

## The HR narratives: AI-supported workforce strategy in tariff-impacted industries

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines how adaptation and dynamic capabilities are discursively constructed in HR narratives that address AI- supported workforces within industries affected by tariffs. It investigates whether sensing, seizing, and transforming are presented as interconnected or separate capabilities amid dual technological and geopolitical disruptions.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A qualitative lexicometric analysis was performed on 143 HR corporate magazine articles published from January 1, 2025, onwards in the IT, manufacturing, and import/export sectors. The corpus (552 pages; 201, 201,964 words) was sourced from EBSCOhost and analyzed using IRaMuTeQ, utilizing Reinert's hierarchical descending classification method.

**Findings:** Four distinct narrative domains—Technology and Innovation; Financial Analysis and Market; Research, Experimentation and Knowledge Sharing; and Workplace, Skills, and Adaptability—covered 95. 73% of the corpus. HR discourse depicts these domains as mostly separate, with limited narrative overlap between technological, financial, and workforce adaptation themes. This separation reflects a rational response to conflicting disruption logics rather than organizational inconsistency.

**Research limitations/implications:** The analysis is restricted to public- facing HR discourse and is purely lexicometric, without testing for stability or evaluating organizational behavior or performance outcomes.

**Practical implications:** The findings offer HR leaders a framework for auditing organizational narratives and strategically connecting domains where coherence is achievable, while preserving stakeholder- specific legitimacy.

**Social implications:** The study demonstrates how organizations manage legitimacy and workforce narratives amid AI- driven changes and geopolitical uncertainties.

**Originality/value:** The study questions assumptions of narrative integration in dynamic capability theory by showing that capability coordination may occur through parallel discursive domains during extreme dual disruptions.

**Keywords:** Human resource narratives, Artificial intelligence, Tariff disruption, Lexicometric analysis

**Jel Codes:** J24, O33, F13

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## 1. Introduction

Export-oriented manufacturing firms are navigating an increasingly volatile global landscape shaped by two converging forces: technological disruption driven by artificial intelligence (AI) and tariff-induced geopolitical instability. On one end, the US 2025 tariff war, with tariffs up to 145% on imports from China, Mexico, Canada, and the EU have disrupted global trade flows, triggered retaliatory measures, and reconfigured global value chains (Rodríguez-Clare, Ulate & Vasquez, 2025). On the other hand, AI is transforming production, logistics, and supply chain management, enabling predictive analytics and autonomous operations (Zhang & Deng, 2023).

These dual disruptions are not operational but strategic, compelling firms to rethink talent pipelines, leadership models, and organizational communications strategy to maintain agility and competitiveness (Peloton Consulting Group, 2025). Human Resource (HR) leaders are widely portrayed as playing a critical role by crafting narratives that shape employee understanding, engagement, and resilience during this volatile period. These narratives are not only enacted inside organizations, but also publicly articulated in HR and leadership magazines, where dual disruptions are interpreted and communicated to employees and managers. However, while AI's impact on workforce management and the economic consequences of trade tariffs receive growing attention, studies analyzing how these dual disruptions are discursively constructed in HR narratives remain sparse (Li, Lay-Hoon, Rashid & Abdul-Halim, 2020; Tick, 2023). In particular, little is known about how published HR discourse represents adaptation, frames uncertainty, and links technological and geopolitical challenges in tariff-impacted industries.

Building on dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997; Barreto, 2010), which emphasizes sensing, seizing and transforming as core organizational processes for adaptation, this study investigates how these processes are represented in published HR narratives. Specifically, the study poses two research questions: (1) How are the dual challenges of AI-driven disruption and tariff-induced geopolitical instability discursively constructed in HR and leadership magazines? (2) To what extent do these published HR narratives portray integrated versus compartmentalized representations of sensing, seizing, and transforming processes associated with dynamic capabilities?

By conducting a lexicometric analysis of a comprehensive corpus of HR corporate magazine articles in 2025, this research offers a novel insight into how HR-related narratives publicly frame and interpret technological and geopolitical disruption. The findings advance human resource management (HRM) and strategic communication literature by mapping distinct discursive clusters through which sensing, seizing, and transforming are represented in HR narratives, and by empirically revealing the compartmentalized nature of these clusters. This contributes to dynamic capabilities theory by showing that, under high uncertainty, such capabilities may be operationalized in parallel rather than wholly integrated. This indicates untapped potential for strategic synergy in HR communication. This interpretation remains at the level of discourse and does not claim to directly measure capability development processes inside the organization.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Understanding Dynamic Capabilities: Theory and Core Dimensions

Dynamic Capabilities theory (Teece et al., 1997) provides a foundational lens for understanding how organizations adapt to rapidly changing environments. The theory posits that firms must develop three interrelated capabilities: the ability to sense opportunities and threats through environmental scanning and interpretation; the capacity to seize such opportunities by mobilizing resources and making strategic decisions; and the transforming capability to reconfigure organizational structures, processes and culture to sustain competitiveness (Teece, 2007).

However, scholarly debate has emerged regarding how these capabilities operate in practice and, critically, how they are communicated across organizational levels. While Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) conceptualize dynamic capabilities as organizational reproducible processes, arguing that firms can develop standardized routines for sensing market shifts and seizing opportunities, Barreto (2010) refines this perspective. Barreto (2010) identifies three critical dimensions: learning processes that enable organizations to acquire and interpret new information about technological or geopolitical changes; integration processes that combine insights from different functional areas into coherent strategic responses; and reconfiguration processes that systematically reallocate resources and restructure operations.

For HR leaders specifically, this multidimensional framing has critical implications. HR leaders must engage in active environmental scanning regarding workforce implications of AI adoption, tariff-induced supply chain changes, and geopolitical policy developments. Critically, HR narratives are not merely communication outputs following strategic decisions. Rather, they function as microfoundations through which sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities are actively operationalized and coordinated across organizational levels (Nonaka, Hirose & Takeda, 2016). However, a critical theoretical gap emerges: Teece's (2007) original formulation assumes HR leaders deliver unified strategic narratives. Yet evidence from dual disruption contexts remain limited. Do contradictory disruption imperatives (e.g., AI transformation versus tariff efficiency) necessarily prelude narrative integration, or do they demand more sophisticated approaches? The present study attempts to contribute to clarifying this ambiguity by analyzing large-scale HR corporate magazine narratives to identify whether thematic clusters operate in parallel or through integrated messaging.

## 2.2. Hr Narratives as Mechanisms for Organizational Sensemaking and Capability Coordination

Leadership narratives serve as fundamental mechanisms through which organizations create meaning from ambiguous environmental signals and coordinate adaptive actions across hierarchical levels (Nonaka et al., 2016; Narayanan, Colwell & Douglas, 2009; Vaara & Tienari, 2011). HR narratives hold strategic significance because human resource leaders bridge organizational strategy, operational requirements, and workforce expectations. Thus, narrative constructions are essential for coordinating dynamic capability development.

Nonaka et al. (2016) propose that narratives enable “*ba*” (shared context or place) wherein organizational members develop common understanding and coordinate action. Narratives enable top management to translate transformational vision into middle management operational routines and frontline adaptive behaviors. Grogard, Colman and Stensaker (2019) demonstrated that leadership narratives exercise legitimizing functions, helping organizational members comprehend why change is necessary, how change will unfold, and what individual and collective roles entail. Vaara and Tienari (2011) document that narratives play a role in organizational identity and strategic positioning, particularly during major organizational change.

While research on leadership narratives is extensive, scholar studies about HR narratives under dual disruptions remain sparse. Nonetheless, what is known about HR narrative construction reveals important patterns. For example, in the context of political nationalism and immigration policy shifts, Horak, Farndale, Brannen and Colling (2017) document that HR leaders in multinational enterprises construct narratives addressing institutional logics, particularly addressing international talent mobility and cultural integration. Deepa, Jaiswal and Shagirbasha (2025) provide contemporary evidence of HR narrative construction under organizational disruption and crisis. Examining organizational responses to crises, Deepa et al. (2025) documents that HR leaders construct two distinct but complementary narrative frames: adaptive resilience narratives emphasizing organizational flexibility, workforce adaptability, and short-term coping strategies; and transformative resilience narratives emphasizing fundamental organizational change, capability development, and long-term repositioning. These studies suggest that HR leaders possess capabilities for integrating multiple, competing narrative frames, yet the extent to which this integration occurs when facing dual AI and tariff disruptions remains empirically underexplored.

## 2.3. Sensing Mechanisms: Discursive Domains of Technology and Markets

Sensing mechanisms enable organizations to detect emerging threats and opportunities through environmental scanning and signal interpretation (Teece, 2007; Barreto, 2010). Different disruption types are known to trigger

distinct sensing patterns, suggesting that “sensing” in HR discourse may not be a unitary construct but rather composed of distinct discursive domains.

In geopolitical disruption context, threat and opportunity identification operates through a “wait and see” strategy, where managers prepare for potential disruptions through scenario simulation (Moradlou, Reefke, Skipworth & Roscoe, 2021). This implies scanning government policies, trade agreements, regulatory changes and competitive responses. Information gathering processes rely on secondary data, combined with structured stakeholder feedback systems. For HR leaders, sensing involves awareness of nationalistic policies and immigration bans impacting HRM (Horak et al., 2017). This literature suggests that sensing narratives in tariff-impacted industries will likely coalesce around a financial analysis and markets domain, focusing on analyst perspectives, economic indicators, and regulatory compliance

In contrast, in AI-driven disrupted contexts, organizations employ continuous environmental scanning. Organizations engage in digital scouting, scenario planning and development of long-term visions (Ghosh, Hughes, Hodgkinson & Hughes, 2021). Consequently, we anticipate a distinct narrative domain, where the discourse shifts away from financial constraints towards startup ecosystems, technology giants (e.g., OpenAI, Google), and breakthrough innovations. These two sensing modalities differ fundamentally: geopolitical challenges prompt monitoring of institutional pressure, while AI disruption drives continuous environmental scanning and digital scouting. When HR leaders face both disruptions simultaneously, do they employ distinct sensing strategies for each disruption type or do they develop integrated sensing approaches. The existing literature provides no clear answer.

#### **2.4. Seizing Mechanisms: How HR Leaders Mobilize Workforce Response**

Once organizations sense disruptions, they must mobilize internal resources and implement strategic responses. Here again, seizing strategies similarly vary substantially by disruption context (Barreto, 2010).

Moradlou, Skipworth, Bals, Aktas and Roscoe (2024) examined how multinational manufacturing firms respond to geopolitical disruptions. Their research, which builds upon earlier work by Moradlou et al. (2021) examining Brexit-induced supply chain responses, identified varied seizing mechanisms. In one end, strategic decision making was directed towards internal restructuring processes, resulting in relocation of production facilities, buffering stocks or adopting new technologies for supply control towers, among others. On the other, firms managed the disruptions through reconfiguration of supplier networks. For HR leaders facing tariff-induced disruptions, seizing means restructuring organizational boundaries and employee structure to accommodate to supply chain reconfigurations (Zeng, Xu & Xie, 2023). Also, HR leaders are challenged with the task of preparing the workforce for potential relocation as well as developing talent in lower-tariff regions. Chinese corporations, for example, have responded by reframing their corporate narratives, translating domestic profiles into English versions that present more acceptable identities to foreign stakeholders (Li et al., 2020). Thus, this stream of research points to a seizing narrative rooted in the workplace, skills and the pragmatic reorganization of talent and labour costs to maintain competitiveness.

Simultaneously, seizing in AI-driven contexts is often addressed through rapid prototyping and agile software development processes (Dey, Chowdhury, Abadie, Yaroson & Sarkar, 2023). Westover (2025) refers to the term “augmentation mindset” to be developed across the organization. Thus, seizing also requires implementing targeted training programs and workshops, fostering employee empowerment and psychological safety for AI implementation. Following Chumnumporn, Jeenanunta, Simpan, Srivat and Sanprasert (2022) HR leaders are called to portray transformational leadership traits, through flexibility, proactivity, and openness to learning. This reinforces the centrality of the workplace domain, with a focus on upskilling and integration, building effective communication and collaboration capabilities (Dun & Kumar, 2021). However, the literature also hints that seizing is not just about people; it involves acquiring technological assets (Tick, 2023). Thus, we expect technology and innovation discourses to also reflect seizing capabilities, specifically through narratives about acquiring new tools or partnering with technology providers.

## 2.5. Transforming Mechanisms: Knowledge Sharing and Experimentation

For HR leaders in disruptive environments, transformation involves restructuring talent development strategies. Bailey, de-Propris, de-Ruyter, Hearne and Ortega-Arigilés (2023) document that manufacturers in the United Kingdom responded to Brexit disruptions by systematically restructuring talent development through investment in apprenticeships and lifelong learning programs.

Transformative responses in the context of AI-driven disruptions are centered around developing digital literacy and systems thinking capabilities across organizational hierarchies. Whysall, Owtram and Brittain (2019) showed that organizations redesign job description and role definitions, restructure workflows around AI-enabled processes and cultivate cultures of experimentation and learning. Thus, the literature highlights that transformation is not just about changing structures but changing how knowledge is created. For example, narratives like frame transformation through the lens of studies, or evidenced-based trials, rather than top-down mandates.

The unanswered question remains: Do HR leaders present these transformation imperatives as complementary or competing? When organizations face crisis, HR leaders construct two distinct but complementary narrative frames that they actively balance and synergize. First, adaptive resilience narratives. These narratives rely on language patterns that empathize “adaptation”, “flexibility”, “coping”. Second, and simultaneously, HR leaders construct narratives emphasizing organizational change, capability development, and long-term strategic repositioning. Language patterns observed here focus on “transformation”, “learning”, “development”. Findings from Deepa et al. (2025) evidence HR leaders do not choose between adaptive and transformative narratives; rather they synergize them, through what the authors call “managing conflict institutional logics”. Institutional logic balancing has strong implications for understanding how HR leaders may construct narratives when facing dual AI and tariff disruptions. Following Deepa et al. (2025) logic, an integrated narrative approach is possible. The integrated approach would position tariff response and AI as mutually reinforcing through competing institutional logics like efficiency and learning simultaneously, through synergized narratives. However, given the lack of evidence that capability deployment patterns converge under duality of disruptions, this study investigates whether these domains remain compartmentalized or achieved the integration predicted by theory.

While Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997; Barreto, 2010) focuses on observable organizational routines and strategic actions, this study adopts a discursive lens. We posit that HR narratives function as communicative microfoundations of dynamic capabilities (Nonaka et al., 2016). We do not claim to observe the physical enactment of sensing, seizing, or transforming processes. Instead, we analyze the discursive representation of these capabilities in public corporate texts. This distinction is critical: the lexical clusters identified in the study reflect how organizations make sense of and legitimize their adaptive strategies to stakeholders, rather than measuring the efficacy of the adaptation itself.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Corpus Text Explanation

The corpus text for this study was obtained from the EBSCOhost database, which provides access to a wide range of industry reports, peer-reviewed journals, and professional magazines. The sample corpus text was restricted to textual materials published between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 because it corresponds with the peak intensity of the 2025 tariff escalation and AI technology in industrial sectors (Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2025). This period ensures that the dataset reflects the most recent development within the research context. To achieve thematic relevance, only materials related to companies impacted by tariffs (technology, manufacturing industries, and import-export businesses), human resources (HR) and leadership magazines were included. This purposeful sampling method allowed for integrating sector-specific perspectives on technological, organizational, and economic transformation.

The corpus was obtained exclusively from internal HR and leadership magazines addressing workforce strategy in the selected context. The HR magazines included HR Magazine, People Management, Personnel Today, Workforce Magazine, Human Resource Executive, and Chief Human Resources Officers Magazine. These

publications were selected because they operate as primary channels through which HR leaders publish and disclose strategic narratives, interpret environmental disruptions, and organizational responses.

The search strategy was conducted in the following way:

(“artificial intelligence” OR “AI”) AND (“tariff” OR “trade war” OR “geopolitical disruption”) AND (“HR” OR “human resource” OR “workforce”) AND (“manufacturing” OR “export” OR “supply chain”).

Inclusion criteria were related to all articles addressing HR strategy, workforce, leadership or organizational communication. Furthermore, all content related to AI adoption and tariff-related impact. Finally, all full articles relating to manufacturing, global trade or export-oriented companies.

Exclusion criteria were related to articles solely associated with macroeconomic theory, customer-oriented narratives, technical AI engineering content, and duplicate articles.

The final corpus text consisted of 557 pages of pure text, comprising approximately 201.964 words and 1.057.734 characters. The corpus was constructed exclusively from pure text content, excluding references, tables, figures, numbers, and other non-textual elements to preserve high-quality analytical consistency. We drew on multiple sources – including leadership and HR publications and industry-specific reports – to integrate managerial insights, contextual factors, and organizational practices. This homogeneity of corpus text strengthened the quality of the text while reducing the risk of bias associated with single-source reliance.

The qualitative analysis of the text corpus was performed using IRaMuTeQ (Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires), a widely used and recognized free open-source software operating on the R statistical environment (Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012). Through Reinert’s method, IRaMuTeQ enables advanced lexicometric and statistical analyses, such as frequency distributions, similarity analysis, and cluster extraction. For the purposes of this study, the English business dictionary was used, embedded in IRaMuTeQ. IRaMuTeQ applied a domain-specific vocabulary, ensuring precision in interpreting HR, leadership, economic, and technological terminologies (Ratinaud, 2014).

### 3.2. Qualitative Textual Analysis with IRaMuTeQ

In recent years, qualitative research methods have become vital tool for exploring topics in management sciences (Kossyva, Theriou, Aggelidis & Sarigiannidis, 2023). IRaMuTeQ is free open-source qualitative software developed by Pierre Ratinaud. It offers a powerful set of features, including co-occurrence, cluster and word frequency analyses (Ratinaud, 2014). The main strength is its ability to process and analyze large amounts of text data. This is crucial in management research, where data from surveys, interviews and documents can be quite extensive (Bardin, 2011). IRaMuTeQ offers automated and manual coding techniques, which can help researchers to adapt data to its best purposes. Researchers can find themes and patterns improving the study’s validity and reliability (Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012). The software is especially good at more advanced techniques such as factorial correspondence and descending hierarchical classification analyses.

IRaMuTeQ provides a clear visualization, such as co-occurrence and dendograms networks that can be integrated very easily into the research illustrating the relationships between data and themes (Camargo & Justo, 2013). These visuals are crucial for understanding complex managerial discourses and perceptions, offering a clear and simple representation of data structure. Finally, the software’s free open-source nature allows replicability and transparency. This means that other researchers can easily reproduce and proceed with its further research. For the purposes of this study, the Reinert’s method will be applied.

To create a cleaned corpus, we segmented the text into Elementary Context Units, which are approximately 40-50 words in length, producing standardized textual segments suitable for statistical processing. The statistical processing was composed of the following three steps:

1. Lemmatization and morphological normalization.
2. Frequency filtering.
3. Descending hierarchical classification (DHC) or Reinert’s method

### 3.3. Lemmatization and Morphological Normalization

Text preprocessing relied on IRaMuTeQ's built-in English normalization procedures that apply limited morphological normalization rather than full linguistic lemmatization. As a result, closely related lexical forms may appear as distinct entries across clusters. This limitation was anticipated by interpreting clusters holistically through groups of related lexical items rather than isolated terms.

### 3.4. Reinert's Method

In the previous section, we prepared the corpus text for Reinert's method. Reinert's method was selected because of its capacity to identify stable, statistically validated thematic classes based on shared lexical fields.

Reinert's method (also known as Descending Hierarchical Classification – DHC) is a technique for categorizing and analyzing large textual datasets. This method was developed by Max Reinert back in 1986. This method became a foundation qualitative method, particularly in social and management sciences. By exploring themes and patterns, this method helps researchers to uncover the deeper meaning and structures within the textual corpus. This approach is especially successful in segmenting a large heterogenous corpus text into smaller homogeneous clusters that are characterized by unique and authentic themes. The method also provides a structure that exists between clusters for better understanding its content.

Reinert's methods works on the mechanism of grouping text segments based on their shared vocabulary. The process begins by dividing a large heterogeneous corpus text into smaller, uniform units, such as sentences or short paragraphs similar in contextual meaning. Next step is performing a statistical analysis of word frequencies and co-occurrence to group these segments into clusters. A word or a phrase that does not repeat at least several times within the corpus text is seen as irrelevant. Words must repeat at least 20 times to be "seen" by the software. This statistical validation is important to ensure that the resulting clusters objectively represent thematic classes (Reinert, 1986). The process is a form of factorial analysis but only applied to words.

Reinert's method provides an objective classification based on lexical distribution patterns, reducing interpretative bias common in NVivo manual coding. This approach is particularly suitable for analyzing managerial discourse, where semantic nuances and vocabulary repetition are key concerns. (Bardin, 2011).

Reinert's Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) was selected over alternative techniques, such as embedding-based clustering, topic modeling, or transformer-based approaches, due to its alignment with lexicometric analysis and its suitability for a theory-driven approach previously discussed. DHC identifies statistically stable lexical classes, grounded in chi-square associations between words and text segments, compared to probabilistic models that infer latent topics based on distributional assumptions. This method provides explicit statistical criteria for class formation and generates lexical profiles, making it suitable for analyzing managerial and HR discourse, where replicability, transparency, and theoretical traceability are crucial.

Epistemologically, Reinert's method identifies lexical co-occurrence structures rather than behaviors, enactment of organizational capabilities or decision processes. The produced clusters represent discursive constructions – how AI adoption, tariffs, and workforce issues are linguistically framed in HR narratives, rather than direct evidence of managerial actions or organizational capabilities deployed. Sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities are interpreted at the level of narrative representation and organizational sensemaking, not as direct measures of dynamic capability. This distinction bounds the theoretical contribution of the study.

While chi-square statistics allow identification of words that statistically differentiate one cluster from another, conceptually, they do not measure semantic importance. High chi-square values indicate a strong association with a cluster, but do not imply that a term is theoretically more important than others. The interpretation of clusters in this study combines chi-square lexical evidence of representative text segments and theoretical grounding from the HR and dynamic capabilities literature.

To assess the robustness of the DHC results, a split-half stability check was conducted by randomly dividing the whole corpus text into two sub-corpora of comparable size and replicating the Reinert classification procedure.

The resulting cluster structures showed high thematic convergence, with equivalent dominant lexical classes. This proves that the four-cluster solution is not an artifact of corpus segmentation or composition. This planned robustness check supports reproducibility and stability.

## 4. Findings And Discussion

### 4.1. Findings

This phase included 143 articles (texts) from HR corporate magazines, 552 pages, 201.964 words, and 1.057.734 characters. The analysis covered 95.73% of the whole corpus text, which means that almost all the corpus text was related to the following 4 classes or clusters.

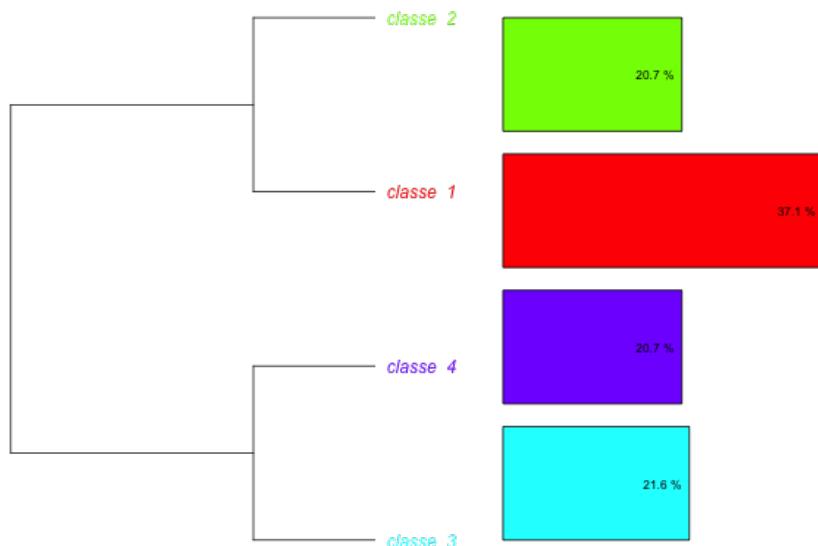


Figure 1. Dendrogram of the four main clusters of corpus text

Category	Color code	Name	% of forms analyzed
Category 1	Red	Technology & Innovation	37.1%
Category 2	Green	Financial Analysis & Market	20.7%
Category 3	Blue	Research, Experimentation & Knowledge Sharing	20.7%
Category 4	Purple	Workplace, Skills & Adaptability	20.7%

Table 1. Categories revealed in the research study

The results in Table 1 above present the four main categories.

**Category 1 – Technology & Innovation:** This cluster is defined by terms such as *Openai* (25.7;70%), *startup* (20.7;76%), *200* (20.06;100%), *chip* (19.2;92%). This cluster centers around corporate innovation and the personalities driving AI development.

**Category 2 – Financial Analysis & Market:** Cluster 2 is dominated by the following terms: *analyst* (38.9;74%), *tariff* (19.4;78%), *ives* (15.9;100%), *wedbush* (15.9;100%), *lightshed* (15.9;100%), *Thursday* (15.9;100%), *counsel* (15.9;100%), *tim* (15.1;83%), *earnings* (12.9;57%). This cluster represents the market-oriented narratives, where AI and engagement are framed in relations to financial performance, economic tariffs and investor perspectives.

**Category 3 – Research, Experimentation & Knowledge Sharing:** Cluster 3 is described with the following terms: *experiment* (42.1;73%), *situation* (39.8;78%), *promote* (39.8;78%), *example* (38.0;51%), *insight* (37.4;59%), *your* (36.5;50%), *study* (35.7;56%), *creative* (35.5;76%), *awareness* (35.5;76%). This discourse reflects academic and evidence-based approaches to AI and engagement, focusing on analysis, experimentation, and the generation of insights.

**Category 4 – Workplace, Skills & Adaptability:** Cluster 4 emphasizes HR and organizational themes, with marker words such as Organization (25.3;44%), talent (22.7;52%), workplace (20.8;57%), adaptability (19.4;78%), upskilling (19.2;86%), integrate (17.5;50%), organizational (17.3;55%), skill (16.7;41%), reskilling (15.9;100%). This cluster reflects corporate discourse on human capital, workforce readiness, and adaptability in the age of AI.

Upon analyzing the results and the positioning of classes in the factorial plan, we can conclude that the following four clusters are independent and distinct, which means there is no overlap or confusion. All four categories are closely related to the central topic (near the center of the factorial plan). Communication within these themes was very clear and precise. Category 1 accounts for 37.1% and is positioned both the negative X-axis (abscissa) and the Y-axis (ordinate). Category 2 represents 20.7% of the text and is located on the negative X-axis (abscissa) and the positive Y-axis (ordinate). Category 3 makes up 20.7% of the text and is situated in the positive X-axis (abscissa) and the negative Y-axis (ordinate). Category 4 makes up 20.7% of the text and is situated in both the positive X-axis (abscissa) and the Y-axis (ordinate). The position of each category determines the strength and distance between them. This arrangement shows that the four categories are completely separated from each other.

Factorial plan analysis confirms the relative positioning of these clusters. Cluster 2 (Finance) and Cluster 1 (Innovation) are located on opposite ends of the map, reflecting the distinct discursive focus. Cluster 3 (Research) is closer to Cluster 1 (Innovation), sharing an orientation toward experimentation and creativity. In contrast, Cluster 4 (HR/Workplace) occupies an intermediary space, bridging human capital discourse with both financial performance and technological innovation.

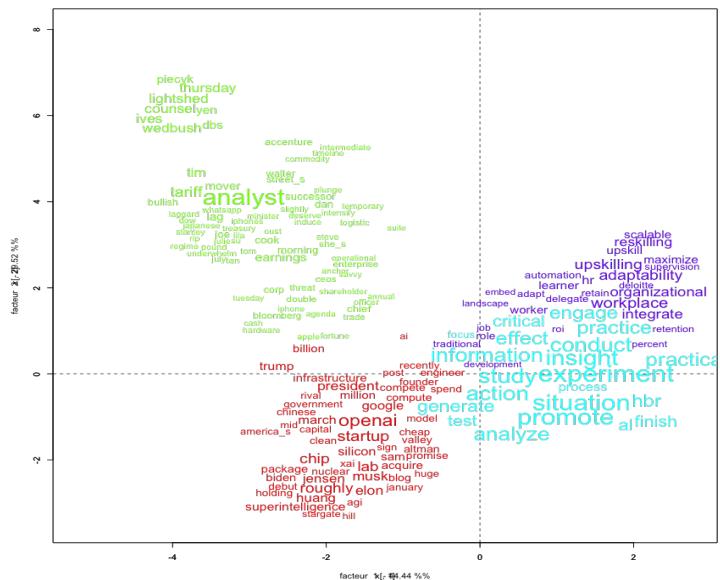


Figure 2. Semantic cloud of the four categories

Together, the four clusters illustrate how AI and employee engagement are framed in corporate discourse: thorough innovation ecosystems (Cluster 1), market and financial achievements (Cluster 2), research and knowledge generation (Cluster 3), and workforce adaptability (Cluster 4). These results highlight that the corpus does not demonstrate a causal relationship but rather maps the discursive structures through which AI and engagement are developed.

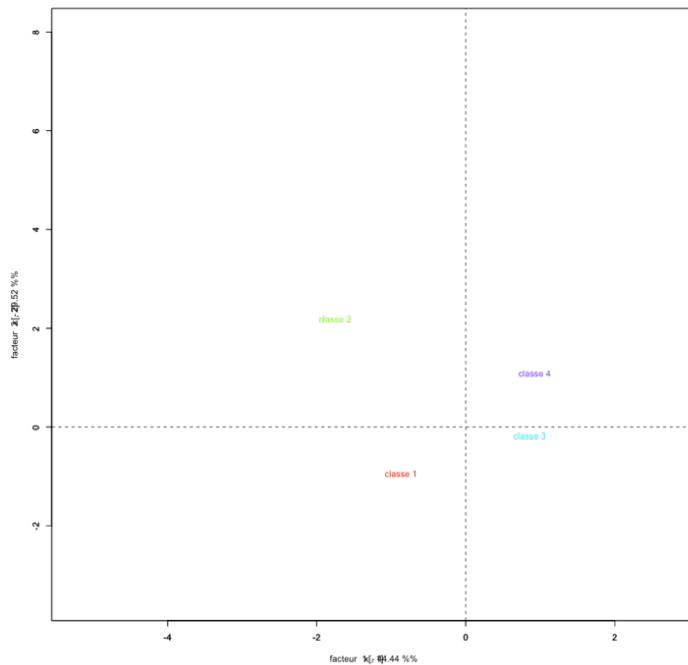


Figure 3. Position of classes in factorial plan

In Table 2, each marker word is accompanied by two statistics reported in the format ( $\chi^2$ , %). The  $\chi^2$  value represents the chi-square statistic measuring the strength of association between a given lexical item and a specific cluster, previously calculated by IRaMuTeQ based on deviations from expected word distribution across clusters. Higher chi-square values indicate strong discriminatory power of the word for that cluster. Another statistic is the percentage (%), which represents the proportion of occurrences of the word that appears within the given cluster relative to its total occurrences in the corpus. Together, these two statistical indicators identify words that are statistically distinct and contextually concentrated within a cluster. To be consistent with lexicometric conventions, only words exceeding a minimum frequency threshold of 20 occurrences and exhibiting statistically significant chi-square values ( $p < 0.05$ ) were retained as marker terms. The columns “Interpretation of Theme” and “Factorial Plan Position” in Table 2 are analytically derived rather than subjective annotations. Cluster interpretations were constructed through a triangulated process combining: (1) inspection of the highest chi-square values; (2) examination of representative text segments assigned to each cluster; (3) theoretical alignment with constructs from the theoretical dynamic literature.

Cluster	Top 20 Marker Words ( $\chi^2$ , %)	Cluster Label	Interpretation of Theme	Factorial Plan Position
1	<i>Openai</i> (25.7;70%), <i>startup</i> (20.7;76%), <i>200</i> (20.06;100%), <i>chip</i> (19.2;92%), <i>roughly</i> (18.6;100%), <i>lab</i> (18.2;87%), <i>musk</i> (16.2;86%), <i>elon</i> (16.2;86%), <i>president</i> (16.1;64%), <i>2022</i> (15.5; 81%), <i>jensen</i> (14.6;100%), <i>huang</i> (14.6; 100%), <i>google</i> (14.0; 64%), <i>silicon</i> (13.6; 80%), <i>march</i> (13.6;80%), <i>trump</i> (13.1;68%), <i>superintelligence</i> (12.6;100%), <i>cofounded</i> (12.6;100%), <i>sam</i> (11.8;79%), <i>million</i> (11.3;60%)	Technology & Innovation	This cluster emphasizes discourse around technology companies (OpenAI, Google), leaders (Elon Musk, Sam Altman, Jensen Huang), and innovation contexts (chips, labs, superintelligence). It reflects corporate narratives about AI breakthroughs, leadership roles, and startup ecosystems.	Anchors the innovation pole of the factorial map, distinct completely from Finance Analysis & Market (2) cluster and Workplace, Skills & Adaptability (4) cluster.
2	<i>Analyst</i> (38.9;74%), <i>tariff</i> (19.4;78%), <i>ives</i> (15.9;100%), <i>wedbush</i> (15.9;100%), <i>lightsb</i> (15.9;100%), <i>Thursday</i> (15.9;100%), <i>counsel</i> (15.9;100%), <i>tim</i> (15.1;83%), <i>earnings</i> (12.9;57%), <i>galone</i> (11.8;100%), <i>yen</i> (11.8;100%), <i>piencyk</i> (11.8;100%), <i>dbx</i> (11.8;100%), <i>lag</i> (11.7;71%), <i>mover</i> (11.2;80%), <i>cook</i> (9.2;63%), <i>morning</i> (8.5;55%), <i>chief</i> (8.4;35%), <i>dan</i> (8.2;67%)	Financial Analysis & Market	This cluster is dominated by financial analysts, brokerage houses, tariff and earning discussions. It represents investor-oriented discourse focused on financial performance, economic conditions, and analyst commentary	Anchors the financial/economic pole, opposite Technology & Innovation (1) cluster, but potentially linked to Workplace, Skills & Adaptability (4) cluster when discussing workforce costs.
3	<i>Experiment</i> (42.1;73%), <i>situation</i> (39.8;78%), <i>promote</i> (39.8;78%), <i>example</i> (38.0;51%), <i>insight</i> (37.4;59%), <i>your</i> (36.5;50%), <i>study</i> (35.7;56%), <i>creative</i> (35.5;76%), <i>awareness</i> (35.5;76%), <i>associated</i> (34.8;80%), <i>action</i> (34.0;64%), <i>behavior</i> (33.6;70%), <i>conduct</i> (33.6;70%), <i>demonstrate</i> (32.4;72%), <i>relate</i> (32.4;65%), <i>information</i> (32.3;53%), <i>find</i> (31.9;56%), <i>quality</i> (31.5;56%), <i>analyze</i> (30.9;67%), <i>practical</i> (30.6;79%)	Research, Experimentation & Knowledge Sharing	This cluster reflects academic and innovative testing discourse: experiments, studies, analysis, creativity, and awareness. It represents how AI is discussed in terms of evidence, insights, and knowledge production.	Positioned near Technology & Innovation (1) cluster, but distinct in being more research- and evidence-oriented. Acts as a knowledge-production pole.
4	<i>Organization</i> (25.3;44%), <i>talent</i> (22.7;52%), <i>workplace</i> (20.8;57%), <i>adaptability</i> (19.4;78%), <i>upskilling</i> (19.2;86%), <i>integrate</i> (17.5;50%), <i>organizational</i> (17.3;55%), <i>skill</i> (16.7;41%), <i>reskilling</i> (15.9;100%), <i>rethink</i> (15.4;75%), <i>HR</i> (13.7;64%), <i>continuous</i> (13.7;64%), <i>equip</i> (12.6;67%), <i>upskill</i> (11.8;100%), <i>scalable</i> (11.8;100%), <i>maximize</i> (11.8;100%), <i>learner</i> (11.7;71%), <i>thrive</i> (11.2;50%), <i>must</i> (13.9;40%)	Workplace, Skills & Adaptability	Focuses on human capital and organizational adaptation: talent, skills, upskilling, reskilling, HR, adaptability. Reflects corporate narratives about preparing the workforce for AI-driven change.	Acts as bridge cluster, positioned between Technology & Innovation (1) cluster, Financial Analysis & Market (2) cluster and Research, Experimentation & Knowledge Sharing (3) cluster. Anchors the HR/people pole.

Table 2. Research Findings Integrated Table

## 4.2. Discussion

This study sets out to explore how HR leaders construct narratives to navigate the dual disruptions of AI adoption and tariff-induced economic uncertainty. Our analysis identified four statistically independent narrative clusters addressing Technology and Innovation (37.1% of corpus), Financial Analysis and Market (20.7%), Research, Experimentation and Knowledge sharing (20.7%), and Workplace, Skills and Adaptability (20.7%). It is important to note these clusters represent narrative emphases rather than direct measures of organizational performance. Nonetheless, this compartmentalization directly contradicts a foundational assumption in Dynamic Capabilities Theory: that sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities are narratively coordinated and strategically unified. This finding creates an interesting tension with Deepa et al. (2025) influential study on

crisis-induced HR narratives. Deepa et al. documented HR leaders successfully synergize competing institutional logics (adaptive resilience via flexibility, short-term coping and transformative resilience through narratives of long-term capability development) within single disruption contexts. Our data shows that when facing dual, distinct disruptions HR discourse maintain the institutional logics in parallel. Why this divergence? The answer likely lies in disruption characteristics. In Deepa et al. (2025) the disruption was singular (organizational crisis) and bounded in time. In the present context, dual disruptions impose contradictory strategic imperatives simultaneously: AI transformation demands investment in experimentation, learning and long-term capability building, while tariff responses demand supply chain efficiency, and operational pragmatism. Apparently, these imperatives cannot be fully synergized without showing incoherence. Compartmentalization thus emerges not as failure to integrate but, potentially, a strategic solution to genuine logical conflict.

Our results refine Nonaka et al.'s (2016) "ba" (shared context) concept wherein narrative integration is the mechanism through which sensing and seizing capabilities are synergized into coherent organizational action. However, the present study reveals that under extreme dual disruption, narrative "ba" does not converge into a single shared context but fragments into parallel, specialized discursive contexts. For example, one for investors and market analysts, another for technology enthusiasts and innovators, a third for researchers and a fourth for workforce and HR practitioners. Overall, the functional silos of the organization (e.g., finance, HR...) appear to dictate the structure of the narrative, resisting the creation of a holistic "dynamic capability story". This fragmentation does not preclude coordination; rather, it suggests that coordination may occur through cross-domain translation or lateral bridging mechanisms.

Additionally, the findings refine Vaara and Tienari's (2011) work on narratives and organizational identity. While they documented how narratives build strategic identity during organizational change, the present study suggests that the identity construction itself is compartmentalized into stakeholder-specific realms. This stakeholder-specific identity construction is not necessarily incoherent; rather it may respond to deliberate segmentation across heterogeneous constituencies.

These findings extend dynamic capabilities theory by demonstrating that narrative microfoundations of sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities operate through parallel discourse domains, particularly under extreme uncertainty. Teece (2007) emphasizes that dynamic capabilities rest upon organizational processes that orchestrate resources across microfoundations. Barreto (2010) similarly stresses integration processes that combine insights from different functional areas into coherent strategic responses. The implicit assumption in both formulations is that coherence requires narrative unity where HR leaders craft unified strategic messages that linguistically and thematically bind technological, financial, and workforce imperatives. However, the present evidence suggests an alternative: under extreme dual disruption, orchestration may occur not within a unified narrative but between compartmentalized narratives.

The distinct financial and innovation sensing domains identified in Cluster 1 and 2 confirm prior research demonstrating that geopolitical and technological disruptions trigger fundamentally different environmental scanning mechanisms (Horak et al., 2017; Ghosh et al., 2021; Moradlou et al., 2021). Horak et al. (2017) documented that HR leaders in multinational enterprises engage in policy-focused scanning when confronting geopolitical disruption, while Ghosh et al. (2021) showed that AI-driven disruptions prompt continuous digital scouting and scenario planning focused on technological ecosystems. The present study extends these findings by revealing that these distinct sensing modalities not only exist but persist as linguistically separate clusters.

Collectively, these exploratory findings suggest that under conditions of extreme dual disruptions, HR leaders prioritize stakeholder-specific clarity over unified narrative integration. We argue that the four-cluster structure reveals not organizational incoherence, but rather a sophisticated segmentation strategy. The critical implication is that compartmentalization should not be assumed inherently dysfunction. Rather, the relevant question may become contextual: under what conditions does compartmentalization represent strategic adaptation, and under what conditions does it represent problematic siloing that inhibits coordination? The present study cannot answer that question as it remains at the level of the discourse analysis and does not measure organizational performance or capability enactment. However, empirically documenting the compartmentalized nature of

narrative microfoundations under dual disruption, it opens a path for future research to investigate the performance implications of narrative compartmentalization versus integration.

## 5. Conclusion

This study sets out to explore how HR narratives construct the dual challenges of AI-driven disruption and tariff-induced instability. Contrary to the theoretical expectation that dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, and transforming) are enacted through integrated strategic narratives (Nonaka et al., 2016), our lexicometric analysis of 143 corporate magazine articles reveals the structure of discursive compartmentalization. This compartmentalization opens new theoretical and practical questions about how organizations coordinate adaptation under extreme uncertainty.

The identification of four statistically distinct clusters demonstrates the adaptation is not narrated as a single, cohesive journey. Instead, it is constructed through parallel, non-overlapping registers. “Sensing” is split between a financial logic (tariff) and a technological one (AI innovation), while “seizing” is confined to human capital logic (skills). This finding advances Dynamic Capability Theory by demonstrating that under conditions of extreme uncertainty and contradicting imperatives, the narrative microfoundations of capability operate through parallel discursive domains instead of fusing them into a single storyline of adaptation. This finding challenges the implicit assumption in dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007; Barreto, 2010) that narrative integration is universally desirable for capability development and coordination.

These results refine microfoundations research by suggesting a reconceptualization of narrative compartmentalization as a potential discursive dynamic capability rather than a symptom of organizational fragmentation. By addressing heterogeneous stakeholder audiences through differentiated narrative domains HR leaders can simultaneously signal, for example, prudence to investors, technological ambition to innovation communities, and workforce adaptability to employees. This extends work on narrative sensemaking (Nonaka et al., 2016) and institutional logic by suggesting strategic coherence can be achieved between narratives through cross-domain translation. Our exploratory study contributes a discursive perspective to dynamic capabilities theory, demonstrating that how organizations talk about adaptation is itself a microfoundational process worthy of theoretical attention.

This does not suggest that compartmentalization is optimal in all contexts. Rather, it suggests contextual wisdom. For HR practitioners and organizational leaders, this study offers a diagnostic lens rather than a prescriptive recipe. The findings suggest that the siloing often observed in organizations is often mirrored by the language used in public corporate discourse. Leaders should be aware that while compartmentalization may be efficient for addressing specific audiences it risks creating an organizational reality where financial threats and technological opportunities are never constructed conceptually bridged. HR leaders might therefore experiment with narrative bridging, intentionally creating communication artefacts that link, for example, the financial necessity of tariff adaptation (cluster 2) directly to skills requirements of AI adoption (cluster 4), thereby fostering a more holistic organizational understanding of the dual disruption.

For practitioners, the findings suggest that HR leaders should assess whether narrative compartmentalization reflects deliberate strategic choice or unintended functional siloing. HR leaders should address a diagnostic phase conducting a narrative audit systematically mapping workforce communications against the four domains identified in this study. This reveals where messages are coupled, loosely related, or disconnected. Two critical assessment questions should guide this diagnostic:

Where is compartmentalization strategically useful? Identify domains where audiences, institutional logics, or time horizons genuinely differ.

Where is compartmentalization potentially problematic? Identify points where narrative disconnection may undermine trust or strategic coherence. For example, if employees hear only tariff-driven cost reduction messages but never receive communications about how AI investment may create career opportunities, this separation may foster cynicism and disengagement.

HR leaders can module their intervention actions experimenting with targeted narrative bridging in domains where genuine synergies exist. Concrete examples include: (1) explicitly linking tariff-induced supply chain redesign to upskilling and talent mobility programs; or (2) positioning AI adoption as productivity strategy as well as employee empowerment opportunity through cross-functional pilot projects where employees create implementation guidelines. These pilot bridging initiatives should be evaluated against expected outcomes through employee pulse surveys measuring perceived coherence and trust, focus groups exploring whether bridging enhances clarity, and engagement metrics tracking correlation with retention and upskilling participation. If pilot demonstrate benefits, leaders can scale gradually; if evaluation reveals confusion, compartmentalization should be maintained in those domains.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is purely lexical; the identification of the discursive clusters does not equate the observation of actual organizational practices or performance outcomes. We analyzed how adaptation is talked about, not how it is done. Second, while Reinert's method offers statistical rigor in identifying lexical co-occurrences, it is sensitive to corpus segmentation. Although the chi-square values indicate strong statistical separation, we did not perform robustness checks to confirm the invariance of these clusters across different sub-samples. Third, the data is drawn exclusively from public-facing HR and leadership magazines, which likely reflects a "legitimizing" discourse intended for external consumption rather than the internal organizational communication.

These limitations open critical research opportunities. The most pressing need is to investigate whether narrative compartmentalization versus integration correlates with organizational performance outcomes such as adaptability, innovation rates, employee engagement and financial performance, for example. Multi-method designs combining discourse analysis with survey or archival data could compare firms maintaining compartmentalized narratives with those attempting integration. Further research should explore employee perceptions of narrative compartmentalization and examine how patterns vary across sectors, geographies or organizational sizes. Such research would move the field from descriptive mapping or narrative structures toward predictive understanding of their organizational consequences.

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