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Strategic Human Resource Practices in Building Professional Culture and Work Ethics for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital organizations requires the strengthening of professional culture and work ethics to ensure long-term business sustainability. However, the implementation of Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs) in supporting this transformation remains inconsistent, particularly in rapidly expanding digital firms.

Objectives: *This study aims to explore the form and implementation of Strategic Human Resource Practices in building professional culture and work ethics, as well as to identify internal and external factors influencing their effectiveness in achieving business sustainability.*

Methodology: *This research adopts a qualitative case study approach at PT Yuxi Jayatama Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, organizational observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis supported by NVivo was employed to identify patterns related to HR strategic alignment, leadership reinforcement, policy consistency, and cultural institutionalization.*

Finding: *The findings indicate that SHRPs contribute significantly to shaping professional culture through structured HR systems, leadership commitment, and ethical reinforcement mechanisms. However, rapid organizational expansion, generational workforce characteristics, and inconsistent supervision create implementation gaps that moderate HR effectiveness.*

Conclusion: *This study proposes a Strategic Human Resource Transformation Model that positions SHRPs as the foundational driver of cultural institutionalization and ethical reinforcement, demonstrating that sustainable business development in digital organizations depends on consistent strategic alignment rather than formal policy existence alone.*

Keywords: *Strategic Human Resource Practices; Professional Culture; Work Ethics; Business Sustainability; Digital Organization.*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital-based organizations has fundamentally transformed workforce dynamics, managerial structures, and competitive landscapes. Digital firms operate in environments characterized by accelerated scaling, flexible work arrangements, and generational workforce diversity. While such expansion creates growth opportunities, it simultaneously introduces structural instability, discipline challenges, and inconsistencies in policy enforcement. In this context, business sustainability is no longer determined solely by financial performance but increasingly depends on organizational culture, ethical

reinforcement, and strategic human resource alignment (Almagharbeh, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

Recent studies emphasize that Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) plays a critical role in developing organizational agility and long-term competitive advantage within digital ecosystems (Acar & Sarnıç, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2023). Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs), including structured recruitment systems, performance monitoring, leadership reinforcement, and policy consistency, are increasingly recognized as strategic mechanisms that shape employee behavior and strengthen organizational resilience. From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, human capital becomes a source of sustainable competitive advantage when effectively aligned with strategic objectives (Barney, 1991; Zhang et al., 2022).

Despite growing literature on SHRM and sustainability, most prior research predominantly adopts quantitative approaches that examine statistical relationships between HR practices and performance indicators (Xie & Lau, 2023; Lashari et al., 2022). While these studies confirm positive associations, they provide limited insight into the internal transformation processes through which SHRPs institutionalize professional culture and reinforce ethical work standards in rapidly growing digital firms.

Professional culture and work ethics represent behavioral outcomes resulting from consistent policy enforcement, leadership modeling, and value internalization (Brown et al., 2023; Kumar & Saini, 2023). In digital organizations characterized by flexibility and informal communication patterns, maintaining discipline and ethical accountability becomes increasingly complex. Furthermore, contextual factors such as rapid organizational expansion, generational workforce characteristics, and digital work flexibility influence how HR practices are interpreted and implemented (Rahmawati & Firmansyah, 2025).

However, limited research has qualitatively explored how SHRPs function as a transformation mechanism that institutionalizes professional culture and ethical standards to support business sustainability within emerging digital enterprises. Existing literature often separates HR performance outcomes from cultural and ethical dimensions, thereby overlooking the mediating processes that connect strategic HR alignment with long-term sustainability.

This research gap highlights the need for an in-depth qualitative investigation that examines not only the existence of HR systems but also their implementation dynamics, contextual influencing factors, and institutionalization processes. Accordingly, this study constructs three core variables:

- (1) Strategic Human Resource Practices as the driving mechanism,
- (2) Professional culture and work ethics as organizational behavioral outcomes, and
- (3) Business sustainability as the strategic objective.

This study aims to explore how Strategic Human Resource Practices operate as a transformation mechanism in building professional culture and strengthening work ethics to achieve sustainable business development within a digital organizational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Theoretical Foundation

1.1 Strategic Human Resource Management and Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory explains that sustainable competitive advantage originates from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney, 1991). In contemporary digital organizations, human capital represents a strategic resource when supported by structured HR systems and aligned with long-term organizational goals.

Recent studies extend RBV by emphasizing that Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs) function as strategic mechanisms that build organizational agility and resilience in dynamic environments (Zhang et al., 2022; Acar & Sarnıç, 2024). Rather than operating as administrative functions, SHRPs—such as structured recruitment, performance monitoring, leadership reinforcement, and policy consistency—create institutionalized systems that shape employee behavior and organizational capability.

In digital industry settings characterized by rapid expansion and flexibility, the strategic alignment of HR practices becomes essential in ensuring organizational stability and sustainable performance (Almagharbeh, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2023).

1.2 Professional Culture

Professional culture refers to shared norms, behavioral standards, and accountability mechanisms that guide employees in executing their roles responsibly and consistently. In digital organizations, professional culture is shaped not only by informal interaction but also by structured reinforcement systems embedded in HR policies.

Recent literature suggests that strategic HR practices contribute to professional culture formation through leadership modeling, structured evaluation systems, and value institutionalization (Brown et al., 2023; Kumar & Saini, 2023). In rapidly growing firms, professional culture becomes a stabilizing mechanism that ensures discipline and operational consistency amid organizational expansion.

Thus, professional culture emerges as a behavioral outcome of strategic HR alignment rather than merely an abstract organizational value.

1.3 Work Ethics

Work ethics represent operationalized moral principles reflected in responsibility, integrity, compliance, and professional conduct. In digital organizational contexts, ethical behavior is reinforced through consistent supervision, accountability mechanisms, and leadership commitment.

Empirical findings indicate that ethical reinforcement mechanisms embedded within HR systems strengthen organizational credibility and long-term sustainability (Goldrokh et al., 2025; Sartika, 2024). Moreover, structured HR governance systems influence how employees internalize professional responsibility in flexible and digitally mediated work environments.

Therefore, work ethics function as a mediating institutional mechanism linking strategic HR practices to sustainable business outcomes.

1.4 Business Sustainability

Business sustainability integrates long-term organizational stability, strategic continuity, and adaptive capability. Contemporary sustainability discourse emphasizes that internal

organizational capability—particularly human capital management—plays a central role in sustaining competitive advantage (Zhang et al., 2022; Xie & Lau, 2023).

Recent studies highlight that sustainable performance is supported by green HRM, ethical governance, and strategic human resource alignment (Lashari et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2021). In digital industries, sustainability challenges arise from rapid scaling, generational workforce dynamics, and operational fluidity.

Accordingly, examining how SHRPs contribute to sustainability through professional culture and work ethics becomes theoretically relevant and practically significant.

2. State-of-the-Art

Existing literature has widely examined the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management and organizational performance using quantitative approaches. Most studies focus on statistical relationships between HR practices and measurable outcomes such as productivity, engagement, and financial performance.

However, limited research explores:

- The transformation process of SHRPs in digital industry contexts
- The internalization mechanism of professional culture and work ethics
- The role of internal and external contextual factors influencing implementation
- Qualitative, process-oriented perspectives in emerging digital organizations

Thus, this study contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of SHRPs as a transformation mechanism in building professional culture and ethical foundations to support business sustainability.

3. Research Propositions

Based on the theoretical foundation and identified research gap, the following propositions are formulated:

P1: Strategic Human Resource Practices function as a driving mechanism in building professional culture within digital organizations.

P2: Strategic Human Resource Practices strengthen work ethics through leadership consistency and policy reinforcement.

P3: Professional culture contributes to sustainable business development.

P4: Work ethics reinforce long-term organizational sustainability.

P5: Internal and external contextual factors influence the effectiveness of Strategic Human Resource Practices implementation.

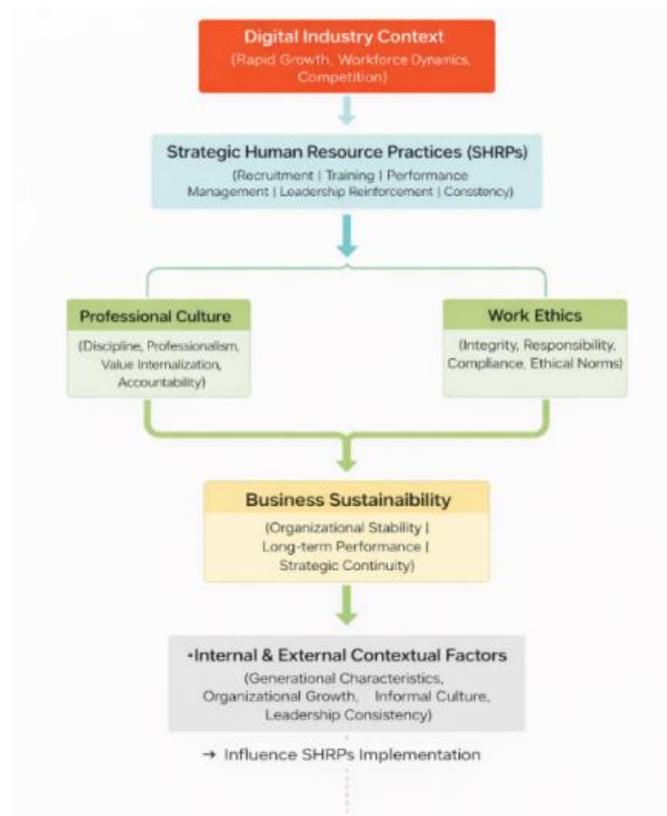
4. Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review, this study constructs a conceptual framework positioning:

- Strategic Human Resource Practices as the independent driving mechanism
- Professional Culture and Work Ethics as organizational behavioral outcomes
- Business Sustainability as the strategic objective
- Internal and external contextual factors as influencing conditions

Conceptually, SHRPs influence sustainability indirectly through the development of professional culture and ethical work standards.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study strategy. Qualitative research is used to explore and interpret organizational experiences, behaviors, and meanings attached to Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs) within a specific context. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how and why HR transformation occurs and how it influences professional culture, work ethics, and business sustainability.

The case study focuses on PT Yuxi Jayatama Indonesia, a rapidly growing digital organization facing challenges in strengthening professional culture and ethical work standards amid organizational expansion.

Research Setting and Informants

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who are directly involved in HR strategy formulation and implementation. Key informants include top management, HR leaders, and operational supervisors who possess in-depth knowledge regarding organizational policies, discipline systems, and cultural reinforcement mechanisms.

To enrich data depth, snowball sampling was applied to identify additional relevant informants based on recommendations from initial participants.

The selection criteria include:

- Direct involvement in HR policy and implementation
- Experience in organizational growth phases

- Understanding of professional culture and work ethics development

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through:

1. In-depth semi-structured interviews
2. Direct organizational observations
3. Review of internal documents (HR policies, regulations, performance systems)

Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding SHRPs implementation, cultural challenges, ethical reinforcement, and sustainability orientation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo software. The analysis process consisted of:

1. Transcribing interview data
2. Coding meaningful statements
3. Categorizing codes into themes
4. Interpreting patterns aligned with the research objectives

This analytical approach allows the identification of transformation processes, internal and external influencing factors, and organizational dynamics related to SHRPs implementation.

Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied:

- Data triangulation (interviews, observation, documentation)
- Member checking with key informants
- Peer review and audit trail documentation

These procedures strengthen the reliability, confirmability, and validity of qualitative findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings derived from in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The analysis was conducted using thematic coding supported by NVivo, allowing identification of recurring patterns related to Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs), professional culture, and work ethics.

1. Thematic Identification of Strategic Human Resource Practices

The findings indicate that SHRPs at PT Yuxi Jayatama Indonesia are formally established but remain in a transitional phase from administrative to strategic orientation. Informants emphasized recruitment structure, performance monitoring, leadership reinforcement, and policy standardization as core HR mechanisms.

However, rapid organizational growth has created implementation gaps between formal HR policies and daily operational practices. Leadership consistency emerged as a decisive factor in determining whether professional standards are internalized or remain procedural.

2. Word Tree Interpretation: Professional Culture (“Budaya”)

The NVivo word tree analysis shows that the term “culture” frequently appears alongside expressions such as “consistency,” “discipline,” “leadership,” “internalization,” and “standard.”

This indicates that professional culture is not perceived as an abstract organizational value but as a structured and reinforced process requiring:

- Clear standards
- Consistent enforcement
- Leadership modeling
- Policy integration

Informants repeatedly associated culture with accountability and professionalism, suggesting that cultural formation is closely linked to HR system reinforcement rather than informal socialization alone.

3. Word Tree Interpretation: Work Ethics (“Etika Kerja”)

The word tree visualization for “work ethics” reveals strong associations with “integrity,” “responsibility,” “compliance,” “communication,” and “discipline.”

Work ethics were described not merely as moral principles but as operational behaviors reflected in punctuality, task ownership, adherence to rules, and professional communication. Informants emphasized that ethical reinforcement requires structured supervision and evaluation mechanisms.

4. Internal and External Influencing Factors

Two major categories of influencing factors were identified:

Internal Factors

- Rapid employee expansion
- Inconsistent rule enforcement
- Leadership variability
- Limited supervision capacity

External Factors

- Generational workforce characteristics
- Digital work flexibility
- Informal communication patterns

These factors influence how SHRPs are interpreted and practiced within different departments.

5. SHRPs Transformation Toward Sustainability

The findings suggest that sustainable business development requires a shift in SHRPs from procedural administration toward strategic cultural institutionalization.

Professional culture and work ethics function as mediating organizational mechanisms linking HR systems to long-term stability. Sustainability is achieved not through isolated HR policies but through consistent reinforcement of standards and ethical norms.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings

Major Theme	Sub-Themes Identified	Interpretation
Strategic HR Practices	Recruitment structure, performance monitoring, leadership reinforcement, policy consistency	SHRPs are formally structured but unevenly implemented
Professional Culture	Discipline, accountability, value internalization, leadership modeling	Culture is shaped through consistent HR reinforcement
Work Ethics	Integrity, responsibility, compliance, communication	Ethical behavior is operational and system-driven
Internal Factors	Rapid growth, supervision gaps, leadership inconsistency	Organizational expansion challenges cultural consolidation
External Factors	Generational dynamics, digital flexibility, informal norms	Contextual characteristics influence HR effectiveness

Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

Discussion

The findings of this study provide deeper insights into how Strategic Human Resource Practices function beyond administrative mechanisms and operate as strategic transformation tools in digital organizations. Consistent with the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), human resources become a source of sustainable competitive advantage when supported by structured and strategically aligned systems.

The results indicate that SHRPs at PT Yuxi Jayatama Indonesia are formally established but require stronger cultural institutionalization. This supports prior research suggesting that HR systems influence organizational performance not directly, but through behavioral and cultural mechanisms (Jiang et al., 2012). In this study, professional culture and work ethics emerge as mediating organizational processes linking SHRPs to business sustainability.

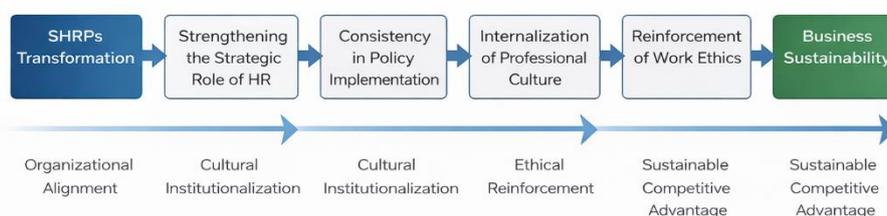
Unlike previous quantitative studies that primarily measure the statistical relationship between HR practices and performance outcomes, this research highlights the internal transformation process. The findings reveal that sustainability is achieved not merely through policy existence but through consistent reinforcement, leadership modeling, and value internalization.

Furthermore, the identification of internal and external contextual factors expands existing literature. Rapid organizational growth and generational workforce characteristics create structural and behavioral complexity, particularly in digital industry settings. These contextual elements moderate the effectiveness of SHRPs implementation, an aspect that remains underexplored in prior SHRM literature.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a Strategic Human Resource Transformation Model as illustrated in Figure 2 that positions SHRPs as the foundational driver, professional culture and work ethics as institutionalizing mechanisms, and business sustainability as the strategic outcome.

Figure 2. Strategic Human Resources Transformation Model

Conceptual Model of Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs) Transformation in Building Professional Culture and Work Ethics for Business Sustainability



Theoretical Contribution

This study extends the Strategic Human Resource Management literature by shifting the analytical focus from outcome-based performance measurement toward process-oriented transformation mechanisms. While previous research predominantly emphasizes statistical associations between HR practices and firm performance, this study demonstrates that SHRPs function as institutional drivers that shape professional culture and ethical work standards before influencing sustainability outcomes. The proposed transformation model therefore contributes to bridging the gap between strategic HR alignment and cultural institutionalization in digital organizations.

Furthermore, by integrating Resource-Based View logic with contemporary sustainability discourse, this research reinforces the argument that human capital becomes strategically valuable not merely through its existence, but through structured reinforcement systems that internalize discipline, accountability, and ethical norms. The findings suggest that sustainability is achieved through behavioral consolidation rather than procedural compliance alone.

Practical and Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight that rapid digital expansion requires stronger cultural governance mechanisms. Organizations experiencing accelerated growth should prioritize consistent policy enforcement, leadership modeling, and structured performance accountability systems to avoid cultural fragmentation. Strategic HR leaders must move beyond administrative coordination and adopt a transformation-oriented role that ensures organizational values are embedded within daily operational routines.

The study also emphasizes the importance of addressing generational workforce characteristics and digital flexibility as contextual factors that influence policy interpretation. HR systems must therefore be adaptive yet firm in reinforcing professional discipline to ensure long-term organizational stability.

Contextual Contribution to Digital Industry Research

This research contributes specifically to the growing body of digital industry studies by demonstrating that sustainability challenges in digital firms are not solely technological or market-driven but deeply rooted in human capital management. Unlike traditional organizations, digital enterprises often prioritize agility and innovation, which may inadvertently weaken formal control systems. The findings reveal that the institutionalization of professional culture and ethical standards becomes a stabilizing mechanism that supports sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic environments.

By providing qualitative evidence from an emerging digital organization, this study enriches the understanding of SHRPs implementation in rapidly scaling contexts, which remains underexplored in prior literature.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how Strategic Human Resource Practices (SHRPs) function as a transformation mechanism in building professional culture and strengthening work ethics to support business sustainability within a digital organizational context.

The findings reveal that SHRPs in rapidly growing digital organizations require a shift from administrative implementation toward strategic alignment and cultural institutionalization. Professional culture and work ethics do not emerge automatically from formal policies but are developed through consistent leadership reinforcement, structured policy implementation, and value internalization processes.

This study contributes to the Strategic Human Resource Management literature by proposing a Strategic Human Resource Transformation Model that positions SHRPs as the foundational driver, professional culture and work ethics as institutional mechanisms, and business sustainability as the long-term strategic outcome. Unlike prior quantitative research focusing primarily on performance measurement, this study highlights the internal transformation process and contextual dynamics influencing HR effectiveness in digital industries.

Practically, the findings suggest that organizations experiencing rapid growth should prioritize consistency in policy enforcement, strengthen the strategic role of HR, and institutionalize professional values to ensure sustainable competitive advantage.

However, this study is limited to a single case within a digital industry setting. Future research may expand to comparative multi-case studies or employ mixed-method approaches to further validate the proposed transformation model.

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