

Article type:
Original Research

Article history:
Received 07 July 2024
Revised 27 August 2024
Accepted 07 October 2024
Initial Publish 19 October 2024
Published online 01 November 2024

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How to cite this article:
Jaber Fzaea, A., Kazemi, S. H., & Mortazavi, M.
(2027). Effective Human Resource Management
Strategies for Rebuilding Professional Identity
Following Job Displacement: A Systematic Literature
Review. *Future of Work and Digital Management
Journal*, 5(6), 1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.61838/fwdmj.366>



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Effective Human Resource Management Strategies for Rebuilding Professional Identity Following Job Displacement: A Systematic Literature Review

ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review aimed to synthesize existing evidence on how Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies address professional identity tensions and facilitate identity reconstruction, career adaptability, psychological resilience, and sustainable career transition following involuntary job displacement. A systematic search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science, supplemented by backward citation searching, using keywords related to HRM strategies, professional identity reconstruction, job displacement, workforce mobility, career transition, and post-displacement adaptation. The search identified 861 records, which were subjected to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and multi-stage screening consistent with PRISMA principles. Following title, abstract, methodological, conceptual, relevance, and full-text assessments, 46 empirical and theoretical studies were retained. The review integrated qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, longitudinal, and conceptual evidence across HRM, organizational behavior, career studies, human resource development, and vocational psychology. The synthesis indicated that professional identity reconstruction following displacement is a nonlinear, iterative, relational, and structurally conditioned process rather than a simple restoration of a previous occupational identity. Retraining, reskilling, redeployment, outplacement, career coaching, mentoring, and developmental support facilitated reconstruction most effectively when embedded within inclusive and psychologically supportive HR architectures. Their effects operated through enhanced coping self-efficacy, social support, narrative coherence, career adaptability, self-directed learning, and professional agency. Structural barriers, including ageism, migration-related exclusion, skill mismatch, and restricted developmental opportunities, weakened these effects and demonstrated that individual adaptability alone is insufficient. Evidence further suggested that standardized interventions may constrain identity autonomy when they impose narrow employability expectations. Effective post-displacement HRM should integrate skills development, psychological support, career adaptability, identity work, and inclusive organizational practices within a coherent multi-level framework that recognizes both individual agency and structural constraints. Stronger longitudinal, quantitative, intervention-based, and intersectional research is required to establish the long-term effectiveness and generalizability of these approaches.

Keywords: Human Resource Management Strategies; Professional Identity Reconstruction; Job Displacement; Career Adaptability; Workforce Mobility; Career Transition

Introduction

Contemporary labor markets are increasingly characterized by discontinuity, technological disruption, organizational restructuring, demographic change, and declining expectations of lifelong employment within a single occupation or organization. Careers that were once understood as relatively stable sequences of advancement are increasingly punctuated by layoffs, automation, restructuring, occupational displacement, health-related interruptions, and transitions across

organizational and professional boundaries. These developments have intensified scholarly interest in how workers respond not only economically and behaviorally but also psychologically and symbolically when established career trajectories are disrupted. Job displacement is particularly consequential because employment represents more than a source of income; it also provides professional status, social relationships, competence validation, routines, future expectations, and a framework through which individuals understand who they are in relation to others. Consequently, involuntary job loss or reassignment can destabilize the professional self and require workers to reconstruct both their careers and the identities through which those careers acquire meaning [1-4].

Professional identity refers broadly to the evolving meanings, values, competencies, affiliations, and role expectations through which individuals define themselves as members of an occupation or professional community. Rather than being fixed, professional identity is continuously negotiated in interaction with organizational environments, occupational norms, relationships, and changing work demands. Workplace change can therefore become emotionally significant when established professional identities no longer correspond with available roles, institutional expectations, or perceived opportunities for meaningful participation. Under such circumstances, individuals must negotiate tensions between continuity and change, preserving valued elements of previous selves while experimenting with identities better aligned with emerging circumstances [5-7]. Recent work on nonlinear careers further emphasizes that transition often involves multiple provisional or competing selves rather than a simple substitution of one occupational identity for another, making professional identity reconstruction a dynamic, iterative, and temporally extended process [4].

Involuntary displacement represents an especially disruptive form of career transition because it can abruptly remove the organizational and occupational structures that previously validated an individual's professional identity. Workers experiencing job loss may encounter uncertainty, emotional disorientation, diminished confidence, perceived status loss, and difficulty imagining a credible future professional self. Theoretical work on severe job loss describes processes through which individuals may reach a psychological "rock bottom" before engaging in identity play and constructing a new positive work identity [2]. Similarly, recent qualitative evidence concerning technology-related displacement among information-technology professionals has documented emotional shock, anxiety, social withdrawal, perceived organizational betrayal, and erosion of professional identity following AI-induced job disruption [8]. Other research suggests that recovery may move beyond resilience toward career reinvention and antifragility when displaced employees gradually restore intrinsic motivation, competence, autonomy, and social connection [9]. Thus, post-displacement adjustment cannot be reduced to obtaining another job; it also involves rebuilding a coherent and sustainable sense of professional self.

The process of identity reconstruction is strongly shaped by individuals' psychological and career-management resources. Social cognitive perspectives on unemployment and reemployment demonstrate that self-efficacy, coping behaviors, goal regulation, and contextual supports influence how workers respond to job loss and manage subsequent career tasks [10]. Career self-management research likewise indicates that job loss generates multiple simultaneous demands, including emotion regulation, job-search behavior, career decision-making, maintenance of psychological well-being, and adjustment of future goals [11]. Coping self-efficacy appears especially important in determining whether unemployed individuals can manage the psychological consequences of displacement while remaining engaged in adaptive career behaviors [12]. Moreover, career adaptability increasingly depends on meta-skills such as problem solving, reflection, self-direction, interpersonal capability, and the capacity to redeploy competencies across changing contexts [13]. Self-regulatory processes

also matter: disengagement from an obsolete or forgone identity can facilitate career crafting and strengthen perceived employability when individuals successfully redirect attention toward attainable future possibilities [14].

Nevertheless, emphasizing individual agency alone risks obscuring the organizational and institutional environments within which career recovery occurs. Career shocks do not generate identical consequences for all workers, because access to training, developmental opportunities, supportive networks, employment alternatives, and organizational resources is unequally distributed. Research examining perceived Human Resource Management (HRM) following career shocks indicates that HR practices can influence whether disruptive events develop into sustainable or unsustainable career trajectories by shaping employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to remain employable and engaged [15]. Similarly, organizational career management and individual career self-management may operate jointly to build the human, social, and psychological capital required for employability development [16]. HRM is therefore potentially more than an administrative response to workforce displacement; it constitutes an institutional mechanism through which workers receive resources, recognition, developmental opportunities, and signals about their continuing professional value.

Development-oriented HR practices may be particularly important because identity reconstruction frequently requires individuals to reinterpret existing competence while acquiring skills compatible with new occupational possibilities. Retraining, reskilling, career counseling, mentoring, redeployment, and structured professional development can provide both instrumental resources and symbolic confirmation that displaced workers remain capable of contributing meaningfully. Research on organizational career growth has linked development opportunities, support, and advancement-related HR practices with positive career outcomes, while also highlighting the need to clarify the mechanisms connecting such practices to longer-term identity and career processes [17]. Positive psychology perspectives similarly suggest that professional development becomes particularly meaningful when experiences are aligned with an individual's ideal self and desired future identity [18]. In a labor market increasingly demanding continual retooling, workers may also need to adopt flexible career orientations that prioritize transferable skills, lifelong learning, and proactive career ownership [19]. Protean career orientations and perceived employability can contribute to career sustainability, although the benefits of self-directed career behavior remain dependent on the opportunities and constraints present in workers' environments [20].

Professional transitions also involve narrative, relational, and social processes that extend beyond skill acquisition. Career identities become credible partly through recognition by others, meaning that reconstruction depends on access to supportive relationships, occupational communities, mentors, and networks. Evidence among senior workers suggests that social support can strengthen grit, career adaptability, and preparation behavior, particularly when accompanied by self-directed learning [21]. Research on senior managers experiencing career shocks similarly identifies the mobilization of networks, reconsideration of career anchors, and rebalancing of professional priorities as mechanisms for coping with disruption [22]. Career resilience itself is increasingly conceptualized not merely as an internal trait but as a process enacted through interactions between individuals, organizational environments, communication, and available resources [23]. These findings reinforce the importance of viewing identity reconstruction as relationally produced rather than exclusively dependent on personal determination.

Transitions across professional domains make these relational dynamics particularly visible. Professionals entering new occupations may need to establish legitimacy by selectively drawing on prior expertise while adapting to unfamiliar professional norms. Research on transitions into emerging occupations demonstrates that identity construction involves

boundary work, negotiation of credibility, and the integration of previous professional backgrounds into a newly developing occupational identity [24]. Cross-domain transitions similarly reveal multiple patterns of identity adoption, resistance, and adjustment as individuals encounter different institutional logics [25]. Military-to-civilian transitions provide another prominent example: former service members must translate institutionally specific competencies and identities into civilian occupational settings, and person-environment fit becomes important for successful integration and retention [26]. Emerging transition models for military personnel further emphasize anticipatory preparation, self-authorship, autonomy, and social capital as resources enabling individuals to “reinvent” themselves before and during occupational change [27].

Identity reconstruction is likewise evident following health-related career shocks, where workers may be forced to relinquish identities anchored in occupations they can no longer perform. Such experiences can involve identity shedding, experimentation, relational validation, and gradual implantation of alternative professional selves [28, 29]. This literature illustrates that identity reconstruction is rarely instantaneous and may continue even after formal occupational transition has occurred. Likewise, workers undergoing industrial reconversion may experience different identity outcomes depending on how they interpret the transition and the extent to which new occupational roles preserve or threaten valued elements of former identities [30]. These findings challenge models that define successful transition exclusively in terms of reemployment, emphasizing instead whether the new career arrangement permits individuals to establish a coherent, recognized, and psychologically sustainable professional self.

Age represents another important dimension of displacement and transition. Older workers often possess substantial career capital, accumulated expertise, and strongly established occupational identities, yet they may simultaneously encounter age discrimination, skills obsolescence, reduced mobility, and narrower employment opportunities. Research on older jobseekers describes temporal identity work through which individuals connect past achievements, present circumstances, and anticipated futures while attempting to preserve continuity and remain employable [31]. Older workers may also confront temporal and spatial barriers that limit the transferability of accumulated career capital in globalized labor markets [32]. Longitudinal research among displaced older workers indicates that sustainable labor-market reintegration depends not simply on finding employment but on obtaining work compatible with personal resources, professional expectations, and longer-term well-being [33]. More recent research similarly emphasizes that mature workers' career transitions are shaped by the interaction between personal resources, social support, labor-market conditions, and age-related barriers [34].

These challenges underscore the need for HRM systems that address structural inequality as well as individual adaptability. Ageing and worker displacement research highlights the disadvantages older employees may experience in access to retraining, reemployment, and active labor-market support [35]. Human resource development scholarship consequently calls for later-career policies that challenge deficit assumptions about ageing and create more inclusive opportunities for continued learning, contribution, and identity development [36]. Inclusive HR bundles that combine equitable training, promotion opportunities, mentoring, flexible arrangements, and intergenerational practices may help organizations accommodate ageing workforces while facilitating collaboration and continued employability [37]. Such approaches are relevant not only to age but also to the broader problem of ensuring that HR systems do not inadvertently intensify identity threats among workers already facing structural disadvantage.

At the organizational level, restructuring may generate different identity responses depending on employees' histories and attachment to existing organizational arrangements. Workers strongly identified with pre-change structures can experience greater threats to identity continuity, whereas newcomers whose identities are less anchored in legacy arrangements may possess greater flexibility in renegotiating practices and expectations [38]. Organizational identity can also mediate relationships between HR practices and employees' intentions to remain, suggesting that HR systems influence workforce continuity partly through the meanings employees attach to membership and belonging [39]. These findings are important for displacement research because they demonstrate that organizational interventions affect not only skills and employment opportunities but also the social recognition and identity resources through which workers interpret career disruption.

However, organizational support is not automatically beneficial. Formal career-transition practices may simultaneously assist and regulate identity reconstruction. Outplacement, for example, can provide valuable structure, coaching, and labor-market guidance while also encouraging workers to conform to standardized assumptions about employability and appropriate professional self-presentation [40]. Consequently, HR interventions can function as both enabling and constraining mechanisms: they may widen the range of viable future identities, but they may also privilege particular career narratives or impose expectations that do not correspond with workers' histories, aspirations, or structural circumstances. The theoretical model proposed by Beazley similarly suggests that involuntary unemployment can produce resistance, crisis, or transformation depending on how individuals interpret and respond to disruption [3]. These tensions call for HR approaches that combine structured support with sufficient autonomy for individuals to construct identities that remain personally meaningful.

Despite substantial advances, the literature remains fragmented across HRM, organizational behavior, vocational psychology, career studies, and human resource development. Some studies prioritize coping, self-efficacy, adaptability, and proactive career behavior, whereas others emphasize identity work, institutional expectations, social recognition, organizational practices, or structural disadvantage. This fragmentation makes it difficult to determine how HR strategies, psychological resources, career adaptability, and identity processes operate together following displacement. Moreover, many studies focus on specific populations or contexts, including older workers, veterans, professionals, workers undergoing health-related transitions, and employees displaced by technological change, which provides valuable contextual depth but complicates the development of an integrative HRM framework. The increasingly diverse and volatile nature of contemporary careers therefore requires a synthesis that connects individual identity work with organizational interventions and broader structural conditions rather than treating them as separate explanatory domains.

Accordingly, the aim of this systematic literature review is to synthesize and critically integrate evidence on how HRM strategies address professional identity tensions and facilitate professional identity reconstruction, psychological resilience, career adaptability, and sustainable career transition following job displacement.

Methodology

This systematic review is guided by the following research question and sub-questions.

Main Research Question (RQ):

How do Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies address professional identity tensions and facilitate professional identity reconstruction following job displacement?

Sub-Research Questions:

1. How have theoretical frameworks and empirical studies conceptualized professional identity reconstruction following job displacement within HRM and career literature?
2. Which specific HRM strategies and practices demonstrate empirical effectiveness in supporting career adaptability and identity reconstruction in post-displacement contexts?
3. What are the methodological, theoretical, and contextual limitations in existing HRM literature on professional identity reconstruction, and what future research directions are indicated?

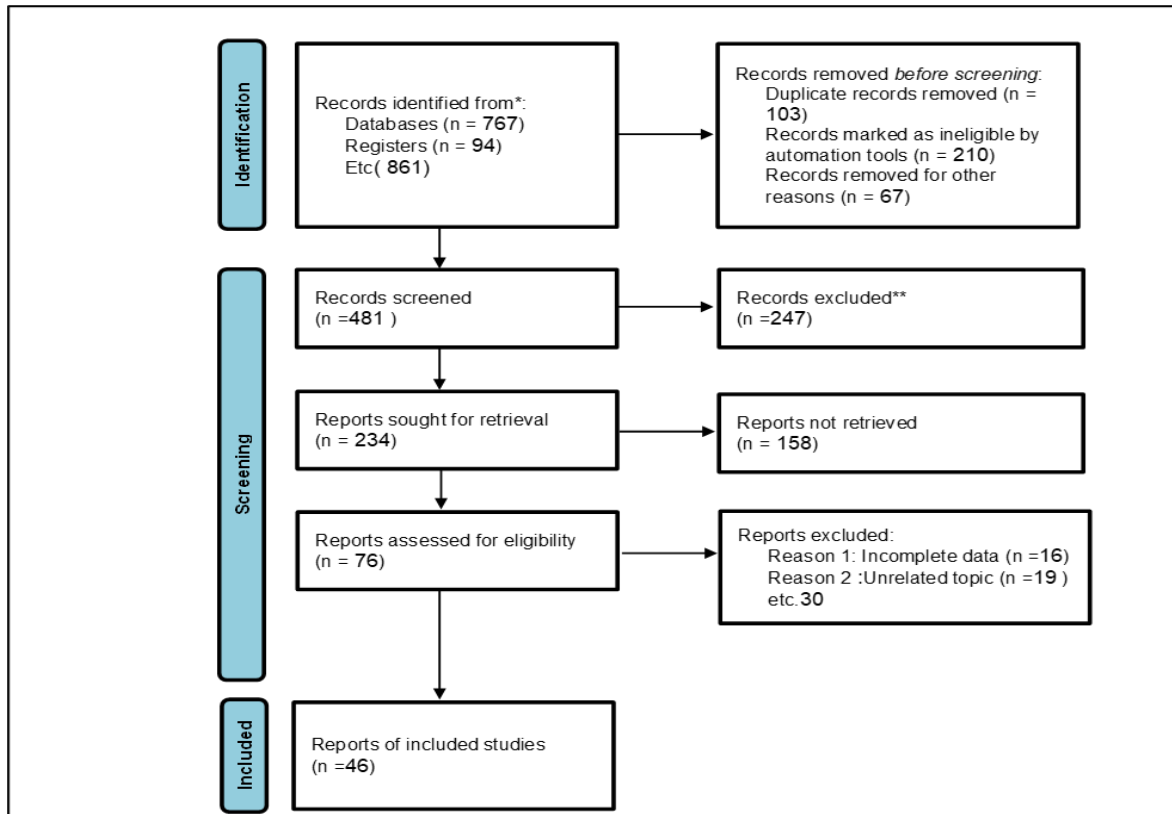
A systematic search was conducted in Scopus and Web of Science using a structured set of keywords, including “Human Resource Management Strategies,” “Professional Identity Reconstruction,” “Job Displacement,” “Workforce Mobility,” “Career Transition,” and “Post-Displacement Adaptation.” Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to align the search with the review’s objectives and to capture the multidimensional character of professional identity reconstruction following job displacement.

The search yielded 861 records (564 from Scopus, 203 from Web of Science, and 94 from backward citation searches). These records were screened through a multi-stage process guided by predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure conceptual relevance, theoretical alignment, and methodological adequacy. After initial screening, 380 records were excluded, leaving 481 for further review. A subsequent stage applying more stringent methodological and conceptual criteria excluded 247 records, resulting in 234 studies.

The remaining 234 studies underwent an advanced relevance assessment matrix focused on conceptual alignment, methodological robustness, and contribution to the research question. This stage excluded 158 studies, leaving 76 that were closely aligned with the review’s focus. Full-text assessment then excluded 30 additional studies, yielding a final sample of 46 studies. Overall, this multi-stage process is aligned with PRISMA expectations and provides a transparent foundation for synthesizing evidence on HRM strategies for professional identity reconstruction after job displacement.

Figure 1

PRISMA diagram



To enhance transparency and replicability, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to screening and applied consistently across title/abstract screening and full-text assessment.

Table 1

Summary of the criteria used to determine eligibility

Criterion	Revised Inclusion Criteria	Revised Exclusion Criteria
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, authoritative theoretical reviews	Unpublished manuscripts, non-academic reports, opinion pieces, editorials
Indexing & scholarly credibility	Journals indexed in Scopus / WoS, or well-established peer-reviewed journals frequently cited in the field	Non-peer-reviewed outlets with no academic standing
Language	English-language publications and selected high-quality French/Portuguese studies central to identity and career research	Publications in languages without established academic accessibility or relevance
Temporal scope	Seminal foundational studies and contemporary research (no strict lower cut-off)	Studies lacking relevance to contemporary career/identity discourse
Core phenomenon	Explicit focus on professional/work identity, identity work, career shock, career adaptability, or career transition	Studies addressing job loss or employment change purely as an economic or statistical event
Disciplinary domain	Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior, Career Studies, HRD, Vocational Psychology	Macro-economics, labor market policy, or demographic studies without identity or organizational lens
Theoretical grounding	Studies employing or contributing to identity theory, career construction, career shocks, sensemaking, or adaptation frameworks	Studies lacking explicit conceptual or theoretical framing
Methodological scope	Empirical (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) and conceptual/theoretical studies	Studies with unclear methods and no theoretical contribution
Population/context	Displaced workers, involuntary job changers, professionals in career transitions, ageing workers, veterans, health-affected professionals	Student-only samples or general workforce studies unrelated to transition or displacement
HRM relevance	Direct or indirect implications for HRM practices, career support, outplacement, HRD, or organizational support mechanisms	Studies with no organizational, HRM, or developmental relevance
Analytical contribution	Studies contributing to understanding identity reconstruction, adaptation mechanisms, or career sustainability	Studies with only peripheral or anecdotal relevance

Findings and Results

This systematic review maps a methodologically diverse body of scholarship on HRM strategies that support professional identity reconstruction following involuntary job loss and career disruption. The included studies draw on HRM, Career Studies, Organizational Behavior, and Vocational Psychology, and cover varied occupational groups, career stages, and socio institutional contexts.

Methodologically, the literature is dominated by qualitative designs such as in-depth interviews, narrative inquiry, ethnography, and case studies consistent with the interpretive and temporal character of identity reconstruction. These insights are complemented by quantitative, mixed-method, and longitudinal studies that examine adaptability, resilience, employability, and career sustainability over time.

Across the evidence base, professional identity reconstruction is portrayed not as a linear recovery pathway but as an iterative process shaped by the interplay between HRM practices, psychological resources, social support, and structural conditions. HRM strategies particularly outplacement, retraining, inclusive HR practices, career support systems, and developmental interventions recur as enabling conditions that influence how displaced individuals interpret disruption, mobilize adaptive responses, and author viable professional identities amid career discontinuity.

Table 2

Descriptive Summary of Studies

Study	HRM Effectiveness	Strategy	Psychological Support	Resilience	Career Facilitation	Adaptability	Inclusivity and Sensitivity	Age	Identity Reconstruction Processes
(Latack & Dozier, 1986)	Model proposing career growth from job displacement with organizational strategies	career management with transitions	Recommend creative transitions	creative career	Focus on coping strategies for career change		General workforce, not age-specific	focus,	Career growth through coping and transition management
(Wang & Abu Hasan, 2024)	Systematic review (PRISMA-based) of 40 empirical studies synthesizing HR-relevant antecedents and outcomes of organizational career growth (OCG)		Does not directly measure resilience; identifies work emotions and work behaviours as key OCG-related themes in the literature		Synthesizes personal-trait and work-support factors driving career growth; flags a gap in mediating/interactive adaptability mechanisms for future research		General workforce; not age-specific review calls for more attention to organizational/cultural-level moderators		Does not address identity reconstruction directly; frames career growth mainly through job performance and management-practice outcomes rather than identity processes
(Zikic & Richardson, 2007)	Older workers' sensemaking and career exploration post job loss		Job displacement reframed as opportunity for self-fulfillment		Career exploration fosters adaptability		Focus on older middle managers		Positive identity reconstruction through sensemaking
(Garrett-Peters, 2009)	Collective self-concept repair strategies among displaced professionals		Social capital leveraged for psychological resilience		Accountability partnerships aid career adaptability		Privileged workers, group focus	displaced, support	Collective identity repair through social strategies
(Courtois et al., 2025)	Does not directly examine HRM strategies; examines how professionals construct occupational identity when transitioning into an emerging occupation (antifraud expertise)		Indirectly supports resilience by showing how professionals from accounting and law-enforcement backgrounds negotiate credibility and coherence while building an identity that has no established template		Highlights the boundary-work and identity-construction strategies required to move from an established profession into an emerging occupation lacking prepackaged identity content		Not age-specific; distinguishes participants by prior professional background ("guardians" vs. "investigators") rather than age		Provides an in-depth account of occupational identity construction processes, contrasting the distinct pathways of accounting-background and law-enforcement-background professionals building a coherent new occupational identity
(Ferrari, 2026)	Quantitative case-study (SEM) of employee responses to organizational restructuring in a healthcare organization, grounded in Social Identity Theory		Change Confidence buffers negative emotional/behavioural outcomes, but only among the historically grounded "Already Present Group," whose identity is tied to the pre-change organization		Newcomers less anchored in the legacy organizational identity show more flexible, adaptive identity work and greater openness to renegotiating practices during restructuring		Controls for tenure, age, and gender as covariates; not age-focused, general healthcare workforce		Identity disruption during restructuring is shaped by group history: the "Already Present Group" experiences threat to identity continuity, while the "Newcomers Group" is still under construction and more open to renegotiation
(Moorhouse & Cunningham, 2010)	HRD strategy critique for migrant deskilling and identity loss		Addresses psychological impact of deskilling and exclusion		Limited facilitation due to systemic barriers		Highlights exclusion of migrants in HRD practices		Identity loss due to underemployment and xenophobia

(Haynie & Shepherd, 2011)	Career transition theory for traumatic Job displacement with future-oriented strategies	Highlights narrative coherence to manage trauma	Emphasizes future career envisionment	Addresses disabled veterans, a marginalized group	Reconstruction of foundational assumptions and identity
(Mulhall, 2014)	Narrative inquiry on career reconstruction after involuntary job loss	Identifies diverse career reconstruction strategies	Emphasizes control and envisionment in career success	Professionals in active labor market programs	Career identity situated in societal and organizational contexts
(Shepherd & Williams, 2018)	"Rock bottom" model enabling new positive work identity creation	Differentiates recovery vs dysfunction pathways post job loss	Identity play as a mechanism for adaptability	Not specifically age-focused	Oscillation between identity play and refinement processes
(Sharma et al., 2025)	Delphi-validated qualitative (phenomenological) study of Indian IT professionals facing AI-driven job loss or reassignment, examining psychological rather than HR-programmatic responses	Six psychological themes identified emotional shock, erosion of professional identity, chronic anxiety and anticipatory rumination, social withdrawal, adaptive/maladaptive coping, and perceived organizational betrayal	Distinguishes adaptive from maladaptive coping strategies, offering a Delphi-validated basis for targeted post-displacement support pathways	Displaced IT professionals in the Indian technology sector facing AI/automation driven role loss; not age-specific	Identity shifts centered on erosion of professional identity and perceived organizational betrayal following AI-induced job displacement
(Tempest & Coupland, 2017)	Emphasizes age-inclusive HRM practices that leverage older workers' career capital and experience.	Highlights how older workers maintain professional value despite career challenges and disruptions.	Shows that adaptability depends on utilizing career capital and responding to changing labor market conditions.	Focuses specifically on older workers and the impact of age-related barriers on career development.	Explains how older workers sustain and reconstruct professional identity through accumulated career capital and adaptation.
(Phuc et al., 2026)	Qualitative study (interviews and focus groups) on how young employees rebuild motivation and career pathways after involuntary job loss	Frames psychological response to job loss as a three-stage process: emotional disorientation and identity disruption, reactivation of intrinsic motivation, and emergence of antifragility	Differentiates antifragility from mere resilience; adaptive career reinvention marked by proactive adaptation and redefinition of career direction	Focus on Generation Z (early-career young adults) in Vietnam, not midcareer professionals	Antifragility conceptualized as a psychological capacity that develops as individuals gradually restore autonomy, competence, and social connection following identity disruption
(Cocandeau-Bellanger & Fonteneau, 2017)	Industrial workers' professional identity post reconversion	Identity profiles vary from authorship to subjection	Cooperative vs conflictual identity construction models	Former industrial workers, age and class focus	Identity construction influenced by reconversion perception
(Thompson et al., 2017)	Social cognitive career theory applied to Job displacement and recovery	Person-cognitive variables predict coping and reemployment	Emphasizes individual differences and contextual affordances	Broad unemployed populations	Career self-management as identity and coping framework
(van Vianen & Klehe, 2018)	Model integrating identity, coping, and adaptability in new economy	Addresses identity threats and mental model shifts	Highlights adaptability resources for nonlinear careers	General workforce, future-oriented	Identity and coping integrated in career adaptation
(Fournier et al., 2018)	Labour market reintegration processes for older displaced workers	Psychological sustainability linked to decent work reintegration	Emphasizes occupational and personal enrichment	Older Canadian workers, longitudinal study	Reintegration identity linked to sustainable employment
(Steel & Tuori, 2019)	Older jobseekers' temporal identity work across time	Identity work relates past, present, and future selves	Renewal and tweaking support adaptability	Older unemployed workers, age-sensitive	Temporal identity work as coping with unemployment
(Pak et al., 2021)	HR practices mitigate negative effects of career shocks on sustainability	HR resources improve motivation and opportunity to work	Person-job fit central to adaptability post shock	Focus on older workers (50+) and career shocks	Career shock impacts mediated by HRM perceptions
(de Becdelièvre et al., 2021)	Senior managers' strategies to overcome career shocks	Recentring and rebalancing career anchors aid resilience	Network mobilization facilitates adaptability	Senior managers, age-sensitive focus	Active agency in identity work post career shock
(Vähäsantanen, 2022)	Professional identity negotiation in changing workplaces	Agentic and emotional identity work amid workplace change	Workplace pedagogies support identity negotiation	Broad professional contexts	Relational and agentic identity perspectives emphasized
(Obiling, 2023)	Professional identity reconstruction in military education context	Cultural and organizational constraints on identity work	Focus on matching new role expectations	Military professionals, later career focus	Micro-macro integration of identity reconstruction
(Becker et al., 2025)	Framework for veteran career transition improving integration and retention	Emphasizes personal adaptation during transition	Focus on person-environment fit to aid adaptability	Limited focus on older veterans, mainly military context	Narrative of personal adaptation and career construction
(Raimi, 2022)	Models of career reinvention and retooling post-pandemic	Highlights resilience strategies amid labor market vulnerabilities	Emphasizes skill and competency development	General workforce, policy and organizational focus	Career reinvention as identity and skill adaptation
(Suzanne et al., 2023)	Identity reconstruction stages after health-related career shock	Identity shedding and implanting as coping responses	Limited direct focus on adaptability facilitation	Case study of senior HR professional	Longitudinal identity internalization and relational recognition

(Finch et al., 2023)	Meta-skills codebook for career adaptation	Identifies problem-solving and self-reliance skills	Framework supports systematic development	Broad applicability	occupational	Career adaptation through metaskills development
(Lent et al., 2023)	Career self-management perspective on psychological and job search coping	Differentiates problem-focused and emotion-focused coping	Integrates coping strategies with career adaptability	General workers, no focus	unemployed specific age	Coping strategies influence identity and career progress
(Suzanne & Voloshyna, 2023)	Identity reconstruction after health-related career shock	Identity shedding and implanting as coping mechanisms	Case study of senior HR professional	Health-related shock, senior focus	career	Longitudinal identity and relational recognition
(Martin-Sanchez, 2024)	Outplacement as regulator of identity work during transition	Highlights potential normalization and constraint effects	Outplacement tools influence career self-management	Focus on French outplacement practices, general workforce		Identity work influenced by social discourses and practices
(de Oliveira & da Silva, 2024)	Career transition of mature workers post dismissal	Contextual and individual factors shape transition outcomes	Ageism and social support influence adaptability	Mature workers aged 45-60, age-sensitive		Vulnerability and identity challenges in mature workforce
(Dhar, 2025)	Positive psychology framework for professional development	Development experiences strengthen aspirational identity	Aligns development with ideal self for adaptability	Broad professional sample, no age focus		Ideal self formation through developmental HRM
(Tomo, 2025)	Model of identity struggles, threats, and coping behaviors	Explores micro-politics of identity dynamics	Highlights coping behaviors across professions	Cross-professional, includes marginalized groups		Iterative identity work amid threats and struggles
(Beazley, 2024)	Theoretical model of transformation after involuntary unemployment	Describes emotional and spiritual crises and growth	Emphasizes adaptation stages and resilience	Addresses diverse displaced populations		Identity transformation through disengagement and growth
(Warhurst & Black, 2024)	Critical HRD lens on later-career inclusion and activation	Lifelong learning policies limited in equity and inclusion	HRD interventions to improve older workers' self-concept	Strong focus on older workers and social justice		Social-constructionist identity theorizing for later career
(CHO & PARK, 2024)	Social support effects on grit, adaptability, and job prep in seniors	Social support enhances psychological resilience	Self-directed learning moderates adaptability	Explicit focus on senior workers in food industry		Identity work linked to social support and learning
(Zhou et al., 2024)	Forgone identity dwelling enhances perceived employability	Career crafting mediates employability via self-regulation	Promotion focus strengthens adaptability behaviors	Not age-specific, general workforce		Self-regulatory identity processes linked to career crafting
(Wang & Lent, 2024)	Social cognitive model applied to psychological coping post job loss	Psychological coping self-efficacy predicts wellbeing	Emphasizes coping behaviors beyond job search	Broad unemployed population, no age focus		Coping self-efficacy as identity resilience factor
(Roumell et al., 2025)	Emerging model for military personnel pre-transition preparation	Autonomy-supportive learning to enhance resilience	Emphasizes self-determination and social capital	Military personnel focus, limited age diversity		Liminality and professional authoring in identity work
(Aitken et al., 2024)	Active labor market policies for older displaced workers	Emphasizes psychological well-being and reemployment support	Skills and training critical for career adaptability	Strong age-sensitivity and antidiscrimination focus		Policy-driven identity support for older displaced workers
(Nimmi et al., 2024)	Protean orientation drives outcomes via self-directed learning, not organizational HRM	Sustains employability rather than buffering strain directly	Lifelong learning and proactive skill development mediate employability (SEM)	General professionals, Italy/Cyprus; not age- or displacement-specific		Diversified skills framed as extension of self-directed professional identity
(Coun et al., 2026)	CSM and organizational career management jointly predict employability via movement capital	Psychological (resilience) capital supports adaptation to new opportunities	Human, social, psychological capital mediate employability; networks/resilience aid both internal and external routes	Dutch civil servants, homogeneous sample; not age-specific		Frames sustained employability, not identity, as the outcome of accumulated career capital
(Napathorn, 2026)	Inclusive HR practices fostering cross-generational synergy	Equal training and promotion opportunities for all ages	Coaching and mentoring support adaptability	Strong focus on age and generational inclusivity		Inclusive HR bundles promote identity and collaboration
(Sheng, 2025)	HR practices reduce turnover via organizational identity mediation	Training and engagement enhance emotional attachment	Fair recruitment supports career continuity	General workforce, no specific age focus		Organizational identity mediates HRM impact on retention
(Woo & Endacott, 2026)	Career resilience as communicative and negotiated process	Organizational norms influence psychological coping	Dual anticipatory and reactive adaptability processes	Marginalized populations' challenges emphasized		Career resilience enacted through interaction and discourse
(Chaturvedi & Nambudiri, 2025)	Spectrum model of identity transformation in veterans	Explores identity adaptation to new institutional logics	Highlights boundary navigation in career shifts	Veteran-specific, with cultural adaptation challenges		Archetypes of identity adoption and resistance
(Ibarra et al., 2026)	Review of nonlinear career transitions and identity dynamics	Discusses psychological challenges in career discontinuity	Emphasizes multiple selves and dynamic identity	Broad applicability, including diverse demographics		Nonlinear trajectories and identity learning processes

A synthesis of the 46 reviewed studies, informed particularly by the identity reconstruction processes documented in Table 2, reveals that scholarly conceptualizations of professional identity reconstruction following job displacement are neither monolithic nor static. Rather, they span a range of theoretical traditions that have progressively expanded from coping-centred frameworks toward integrative, multi-level accounts of identity work in disrupted careers. The following analysis maps the principal theoretical conceptualizations identified in the literature, organized into six overlapping but analytically distinct frameworks.

1. Transition and Coping Models: Identity Reconstruction as Career Growth

The earliest theoretical contributions in the reviewed literature conceptualize professional identity reconstruction primarily through the lens of career transition and adaptive coping (Latack & Dozier, 1986). These scholars proposed that job displacement could be reframed as an opportunity for career growth, provided that individuals and organizations collectively manage the transition through deliberate coping strategies. This perspective finds later resonance in HRM-oriented syntheses such as Wang and Abu Hasan (2024), whose systematic literature review of organizational career growth situates advancement-oriented HR practices training, promotion opportunities, and development support as key antecedents through which employees sustain motivation and a stable sense of professional progression; notably, their review also identifies a persistent gap in the literature regarding the mediating and interactive mechanisms linking such HR practices to deeper identity-level outcomes. Within these early formulations, identity reconstruction is treated as a largely continuous process in which the professional self is assumed to retain its fundamental structure and can be restored through skill acquisition and role re-establishment. Despite their foundational contribution to the literature, these models have been criticized for underestimating the depth of identity disruption associated with involuntary job displacement and for overemphasizing organizational instrumentality at the expense of the subjective and emotional dimensions of identity work (Courtois et al., 2025; Obling, 2023).

2. Narrative and Sensemaking Frameworks:

Identity as Biographical Repair A substantial strand of the reviewed literature conceptualizes identity reconstruction as a narrative and sensemaking process through which displaced workers re-author their professional biographies. Research demonstrates that older displaced managers often engage in deliberate career exploration to transform job loss into an opportunity for self fulfilment, reconstructing professional identity through retrospective sensemaking and future-oriented career exploration (Zikic & Richardson, 2007). The challenges faced by older workers in maintaining a coherent sense of self during career transitions have also been highlighted, particularly in the context of a global economy that presents temporal and spatial challenges (Tempest & Coupland, 2017). This perspective was further extended to traumatic displacement contexts, where narrative coherence the ability to construct meaningful explanations for career discontinuity was identified as a central mechanism for rebuilding foundational assumptions about professional selfhood (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011). Additionally, career identity reconstruction has been situated within broader societal and organizational discourses, emphasizing that displaced workers frequently draw upon institutional narratives and role models to reposition their professional selves (Mulhall, 2014). Collectively, these studies conceptualize identity reconstruction as a culturally embedded, relational, and biographical process rather than merely an individual cognitive adjustment mechanism.

3. Social and Collective Repair: Identity as Relational Achievement

Several studies in the reviewed corpus challenge individualistic interpretations of professional identity reconstruction by emphasizing its relational and collective dimensions. Ethnographic evidence suggests that displaced professionals actively mobilize social capital and accountability partnerships to engage in what has been described as collaborative self-concept repair, through which identity erosion associated with role loss is mitigated via social affirmation and shared meaning-making processes (Garrett-Peters, 2009). Similarly, identity reconstruction has been examined among professionals facing technology-driven job displacement, where social withdrawal emerged as a core psychological theme alongside professional-identity erosion underscoring that the relational fabric surrounding displaced workers, rather than isolated individual coping, shapes whether identity disruption is contained or compounded, a conclusion the researchers reinforced by validating their findings through a multi-round expert consensus process (Sharma et al., 2025). Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that access to social support systems, peer networks, and community resources represents a critical structural condition for effective identity reconstruction, carrying important implications for the design of HRM interventions and transition support systems.

4. Career Shock and HRM-Mediated Identity Frameworks

A more explicitly HRM-oriented conceptual cluster focuses on career shocks unplanned and disruptive events as triggers of identity threats while positioning HR practices as mediating mechanisms that shape the trajectory of professional identity reconstruction. A process-based perspective suggests that employees' perceptions of HR resources including motivation, ability, and opportunity to work mediate the relationship between career shocks and career sustainability outcomes, highlighting how interpretations of organizational support influence identity-related adjustment processes (Pak et al., 2021). This framework has been extended to senior management contexts, where active identity work strategies such as career anchor recentering and network mobilization have been identified as adaptive responses to career shocks, often facilitated or constrained by organizational conditions (de Becdelièvre et al., 2021). Longitudinal evidence further illustrates how identity reconstruction unfolds following health-related career disruptions through sequential mechanisms of identity shedding and identity implantation, whereby a new professional self is gradually internalized through relational recognition (Suzanne et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies position HRM not merely as an administrative function but as a socially significant institutional context that shapes the meaning-making processes through which displaced workers reconstruct their occupational identities.

5. Temporal Identity Work and the Multi-Self Framework

A theoretically distinctive strand within the reviewed literature conceptualizes identity reconstruction as temporal identity work, referring to the process through which individuals connect past, present, and future professional selves to construct a coherent and sustainable occupational narrative. Evidence indicates that older job seekers often engage in forms of renewal and tweaking, drawing on prior professional achievements to legitimize future career identities while navigating tensions between continuity and change (Steel & Tuori, 2019). Similarly, professionals' prior occupational backgrounds have been identified as important legitimizing anchors that facilitate the construction of a new occupational identity during career transitions, as accounting- and law-enforcement-trained professionals moving into an emerging occupation draw on their earlier professional credentials and expertise to establish credibility and coherence while building an identity for which no established template yet exists (Courtois et al., 2025). These insights are further consolidated within nonlinear career transition frameworks, which suggest that individuals experiencing career discontinuity frequently inhabit multiple

provisional selves simultaneously experimenting with, testing, and selectively internalizing alternative professional identities rather than replacing one identity with another through a linear process (Ibarra et al., 2026). This perspective challenges traditional stage-based transition models and advances a more dynamic understanding of identity reconstruction as an iterative and temporally distributed process that HRM interventions must be capable of supporting over extended transition periods.

6. Structural, Inclusive, and Multi-Level Frameworks

Structural, Inclusive, and Multi-Level Frameworks The most recent theoretical contributions in the reviewed literature have advanced multi-level and structurally sensitive frameworks that situate professional identity reconstruction within intersecting organizational, cultural, and institutional contexts. A relational and agentic perspective emphasizes that professional identity negotiation is shaped by workplace pedagogies, emotional dynamics, and institutional constraints, positioning HRM-embedded learning environments as critical spaces for identity work (Vähäsantanen, 2022). Similarly, multi-level analyses demonstrate how institutional demands and role expectations define and constrain the identity reconstruction opportunities available to individuals navigating organizational change (Obling, 2023). A social constructionist perspective further argues that structural ageism and discriminatory organizational practices systematically restrict identity reconstruction among older workers, emphasizing that HRM interventions must operate at structural rather than purely individual levels (Tempest & Coupland, 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2024). In addition, inclusive HRM bundles that combine age-neutral training, mentoring, and anti-discriminatory promotion practices have been identified as mechanisms that foster both individual identity reconstruction and cross-generational collaboration (Napathorn, 2026). Research has also highlighted the micro-politics of identity threats and coping behaviours across professional contexts, illustrating that identity work often unfolds through continuous negotiation and contestation rather than linear recovery processes (Tomo, 2025). Collectively, these frameworks demonstrate that professional identity reconstruction cannot be adequately theorized or supported through HRM approaches that locate agency exclusively at the individual level; instead, it requires integrative architectures that are sensitive to structural, institutional, and cultural dynamics.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present systematic review synthesized evidence from 46 empirical, conceptual, qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, and longitudinal studies to clarify how Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies contribute to professional identity reconstruction following job displacement. The principal finding was that professional identity reconstruction is not a linear process of restoring a previously stable occupational self; rather, it is an iterative, relational, temporally extended, and structurally conditioned process shaped by the interaction of HR practices, psychological resources, social support, career adaptability, organizational context, and labor-market constraints. Across the reviewed studies, displaced workers were repeatedly shown to move through processes of identity disruption, experimentation, redefinition, and consolidation, with the quality and sustainability of these processes influenced substantially by the resources available to them. This finding is consistent with contemporary perspectives that conceptualize career transitions as nonlinear trajectories involving multiple possible selves rather than a simple movement from one fixed occupational identity to another [4]. It also aligns with evidence showing that professional identity must be actively renegotiated when workplace expectations, roles, and institutional environments change [5, 6]. The findings therefore reinforce the view that job displacement should be understood not merely

as an employment event but as a disruption to the meanings, relationships, and professional narratives through which individuals define themselves.

A second major finding was that retraining, reskilling, redeployment, outplacement, career coaching, mentoring, and developmental support were the HRM strategies most consistently associated with adaptive post-displacement outcomes. These practices appeared to operate through two related mechanisms. First, they provided instrumental resources by enhancing skills, employability, job-search capacity, and access to alternative career pathways. Second, they provided symbolic and psychological support by communicating continued professional value, restoring confidence, and creating opportunities for workers to envision credible future identities. This result corresponds with evidence that perceived HRM can influence the relationship between career shocks and career sustainability by affecting employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to adapt [15]. It is also supported by research demonstrating that organizational career management and individual career self-management jointly contribute to employability through the accumulation of human, social, and psychological capital [16]. Similarly, organizational career growth research emphasizes the importance of development, advancement opportunities, and supportive HR practices for sustaining positive career outcomes [17]. Taken together, these findings suggest that HR interventions are most useful when they extend beyond technical reskilling and address both the employability and identity dimensions of displacement.

The review further showed that psychological resources such as coping self-efficacy, emotional regulation, narrative coherence, resilience, social support, perceived competence, and future orientation are central mechanisms linking displacement experiences with adaptive identity reconstruction. Workers who were better able to reinterpret job loss, maintain confidence in their capacity to manage career tasks, and construct meaningful narratives about their future were more likely to engage in adaptive forms of career self-management. This result closely aligns with social cognitive career perspectives, which emphasize self-efficacy, goal regulation, coping behavior, and contextual supports in responses to unemployment and reemployment [10]. The importance of coping self-efficacy is further supported by evidence showing that confidence in managing the psychological challenges of job loss is associated with better coping and adjustment [12]. Lent and colleagues similarly demonstrate that individuals facing job loss must simultaneously manage emotional distress, career decision-making, job-search behaviors, and self-regulatory demands [11]. The present findings therefore indicate that psychological resources should not be viewed as secondary outcomes of HR interventions but as mechanisms through which HR practices may influence longer-term identity and career adaptation.

The review also identified social and relational support as a central component of identity reconstruction. Professional identity is validated through interaction with colleagues, mentors, occupational communities, organizations, and broader social networks; consequently, displacement can weaken identity not only because a job has been lost, but also because sources of recognition and belonging have been disrupted. The reviewed evidence indicated that mentoring, peer support, coaching, networking, and socially supportive HR environments can reduce this relational discontinuity and support the reconstruction of a credible professional self. This finding is consistent with evidence among senior workers showing that social support is associated with grit, career adaptability, and job preparation, particularly when combined with self-directed learning [21]. It also aligns with research among senior managers demonstrating that network mobilization and reconsideration of career anchors support adjustment following career shocks [22]. Career resilience has similarly been described as a socially and communicatively produced process rather than merely an individual trait [23]. These converging

findings emphasize that identity reconstruction is fundamentally relational and that HRM strategies should create opportunities for affirmation, networking, mentoring, and professional recognition alongside skill development.

Career adaptability emerged as another major mechanism through which displaced workers respond to occupational disruption. Across the reviewed studies, adaptability was associated with self-directed learning, career crafting, transferable skills, problem solving, boundary-spanning capability, and the ability to imagine and pursue alternative professional futures. This result is consistent with dynamic capability perspectives that conceptualize career adaptation as the capacity to sense changing demands, mobilize resources, and reconfigure skills in response to emerging opportunities [13]. The importance of proactive identity redirection is also supported by findings that disengaging from unattainable or obsolete identities may facilitate career crafting and improve perceived employability [14]. Protean career orientations further illustrate the importance of self-directed learning and perceived employability in sustaining careers under conditions of uncertainty [20]. However, the present review also demonstrated that adaptability alone is insufficient. Individuals may possess strong personal resources yet remain constrained by discriminatory recruitment practices, limited access to training, structural unemployment, or lack of institutional support. Thus, career adaptability is best understood as an interaction between personal capability and environmental opportunity rather than solely as an individual responsibility.

A particularly important finding concerned the heterogeneous nature of displacement experiences across age groups, occupational backgrounds, and socially disadvantaged populations. Older workers, migrants, veterans, persons with disabilities, and individuals affected by technological substitution were frequently exposed to additional identity threats arising from ageism, deskilling, institutional mismatch, or restricted access to developmental resources. For older workers, displacement may be especially disruptive because professional identity is often strongly embedded in accumulated career capital and long-standing occupational roles. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that older jobseekers engage in temporal identity work that connects past achievements, present circumstances, and anticipated future selves [31]. Older workers also face particular temporal and spatial barriers in transferring accumulated career capital across changing labor markets [32]. Sustainable reintegration among displaced older workers has likewise been shown to depend on obtaining work compatible with their accumulated experience, well-being, and longer-term professional expectations rather than simply securing any available employment [33]. More recent research similarly demonstrates that mature workers' career transitions are shaped by both individual resources and age-related structural barriers [34].

These findings support the review's broader conclusion that inclusive HR practices are necessary for equitable identity reconstruction. Training, mentoring, flexible arrangements, age-neutral opportunities, fair promotion procedures, and anti-discriminatory practices can reduce structural barriers that might otherwise undermine the benefits of individual adaptability. This result is directly aligned with scholarship emphasizing that later-career development should move beyond deficit assumptions concerning ageing and instead create opportunities for continued learning, contribution, and identity development [36]. Similarly, inclusive bundles of HR practices have been associated with improved management of ageing and multigenerational workforces through equitable access to training, mentoring, and career opportunities [37]. Aitken and colleagues also show that older displaced workers often encounter disadvantages in labor-market reintegration, making institutional and policy support particularly important [35]. The findings therefore indicate that HRM architectures intended to support identity rebuilding must explicitly address structural inequalities rather than assuming that all displaced workers possess equivalent opportunities to benefit from developmental interventions.

Another important result was that identity reconstruction varies according to the nature of the transition. Individuals moving into emerging occupations, new professional domains, civilian employment after military service, or careers altered by health-related shocks confront distinct identity challenges that cannot be fully addressed through standardized transition models. Professionals moving into emerging occupations must establish legitimacy in contexts where occupational templates may be weak or evolving, requiring them to combine prior expertise with new forms of professional identification [24]. Cross-domain transitions similarly involve negotiation between previous and emerging identities and may result in different patterns of adoption, resistance, and hybridization [25]. Among military personnel, successful transition depends partly on translating institution-specific skills and identities into civilian employment contexts and achieving adequate person-environment fit [26]. Anticipatory learning, self-authorship, social capital, and transition preparation also appear important before military personnel leave highly institutionalized environments [27]. These findings reinforce the need for context-sensitive HRM responses rather than universal intervention models.

Health-related career shocks provided further evidence that professional identity reconstruction is temporally extended and psychologically complex. The reviewed studies indicate that workers may need to relinquish elements of a former professional self, experiment with new roles, obtain social recognition, and gradually internalize a new occupational identity. This is consistent with work describing identity shedding and implantation following major health-related career shocks [28, 29]. Similarly, industrial reconversion research shows that workers' identity outcomes depend on how occupational change is interpreted and whether the new role preserves or undermines valued dimensions of the former professional self [30]. These results suggest that successful post-displacement adjustment should not be evaluated solely through short-term reemployment indicators. Reemployment without identity continuity, perceived competence, or meaningful professional recognition may produce only superficial adaptation and may remain psychologically unsustainable.

The review also found that organizational restructuring and changes in institutional expectations may produce different identity responses depending on workers' previous attachment to organizational structures. Employees strongly identified with established practices may experience greater identity threat when organizational change disrupts familiar roles and meanings, whereas newcomers may possess greater flexibility because their identities are less anchored in legacy arrangements. This interpretation is supported by research showing that historically embedded employees and newcomers respond differently to restructuring, with newcomers displaying greater openness to identity renegotiation [38]. HR practices may further shape employee attachment by influencing organizational identity, which has been shown to mediate relationships between HR practices and turnover intentions [39]. Accordingly, HRM strategies supporting displaced or reassigned employees should consider the depth of employees' prior organizational identification and the extent to which transition threatens continuity of meaning, status, and belonging.

At the same time, the review demonstrated that HR interventions are not inherently beneficial. Structured outplacement, employability programs, and career-transition services may provide valuable resources while simultaneously regulating how workers are expected to present themselves and what kinds of professional futures are considered legitimate. Outplacement practices may therefore shape identity work by promoting standardized norms of employability and self-presentation [40]. The broader literature on professional identity crises similarly shows that workers may adopt multiple coping responses when their existing identity is threatened, including accommodation, resistance, distancing, and reconstruction [7]. Professional development may be most constructive when it helps workers move toward a personally meaningful ideal self rather than

merely fitting them into externally defined roles [18]. These findings suggest that effective HRM must balance structure and autonomy, providing guidance without excessively prescribing the content of the reconstructed professional identity.

Finally, the review supports an integrative interpretation of post-displacement adaptation in which resilience, career adaptability, identity work, and organizational support are mutually reinforcing rather than independent processes. Severe job loss can initially produce emotional disorientation and identity collapse but may also create opportunities for redefinition when individuals receive adequate psychological, relational, and developmental resources [2]. Recent research on AI-induced job displacement similarly demonstrates that technological job loss may produce anxiety, identity erosion, social withdrawal, and perceived organizational betrayal, indicating that technological transitions require psychological and identity-sensitive responses in addition to technical reskilling [8]. At the same time, some individuals may progress beyond simple recovery toward career reinvention and antifragility as they rebuild intrinsic motivation and develop new professional directions [9]. Theoretical models of involuntary unemployment likewise describe both resistance and transformation as possible outcomes depending on individual interpretation and environmental conditions [3]. Consequently, the overall evidence supports an identity-centered HRM framework in which professional reconstruction is facilitated through the integration of psychological support, inclusive development, social recognition, career adaptability, and structural opportunity rather than through isolated interventions.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this review. First, the evidence base was methodologically heterogeneous and dominated by qualitative, narrative, retrospective, and case-based studies, which provided substantial depth concerning identity processes but limited the extent to which causal relationships between specific HRM interventions and identity outcomes could be established. Second, many studies focused on narrowly defined groups, including older workers, veterans, managers, professionals, or individuals experiencing health-related or technologically induced career disruption, thereby limiting generalizability across broader displaced populations. Third, considerable geographic and cultural concentration was evident, with relatively limited evidence from many labor-market and institutional contexts. Fourth, professional identity, career adaptability, resilience, and employability were conceptualized and measured inconsistently across studies, complicating direct comparison. Finally, the limited number of longitudinal and intervention-based studies restricted conclusions regarding the duration, sequencing, and long-term sustainability of identity reconstruction and the effectiveness of specific HRM programs over time.

Future studies should prioritize longitudinal, prospective, and intervention-based designs that follow workers before, during, and after displacement to clarify how identity reconstruction unfolds over time and which HRM interventions produce sustained effects. Larger quantitative and mixed-method studies are needed to test the relationships among HR practices, professional identity, psychological resilience, career adaptability, employability, and reemployment quality. Research should also examine mediating and moderating mechanisms, including self-efficacy, social support, organizational identification, career stage, occupational centrality, and perceived fairness. Greater attention should be given to intersectionality by examining how age, gender, migration status, disability, socioeconomic position, and occupational background jointly influence access to support and identity outcomes. Cross-cultural and cross-sector comparisons would help determine which findings are context-specific and which are transferable across labor markets. Future studies should also evaluate pre-displacement interventions and investigate whether anticipatory career development, continuous reskilling, and transition preparation can reduce identity disruption before job loss occurs.

Organizations should develop integrated transition systems that combine reskilling and employability support with psychological, relational, and identity-focused assistance. HR professionals should provide displaced or reassigned workers with individualized career counseling, mentoring, coaching, networking opportunities, and access to meaningful development rather than relying exclusively on standardized outplacement programs. Transition programs should recognize differences in age, career stage, occupational background, disability, and other sources of vulnerability and should ensure equitable access to training and internal mobility opportunities. Managers should communicate transparently during restructuring and provide opportunities for employees to preserve valued competencies and professional continuity wherever possible. Organizations should also maintain support beyond immediate placement or redeployment because identity reconstruction may continue long after formal employment transition. Most importantly, HR practices should enable workers to exercise agency in defining viable future professional identities rather than imposing narrow organizational or labor-market templates of employability.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

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