, and other body parts on installment plans, including a deluxe version of a Geniak electronic brain replacing a cerebral hemisphere. When the defendant's debt reached $29,863, Cybernetics Comp. filed a claim for the repayment of all purchased prosthetics. The money was never recovered. However, the company agreed to completely "genialize" Johns, meaning to replace his last, natural part of the brain with a second Geniak device. As debts mounted, the parties met in court. However, a procedural issue arose: was Johns still a human being or a "self-proclaimed prosthetic device" that should become the property of Cybernetics Comp. (Lem, 2017). Another example illustrating the issue of social change is the statement of the protagonist of another novel, Sirim Keeton, who, remembering his friend, lamented that his parents never "optimized" him because "they were among the handful of twentieth-century fossils who still believed in God and believed that His work should not be improved" (Watt, 2011). The stories of "geniusization" and "optimization" cited above are examples taken from fantasy literature. However, is this a "song of the distant future", or a state possible today, held back only by the prevailing social norms of these "twentieth-century fossils"?

In the era of Reality 5.0, which by definition declares the homocentrism of technology, we may be surprised by an important fact: the diminishing of the role of the human as a human (an individual, valuable entity). Humans are far from the ideal (an infallible, perfect, and fast "working subject"). The products of modern technology, especially digital technology,

are decidedly more perfect than humans. The gradual shift away from the idea of humanism can be observed not only in management sciences. Generally, posthumanism and transhumanism are developing, called by some authors the "non-human turn" (Zawojski, 2017), as well as the period of the "end of humanity" (Fukuyama, 2004), or the "post-human period" (Braidotti, 2014). The mental groundwork is being prepared so that the stories mentioned at the beginning can function without causing moral dilemmas.

However, there is still a group of scientists who recognize the need to spark a scientific discussion about the serious issue of dehumanization of work, that is, the level of dehumanization characterized by the loss of humanistic or even humanitarian values (Mączyńska, 2025; Kopka, 2017; Janowska, 2021). We should ask ourselves a fundamental question: what is more beneficial to us as living beings functioning in our current form: supporting and developing the ideas of transhumanism, or directing scientific potential towards creating "tools" that support the functioning of "imperfect" humans (e.g., digital equipment, applications, devices, etc.)? The question, of course, belongs to the catalog of interdisciplinary and far-reaching issues.

The above observation consequently justifies the use of a holistic approach to problems occurring in human capital management. This is also justified from a methodological perspective, because in explaining social phenomena, and phenomena related to human capital undoubtedly include such phenomena, attention should be paid to examining the whole, not just individual elements, because in relation to the whole, detached parts can be misunderstood or interpreted incorrectly. As Rybicki (2022) noted, in organization and management theory, the concepts of holistic, systemic, and network approaches are used, which have many common elements and are sometimes perceived as synonyms. It is assumed that their essence lies primarily in treating reality in a comprehensive, holistic manner. The need for a holistic approach to the analysis of human capital management phenomena is also justified by macro- and microeconomic premises, including the high degree of interconnectedness, globalization and virtualization of markets with their simultaneous instability, changing social values of employees, and demographic changes (Hecklau et al., 2016).

A complementary idea to holism is harmonization. Social and economic phenomena occurring in organizations should not only be observed but also organized holistically. Karol Adamiecki introduced harmonization as a practice in management, thus attempting to legitimize it as a scientific discipline. Based on many years of research (conducted since 1895) and industrial practice, he demonstrated that organizing work is not only an "art" but also a "science", as it "is based on three laws of nature: 1) division (analysis), 2) concentration (synthesis), and 3) harmony (rhythm)" (Geisler, 1924). In a series of three articles, Adamiecki (1924a, 1924b, 1924c) presented the essence of harmony among "organs" (devices, machines, etc.), time (synchronization of individual activities), and people (selection of team members). The author's reason for undertaking this research is interesting. Adamiecki wrote that he was tasked with increasing production in a small division of an ironworks. Foreign advisors

concluded that the reason for the low results was the sluggishness of Polish workers, so, driven by national pride, he decided to verify this (Adamiecki, 1924a). However, leaving aside the author's motivation, it should be noted that, faced with the problem of efficiency, he applied scientific methods of analysis to solve the problem. In this way, he formulated the foundations for work harmonization, which in subsequent years became the basis for the creation of numerous management methods, techniques, and tools. The language used by the author sounds somewhat naive and general in modern times, but the essence of the idea is universal. According to Adamiecki, time losses in the work process result from two reasons: a) the poor selection of organs, and b) the lack of timely harmonization of their operation. Therefore, "every work should be performed according to a plan prepared in advance and based on a rigorous examination (analysis) of all work elements" (Adamiecki, 1924b). One cannot ignore another aspect of the work that interested Adamiecki, namely the selection of people in the team, which he called spiritual harmony. "Although the laws of spiritual harmony cannot be expressed in mathematical terms, the principles on which it is based can be precisely formulated, and the science of work organization accepts for granted that the highest economic efficiency cannot be achieved unless the principles of spiritual harmony are also fully applied. (...) If the principles of spiritual harmony are observed in organizing human work for the highest good of the working man and all of humanity, if, striving for the highest ideals, we apply sound judgment of a higher order, introduce discipline stemming from higher moral motives, and are guided by justice, in a word, if we apply all the principles of spiritual harmony (...) then there is no doubt that the science of work organization will become one of the most powerful cultural factors in the coming era and will contribute to man finding in work a source of the highest riches, not only material but also moral" (Adamiecki, 1924c). Unfortunately, reality on a global scale has proven brutal. Nevertheless, currently an idea similar to Adamiecki's vision is reflected, among others, in the UN Sustainable Development Strategy (UN, 2015).

3. Paradygmaty w zarządzaniu kapitałem ludzkim

Ł. Sułkowski (2014), adopting the author's classification of paradigms in HRM (Fig. 1), noted that the functionalist paradigm dominates in Polish science; works based on the assumptions of radical structuralism and postmodernism are rare.

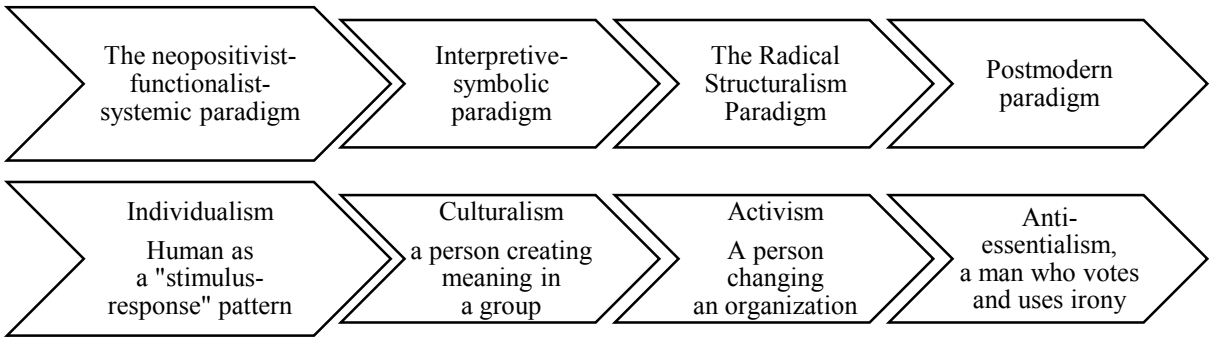

Figure 1. Paradigms in Human Resource Management.

Source: prepared based on Sułkowski, 2014, pp. 79-90.

Assuming the evolutionary transition from HRM to HCM (Fig. 2) following M. Juchnowicz, HCM can be considered "a specific way of managing in the human sphere, the aim of which is to create added value for all stakeholder groups" (Juchnowicz, 2014). Therefore, the HCM concept emphasizes a subjective approach to employees as internal customers and partners. Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that in the current, innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy, intellectual capital possessed and generated by the human factor should be perceived as a key driving force for innovation and organizational development (the concept of humanization of intellectual capital) (Konno, 2025).

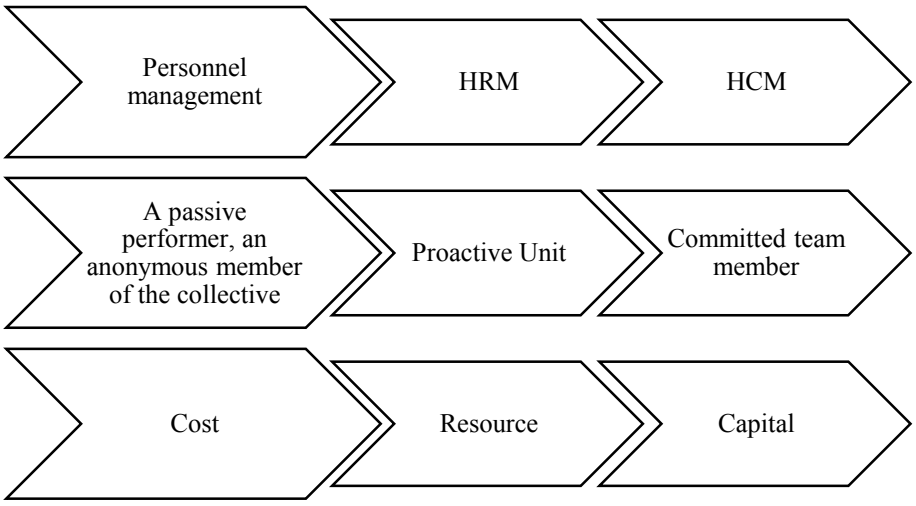

Figure 2. Employee perception in three generations of management in the human sphere.

Source: prepared based on Juchnowicz (ed.), 2014, p. 132.

In connection with the above, following Moczydłowska, the following ZKL paradigms can be indicated:

a) human capital is the most important asset in an organization, and people management is the most important element of management,
b) a fundamental attribute of human capital is variability (development); this property also applies to the employee-employer relationship; from an organizational perspective, human capital is a demanding, collective partner and a co-responsible stakeholder,
c) the effectiveness of HCM depends on age management skills,

d) HCM must be based on universal values that recognize the agency of employees at all levels of the organizational structure,
e) the "enterprise of tomorrow" requires a new model of manager-leadership (Moczydłowska, 2015).

It should be added to the above list that in difficult economic conditions, a rational direction for improving motivation systems is the use of solutions based on the paradigm of caring for the level of employee satisfaction (Juchnowicz, 2013).

4. Methodology

Before commencing the study, the following questions were formulated: 1) what views and approaches in contemporary HCM constitute the opposite/alternative to humanism, holism, and harmonization; 2) do the identified views and approaches contribute to a shift in HCM paradigms? The first stage of the study was a literature review; the publications that formed the basis for the considerations cover the period 2010-2025.

Additionally, to deepen the analysis of the evolution of HRM and verify the conclusions from the theoretical and predictive considerations described in the first part of the article, a review of 179 abstracts submitted to the 13th Congress of HRM Departments (HRM, 2025), held in 2025, was conducted. Text mining and coding of keywords identified by the authors were employed. Because the conference in question was not focused on a specific theoretical issue, the sources examined were considered objective and cross-sectional in nature.

Content coding was performed according to the following procedure:

a) coding abstract titles and keywords into thematic groups without using a predefined key,
b) coding abstract titles and keywords into thematic groups using the ZKL subclassification (Rostkowski, 2014, p. 149).

5. Results

The first conclusion drawn from the analysis of the thematic distribution (Table 1) is the significant divergence of the issues discussed, both in terms of the level of detail and the strategic level to which each topic pertains. However, five leading themes can be identified: competencies, leadership, diversity, generations, and artificial intelligence. These subjects were studied in conjunction with specific issues, such as digital competencies, generational and cultural diversity, etc.

Table 1.
Results of coding abstract titles and keywords into thematic groups without using a preliminary key

Issue	Number of abstracts in which the issue was indicated	Issue	Number of abstracts in which the issue was indicated
Competencies	31	CSR	3
Leadership	29	Virtual Teams	3
Diversity	28	Burnout	3
Generations	24	Communication	3
Artificial Intelligence	22	Remuneration Transparency	3
Sustainable Human Resources	16	Onboarding	3
Employee Development	16	Green HR	2
Technological Development	15	HR BP	2
Organizational Culture	15	Human-Artificial Intelligence	2
Well-Being	14	Participation	2
Inclusivity	14	ESG	2
Engagement	13	Pathologies	2
Ethics and Values	13	Sustainable Leadership	2
HRM Processes	10	Circular Economy	2
Remote Work	10	Enterprise	2
Sustainability	9	Professional Activation	2
Technostress	9	Remuneration Fairness	2
Knowledge Management	8	Organizational Behavior	2
Satisfaction	8	Organizational Climate	2
Age Management	8	Job Crafting	2
Multiculturalism	8	Working Time	2
Labor Market	8	Work Organization	2
Social Capital	7	Flexible HRM	2
Discrimination	7	Entrepreneurship	2
Productivity, Efficiency	7	Anomie	2
Digitalization	6	Change Management	2
Remuneration	6	Organizational Identity	2
Recruitment	6	Psychological Safety	2
Network Capital	5	Networking	1
Humanization	5	Empowerment	1
Motivation	5	Smart	1
Meaning of Work	5	Continuous Learning	1
Work Life Balance	5	Family Policy	1
Resilience	5	Employee Loyalty	1
Trust	5	Multi-Team Work	1
Employer Branding	5	Talent Management	1
Employee Experience (Candidate Experience)	5	Occupational Health and Safety	1
Organizational Fit	5	Feedback	1
Innovation	4	Departures	1
Selection	4	Training	1
Quiet Departures	4		

Source: own study.

WordCloud was used to visualize the content analysis contained in the titles and keywords (Figures 3 and 4). In both cases, the word "work" dominates; the detailed scope of the topics covered can be deciphered by analyzing the keywords, which indicate preferences for "management" and "competencies". This confirms the conclusions from the content analysis of

the abstracts, according to which the authors attempt to formulate recommendations for "managing" specific aspects of HCM in their papers, despite their research focusing on a narrow subject matter.



Figure 3. Results of coding abstract content by title.

Source: own study.



Figure 4. Results of coding the content of abstracts according to keywords.

Source: own study.

The conclusions from the above analyses became a contribution to the coding of content using the strategic and tactical (functional) levels of ZKL; at the tactical (functional) level, the classification proposed by Rostkowski (2014, p. 149) was adopted, which lists the following ZKL sub-elements:

1. determining (planning) staffing needs,
2. recruitment, enrollment, networking,
3. selection, selection,
4. socio-professional adaptation, onboarding,
5. professional development, employee training,
6. employee (performance) evaluation, performance assessment,
7. motivation, remuneration, and benefits system,
8. career development and succession planning,
9. promotions, transfers, sanctions (demotation), employee transfers,

10. departures, layoffs,
11. occupational health and safety,
12. organizational culture and interpersonal relations,
13. labor costs and personnel controlling, HR information system,
14. labor and employee relations,
15. shaping HCM policy.

Based on the results of the analysis, two extreme tendencies can be observed: 1) discussing issues at a high level of generality and with an undefined subject scope; 2) narrowly defined research problem without reference to the context embedded in a specific sub-field of HCM.

Table 2.
Results of coding abstract titles and keywords into thematic groups using the initial strategic level key

Strategic level of HCM		**Number of abstracts in which an issue from a given level was indicated**
	General Theoretical Issues	42
	Labor Market	29
	Strategic Level of HR Management	41
Tactical (functional) level	Determining (planning) staffing needs,	0
	Recruitment, recruitment, networking,	3
	Selection, selection,	1
	Social and professional adaptation, induction,	4
	Professional development, employee development and training,	16
	Employee (performance) assessment, performance evaluation,	0
	Motivation system, remuneration and benefits,	28
	Career development and succession planning,	0
	Promotions, transfers, sanctions (demotation), employee transfers,	1
	Departures, layoffs,	4
	Occupational health and safety,	11
	Organizational culture and interpersonal relations,	43
	Labor costs and personnel controlling, HR information system,	4
	Labor and employee relations,	17
	Development of HR management policy.	20

Source: own study.

Cross-analysis of the abstract content allowed us to identify thematic groups and thematic gaps that were not addressed by researchers in the analyzed works (Table 3). For example, in the "Trends and Challenges" group, the "Artificial Intelligence" subgroup includes works on the recruitment and onboarding process, but lacks studies related to development, derecruitment, healthcare, etc.

Table 3.
Thematic directions of research undertaken within the framework of HCM

Thematic group	Thematic subgroup	Detailed subject
Trends and Challenges	Artificial Intelligence	Process Automation Recruitment Onboarding
	Generations	Gen Z Generational Diversity
	Sustainability	ESG Circular Economy
	Technologies and Digitization	Technostress Digital Wellbeing
	Transparency	Remuneration HCM
Competencies and Development	Digital Competencies	Digital Transformation
	Leadership Competencies	Inclusive Leadership
	Eco-Competencies	Green Transformation
	Continuous Learning	Upskilling, Professional Development
Well-Being	Engagement	Job Satisfaction
	Work-Life Balance	Remote Work HRM Flexibility
	Psychological Safety	Trust Relationships Knowledge Management
	Neurodiversity	Inclusivity Support
Diversity and Inclusion	Diversity Management	Age Culture Religion
	Inclusive Leadership	Support Empowerment
	Diversity and Equity	Remuneration Opportunities
Management Models and Styles	Situational Leadership	Flexibility, Adaptability
	Inclusive Leadership	Support Diversity
	Crisis Management	Organizational Resilience
Emplyee Experience	Building Engagement	New Technologies
	Organizational Culture	Healthy Culture
	Talent Management	Acquisition Development

Source: own study.

Analysis of the issues raised highlights a broad spectrum of topics related to HCM in the context of the changing work environment, including the impact of technology, generational and cultural diversity, and the pursuit of sustainable development. Key areas include:

- Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) – including the impact of AI on recruitment, onboarding, competency development, and process automation, as well as related challenges such as technostress, algorithmic discrimination, and technology ethics.
- Diversity and Inclusion – including managing generational diversity (Generation Z, people aged 50+), cultural diversity (organizational multiculturalism, employees from Ukraine), neurodiversity, as well as academic and workplace inclusivity.

- Sustainability – including the concept of sustainable HRM, the circular economy, sustainable work, ecological competencies, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), family-friendly policies, and employee well-being.
- Engagement and Employee Experience – including building engagement, job satisfaction, ensuring employee well-being, work-life balance, and analyzing phenomena such as quiet quitting and burnout.
- Competencies and development – including competency development (including digital, psychosocial, and leadership competencies), upskilling, continuous learning, competency modeling, and talent management.
- Leadership – including leadership styles (inclusive, digital, and authentic), and the leader's role in building trust, engagement, and mental resilience.
- Compensation and transparency – including issues of pay transparency, equal pay, and fairness in pay distribution.
- Organizational culture – including the impact of organizational culture on engagement, well-being, innovation, and work performance.
- Trust – including the importance of trust in one's manager, organizational trust, and trust in technology.
- Remote and hybrid work – including the challenges and opportunities associated with remote and hybrid work, including the impact on well-being, productivity, and engagement.
- Humanization of work – including the concept of humanization of work in the context of automation and digitization, and the importance of the dignity of work and human empowerment.

Summary

The results of the theoretical and empirical studies allow us to formulate preliminary answers to the research questions. In terms of identifying alternative trends to humanization, holism, and harmonization, we should point to dehumanization, posthumanism, transhumanism, specialization, fragmentation, chaos, improvisation, and coercion.

To maintain a true homocentrism in Economy 5.0, based on the fundamental approaches to HCM (humanism – holism – harmonization), research into phenomena occurring in social organizations should be conducted with particular sensitivity to identifying practices of dehumanization of work and transhumanism, while simultaneously identifying solutions that mitigate the associated threats. Research and management processes should promote a holistic approach, expressed at least through an appropriate description of the context (background,

environment) of a given detailed problem, while also referencing specific HCM sub-themes. In terms of harmonization, the functioning of the "human-technology" system in various spheres of HCM should be analyzed, rather than simply seeking technological solutions to replace human labor. At the same time, research should be intensified to identify pathologies related to maximizing work efficiency at the expense of human integrity and dignity.

Therefore, it is recommended that the identified views and approaches not constitute a basis for changing the HCM paradigms. HCM practices should be verified, especially the level of their deviation from ethical solutions and those consistent with the sustainable development strategy.

Limitations in the research process primarily concern the specificity of the source materials that form the basis of the analysis; the abstracts submitted for the indicated conference are not representative of the global knowledge base. However, they are (due to the conference's prestige and national scope) representative of Polish science. An additional limitation is the lack of research conducted in business practice within a similar scope; supplementing the presented considerations with the perspective of operating organizations would indicate a gap between the theory and practice of HCM in the perception of the evolution of the holistic, humanistic, and harmonization approaches.

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